



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Acting Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

March 1, 2023

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 399 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - State Purchase and Use - Prohibition

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION WITH AMENDMENTS

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION:

The Department would like to provide information on HB 399 with amendments. These amendments are intended to enable gas powered leaf blowers to be utilized in cases of wildland fire suppression and prescribed burn management activities. The amendments also extend the time for prohibition on use of gas powered leaf blowers until 2026 to allow for attrition of equipment still in good working condition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Department of Natural Resources utilizes gasoline powered leaf blowers for many uses from maintenance, ecosystem management, and fire suppression. Leaf blowers are used to clear the ground of duff and other flammable material to expose the dirt so that a fire can be contained, prevented from spreading, and more easily extinguished. Prescribed burns are fires that are intentionally started and controlled by DNR staff to remove unwanted plants and trees to enable a specific ecosystem to become established, including to promote rare, threatened, or endangered species. The Maryland Forest Service also uses gas powered leaf blowers at the John S Ayton State Tree Nursery for processing seeds. Battery operated leaf blowers do not have enough power or the necessary life span to be used in remote areas for fire suppression or control, and could cause a safety issue for staff and the public.

BILL EXPLANATION:

HB 399 prohibits the State from purchasing gasoline powered leaf blowers after July 1, 2023 and prohibits the State from using these leaf blowers after July 1, 2025.

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BY:

(To be offered in the Health and Government Operations Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 399

(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in lines 19 and 21, in each instance, after “blower” insert “except for:

- (1) Wildland fire suppression activities; and
- (2) Prescribed burn management activities”;

and in line 20, strike “2025” and substitute “2026”.