

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1535 (Delegate Jacobs, *et al.*)
 Environment and Transportation

Natural Resources - Recreational Fishing - Mobile Reporting Application

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a mobile application (“app”), for use by angler’s licensees and Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing licensees, to submit any report required by the department under specified statutory provisions. DNR may contract with a third party to develop the mobile app. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by at least \$736,800 in FY 2027. Future years reflect annualization and inflation.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	736,800	350,500	355,200	360,000	364,800
Net Effect	(\$736,800)	(\$350,500)	(\$355,200)	(\$360,000)	(\$364,800)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Recreational Fishing Licenses and Reporting

Chapter 520 of 2024 requires persons licensed to fish recreationally (under an angler’s license or a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license) to submit any report DNR

requires in accordance with DNR regulations. In general, any person age 16 or older (1) must secure an angler's license to fish in the nontidal waters of the State and (2) must obtain a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing (recreational tidal) license before fishing for finfish in the tidal waters of the State, including the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, the State waters of the Atlantic Ocean, and the Atlantic coastal bays.

Under the provisions governing the Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license, DNR is authorized to provide by regulation for the issuance of an annual special Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license (which DNR [calls](#) a “consolidated Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport boat license”), which when permanently affixed to a boat (other than a boat hired to take persons fishing) authorizes any person on the boat to fish under the license, provided the person registers with DNR.

Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License Pilot Program

Chapters 409 and 410 of 2022 established a Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License Pilot Program in DNR. The purpose of the pilot program is to (1) collect contact information and demographic data of individuals fishing under a consolidated Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport boat license; (2) collect information regarding the number of trips taken and fish caught and released under a consolidated Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport boat license; and (3) improve compliance with the provision under the Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license statute that requires certain individuals authorized to fish without a license (including those fishing on a boat that has a consolidated Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport boat license affixed to it) to register with DNR.

The department must track monthly costs associated with implementing the pilot program, and each December 1, for the duration of the program, [report](#) recommendations on expected funding needed to grow and establish the program as a permanent program, to the Governor and the General Assembly. The provisions of Chapters 409 and 410 that establish the pilot program terminate June 30, 2027.

State Fiscal Effect: General fund expenditures increase by at least \$736,750 in fiscal 2027, at least \$350,530 in fiscal 2028, and by similar ongoing minimum amounts in future years, for DNR to develop and implement a mobile app for use by angler's and Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing licensees to report recreational catch information to the department. This estimate accounts for the bill's July 1, 2026 effective date. The costs are assumed to be covered by general funds, due to limited availability of special funds for fisheries management. The estimate includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. It accounts for:

- DNR hiring one natural resources biologist – starting July 2026 – to oversee the development, maintenance, and use of the app and the data collected through it for fisheries management;
- development costs to modify DNR’s MD Outdoors licensing mobile app to be configured to receive reporting of recreational licensees’ catch (one-time cost of \$500,000); and
- annual maintenance and data storage costs associated with data collection through the MD Outdoors licensing mobile app (at least \$250,000 annually).

This minimum estimate assumes that DNR configures and uses the MD Outdoors licensing mobile app for voluntary reporting by recreational licensees as a result of the bill, requiring the natural resources biologist to oversee the development, maintenance, and use of the app and the data collected through it. The estimate also assumes that configuration of the MD Outdoors mobile app is complete by January 1, 2027 (though presumably the configuration could take longer). To the extent a more significant, mandatory reporting program is established, additional costs are incurred for an additional staff position, outreach to licensees, additional app development/configuration and maintenance/storage, and data entry of paper reports submitted by licensees who do not have access to the app.

For additional context regarding this estimate being a minimum estimate, DNR indicates that configuring the MD Outdoors app for reporting of recreational licensees’ catch will provide the department a certain level of data collection ability, but development of an independent, more comprehensive, and high-level catch reporting mobile app (providing more effective data for fishery management) results in costs upwards of \$2.0 million for development (for reporting covering various tidal and nontidal recreational fisheries), and potentially upwards of \$500,000 for annual maintenance and data storage.

	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>
Positions (New)	1.0	0.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$101,915	\$97,725
App Development	500,000	0
Maintenance/Storage (Minimum)	125,000	250,000
Other Operating Expenses	<u>9,835</u>	<u>2,805</u>
Minimum State Expenditures	\$736,750	\$350,530

Future year minimum expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

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

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js/lgc

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