

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 559 (Senator Bailey)
 Education, Energy, and the Environment

Natural Resources - Recreational Striped Bass Catch - Reporting

This bill requires every person who catches striped bass under a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license or registration to report the catch to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The department must adopt regulations to implement the bill, that (1) authorize reporting methods that the department determines to be feasible; (2) to the maximum extent feasible, authorize a person to report the catch through a mobile application (“app”); and (3) establish a reporting method that is usable by persons who do not have Internet access. **The bill takes effect January 1, 2027.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by at least \$905,600 in FY 2027. Future years reflect annualization and inflation. Special fund revenues may decrease annually beginning in FY 2027.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
SF Revenue	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
GF Expenditure	\$905,600	\$621,800	\$629,900	\$638,100	\$646,300
Net Effect	(\$905,600)	(\$621,800)	(\$629,900)	(\$638,100)	(\$646,300)

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law:

Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License

In general, a person who is age 16 or older is required to 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. The annual license fee for a Maryland resident is \$15.00, while the fee for a resident seven-day short-term recreational tidal fishing license is \$6.00. The annual license fee for a nonresident is \$22.50, while the fee for a nonresident seven-day short-term recreational tidal fishing license is \$12.00. DNR collects these fees and deposits them into the Fisheries Research and Development Fund (FR&D).

Consolidated Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Boat License

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. The annual license fee is \$50 for a resident and \$100 for a nonresident.

Registration Requirement

A person must register with DNR if they fish on a boat that has a consolidated Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport boat license affixed to it (and are not the holder of the license). There is no fee for the registration. The registration requirement also applies to persons fishing under certain other exceptions to the requirement to hold a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license – those fishing in a free fishing area established by the department or on private real property bordering on tidal water as an owner or tenant of the property, or a spouse or an immediate family member who resides on the property with the owner or tenant.

Reporting

Pursuant to Chapter 520 of 2024, every person licensed under the Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license provisions must submit any report DNR requires in accordance with department regulations.

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 increase by at least \$905,634 in fiscal 2027, at least \$621,825 in fiscal 2028, and by similar ongoing minimum amounts in future years, for DNR to establish a reporting system to support the bill's requirement that every person who catches striped bass under a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license or registration report the catch to the department. This estimate accounts for the bill's January 1, 2027 effective date, and assumes certain expenses are incurred prior to that date to establish the reporting system. The costs are assumed to be covered by general funds, due to limited availability of special funds for fisheries management. The estimate includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. It accounts for:

- DNR hiring (1) one natural resources biologist – starting July 2026 – to oversee the development and maintenance of the reporting system, outreach to recreational anglers, and analysis of data collected for use in striped bass management and (2) one administrative specialist – starting January 2027 – to assist the natural resources biologist, coordinate processing of paper reports submitted by persons without Internet access, and assist with data quality assurance and control;
- costs for in-state outreach travel, signage at popular fishing sites and ramps, and other supplies (\$50,000 annually);
- development costs to modify DNR's MD Outdoors licensing mobile app to be configured to receive mandatory reporting of striped bass recreational catch (one-time cost of \$500,000);

- annual maintenance and data storage costs associated with data collection through the MD Outdoors licensing mobile app (at least \$250,000 annually); and
- costs for data entry of paper reports submitted by persons without Internet access (\$150,000 annually).

For additional context regarding this estimate being a minimum estimate, DNR indicates that configuring the MD Outdoors app for reporting of striped bass catch will provide the department a certain level of data collection ability, but development of an independent, more comprehensive, and high-level catch reporting mobile app (providing more effective data for fishery management) requires development costs in the range of \$2.0 million for development, and potentially upwards of \$500,000 for annual maintenance and data storage.

	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>
Positions (New)	2.0	0.0
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$137,352	\$166,216
Outreach/Supplies	50,000	50,000
Mobile App Development	500,000	0
Maintenance/Storage (Minimum)	125,000	250,000
Data Entry	75,000	150,000
Other Operating Expenses	<u>18,282</u>	<u>5,609</u>
Minimum State Expenditures	\$905,634	\$621,825

Future year minimum expenditures reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

State Revenues: Special fund (FR&D) revenues may decrease to the extent the bill’s mandatory reporting requirement causes any individuals to choose to fish in another state to avoid the requirement and not purchase a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license. The extent to which this occurs, if at all, cannot be reliably estimated.

Small Business Effect: To the extent the bill’s reporting requirement causes any individuals to fish in other states, small businesses involved in, or benefiting from, recreational fishing in the State (fishing guides that guide recreational licensees, for example) may be meaningfully affected by the bill.

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

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jg/lgc

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