

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Third Reader - Revised**

Senate Bill 559

(Senator Bailey)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Environment and Transportation

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**Natural Resources - Recreational Fishery Data Collection Program - Established**

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This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish the Recreational Fishery Data Collection Program, by December 31, 2026, to develop and implement a data collection system for recreational anglers in the State. In coordination with State and federal partners, the department must (1) survey and collect data on recreational fishing reporting programs in other states and (2) subject to available funding, enter into a contract for the development and implementation of a data collection system for recreational anglers. By December 31, 2027, DNR must report on the findings of the program, including a workplan detailing the proposed development and implementation of a data collection system for recreational anglers. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026, and terminates December 31, 2027.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** No effect in FY 2027. General fund expenditures may increase by an indeterminate amount in FY 2028 only, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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**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 Expenditures:** General fund expenditures may increase by an indeterminate amount in fiscal 2028 only, to the extent that there is available funding to enter into a contract for the development and implementation of a data collection system for recreational anglers, pursuant to the bill. This assessment is based on the following information and assumptions:

- It is assumed that DNR surveys and collects data on recreational fishing reporting programs in other states, largely in fiscal 2027, which the department indicates it can accomplish with existing resources.

- It is assumed that if the department enters into a contract for the development and implementation of a data collection system for recreational anglers (if there is available funding), the contract is entered into in fiscal 2028, subsequent to the survey and collection of data on programs in other states.
- The costs of the contract are assumed to be covered by general funds, due to limited availability of fisheries management special funds for new expenditures.
- The department indicates that the extent of any costs incurred to enter into a contract for the development and implementation of a data collection system cannot be reliably estimated in advance of the survey and collection of data on other states' programs, which will inform the type and scope of the system developed and implemented. However, for context regarding the potential magnitude of the costs, DNR has indicated that costs for the development of a recreational fishing reporting system could range from minimal costs to upwards of \$2.0 million (depending on factors such as the capability of the system, the range of recreational fisheries covered by the system, and the number of users of the system), not accounting for any ongoing maintenance and personnel costs associated with implementation.
- It is assumed that any ongoing costs incurred for the development and implementation of a data collection system for recreational anglers beyond fiscal 2028 are at the discretion of the department and are not costs of the bill, because the bill terminates December 31, 2027.

The Department of Legislative Services notes that DNR intends to undertake research of other states' recreational fishing reporting programs to inform the potential development and implementation of a recreational fishing data collection system in the State, even in the absence of the bill. To the extent that research is undertaken, and a data collection system is developed, under a similar timeline, in the absence of the bill, the fiscal impact of the bill is reduced or even none. Alternatively, expenditures under the bill in fiscal 2028 may represent an acceleration of expenditures that otherwise occur in a later fiscal year, if a data collection system is developed in the absence of the bill but on a longer timeline.

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### **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

**Fiscal Note History:**  
caw/lgc

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