

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1473

(Delegate Malone)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Forest and Park Wardens - Responsibilities

This bill repeals a requirement that a forest or park warden take specified action upon learning of, as opposed to seeing, a forest fire. A forest or park warden must, however, take specified action if requested by a fire company to assist with a fire plow or provide incident command expertise at the scene.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's changes would not materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: A forest or park warden that sees or learns of a forest fire must take specified actions including • going immediately to the fire and employing persons and means deemed necessary to extinguish the fire; and • controlling and directing any person and apparatus engaged in extinguishing forest fires.

Background: In 2006, 753 wildfires burned 6,074 acres in the State. The Department of Natural Resources' Forest Service maintains specialized heavy equipment (including wildfire engines, tractor plow units and transports, and tankers) to respond to fires and also relies on volunteer and paid fire departments throughout the State.

DNR indicates that the bill's changes will allow the department greater flexibility in responding to wildfires. Specifically, the bill will allow DNR to not respond when its assistance is not needed. DNR advises that it has limited personnel available to respond to fires it learns of. Further, in the more urban/suburban parts of the State, volunteer and paid fire companies handle the majority of wildfires without the department's assistance.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 860 (Senator Glassman) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 10, 2008
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