

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 23 (Delegates Haddaway and Eckardt)
 Environmental Matters

Talbot County - Knapps Narrows - Speed Limit

This bill prohibits a person from operating a vessel on Knapps Narrows in Talbot County at a speed in excess of the slowest speed necessary to maintain steerage under prevailing wind and water current conditions. The bill also requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop an informational program to assist vessel operators in complying with that prohibition, including a phase-in period for enforcement. The bill establishes criminal penalties for violations.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: DNR special fund expenditures increase by \$13,300 in FY 2011 and by \$2,000 annually thereafter for public education efforts. The criminal penalty provisions of this bill are not expected to significantly affect State revenues.

(in dollars)	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	13,300	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Net Effect	(\$13,300)	(\$2,000)	(\$2,000)	(\$2,000)	(\$2,000)

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

Local Effect: The criminal penalty provisions of this bill are not expected to significantly affect local expenditures.

Small Business Effect: Minimal or none.

Analysis

Current Law: Where it has been determined that an area is too populated with boats and/or persons to allow unlimited speed, speed limits of six knots have been established. There is a special speed limit of six knots on Seneca Creek in Montgomery County and on certain areas of the Monocacy River in Carroll and Frederick counties. Speed limits for other areas are generally established via regulation. Under current regulations, Knapps Narrows has a six-knot speed limit all year.

Background: Concern has been raised that, despite the existing six-knot speed limit established through regulation, the wake caused by large boats in Knapps Narrows is creating problems for boats docked along the narrows and is hazardous to paddle boaters. According to DNR, Knapps Narrows has a strong current, so vessels must increase speeds to navigate the waterway. DNR also advises that much of the waterway has been hardened with timber bulkheads, which have a tendency to reflect waves generated by vessels and make them larger and more damaging to boats docked nearby.

DNR has met with members of the Knapps Narrows community to discuss the speeding problem and plans to study the issue during the upcoming boating season. In addition, DNR has:

- replaced old signs that were faded or damaged with new signs that clearly display the existing six-knot speed limit;
- asked bridge tenders to stop encouraging boats to hurry to make bridge openings; and
- requested heightened Natural Resources Police presence and enforcement in the area.

State Expenditures: DNR's Waterway Improvement Fund expenditures increase by \$13,300 in fiscal 2011 to develop and implement informational efforts to help vessel operators comply with speed limits on Knapps Narrows. This estimate assumes that DNR adjusts boating safety class materials; places four advertisements in local boating magazines; places four new information buoys; and creates brochures, posters, flyers, and 50 metal signs. Future year expenditures reflect replacement of buoys and signs, printing costs for informational materials, and advertising in boating magazines.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 48 (Senator Colburn) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 14, 2010
ncs/lgc

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