

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 404

(Delegate Mireku-North)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Natural Resources - State Parks - Terminology

This bill changes (1) certain references to “State historical parks” in provisions enacted under Chapter 39 of 2022 (Great Maryland Outdoors Act) to simply refer to “State parks” and (2) references to two specific parks required to be established under Chapter 39 – “Freedman’s State Historical Park” and “Port of Deposit State Historical Park” – to refer instead to “Freedman’s State Park” and “Port Deposit State Park.” Despite the bill’s removal of the word “historical” from those references, the historical nature and purpose of the parks expressed in statute is not changed.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect State finances. Signs and publications have not yet been produced for Freedman’s State Historical Park or Port of Deposit State Historical Park.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local government finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Chapter 39 of 2022

Under Chapter 39, the term “State historical park” is used in the contexts of:

- a requirement that Department of Natural Resources (DNR) decisions related to the establishment of State historical parks or other units that preserve and interpret the

history of African American, Asian, Indigenous or Native American, and Hispanic or Latino populations in the State be made in coordination with the Parks and Recreation Commission, and with input from groups active in the preservation of historical sites of underrepresented communities; and

- a requirement that a Comprehensive Long-Range Strategic Plan for State parks that DNR must develop, publish, and periodically update include new State historical parks or other units that preserve and interpret the history of African American, Asian, Indigenous or Native American, and Hispanic or Latino populations in the State.

Chapter 39 also authorizes DNR to enter into a memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement with a local government, bicounty agency, or nonprofit organization to establish or manage a “partnership park” and requires the department to establish Freedman’s State Historical Park (in northeastern Montgomery County) and the Port of Deposit State Historical Park (in western Cecil County) as partnership parks that seek to educate the public about and preserve and interpret the lives and experiences of Black Americans both before and after the abolition of slavery.

State Park System – In General

The State park system is administered under the jurisdiction of DNR’s Maryland Park Service to preserve and protect the best of Maryland’s natural and historic places for the enjoyment and appreciation of its citizens.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 280 (Senators Augustine and Zucker) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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