

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 696

(Delegate Addison)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Natural Resources - Black Bass Conservation Fund - Establishment

This bill establishes a Black Bass Conservation Fund in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – consisting of voluntary monetary donations made by individuals at the time of purchasing a recreational fishing license – to be used for black bass stocking, habitat enhancement, tournaments, and conservation research.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues and expenditures increase by an indeterminate amount beginning in FY 2024, as discussed below.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill establishes a Black Bass Conservation Fund, within and administered by DNR, for the purpose of furthering black bass management. The fund consists of (1) voluntary monetary donations made by individuals at the time of purchasing an angler’s license or a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license through DNR’s electronic licensing system; (2) money appropriated in the State budget to the fund; (3) interest earnings; and (4) any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund. The bill requires DNR to (1) establish a process through which individuals may make donations through the electronic licensing system and (2) collect the donations and deposit them into the fund.

DNR may use money in the fund to (1) stock black bass; (2) enhance aquatic habitats for black bass; (3) support responsible black bass tournaments; and (4) support scientific research related to black bass conservation.

Current Law: DNR is authorized to develop and implement an electronic system for the sale and issuance of licenses, permits, and registrations and the recording and releasing of security interests. There are two existing requirements for DNR to establish a process through which individuals may make specified voluntary monetary donations when making a purchase through the electronic licensing system:

- *Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund* – The department is required to establish a process through which an individual who purchases an angler’s license, a Chesapeake and coastal sport fishing license, or a hunting license and any corresponding stamps through the electronic licensing system may make a voluntary monetary donation to the Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund at the time of purchase. The fund has the purpose of providing any of the following opportunities for Gold Star recipients, disabled veterans or other veterans who could benefit from one of the opportunities, disabled members of the U.S. Armed Forces or other members of the U.S. Armed Forces who could benefit from one of the opportunities, and permanently disabled persons who require the use of a wheelchair: (1) recreational hunting or fishing; (2) recreational water activities; (3) other recreational outdoor activities; (4) therapeutic outdoor activities; or (5) workforce training for green jobs, including outdoor agricultural jobs.
- *Chesapeake Bay Trust and Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays 2010 Trust Fund* – The department is required to establish a process through which an individual who purchases a license, permit, or registration through the electronic licensing system may make a voluntary monetary donation to the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays 2010 Trust Fund (split evenly between the two and used for specified purposes) at the time the license, permit, or registration is purchased.

Statute requires that the donation process established for those donations must be limited to providing not more than two options to which an individual may make a monetary donation.

State Fiscal Effect: Special fund revenues and expenditures increase by an indeterminate amount beginning in fiscal 2024, reflecting receipt of donations and any interest earnings and spending of those revenues in accordance with the authorized uses of the fund. The extent of the increase in special fund revenues and expenditures cannot be reliably estimated. For context, DNR reports that the Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund (mentioned above) received \$12,493 in donations from 2,597 contributors in fiscal 2021 and \$9,604 in donations from 2,040 individuals in fiscal 2022.

DNR can establish the donation process, and collect and deposit the donations in the fund, with existing resources.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: SB 422 (Senator Bailey, *et al.*) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 23, 2023
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