

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 211 (Delegate Robinson, *et al.*)
Environment and Transportation

Cownose Ray Fishing Contests - Prohibition

This bill prohibits a person from sponsoring, conducting, or participating in a cownose ray fishing contest in State waters. “Cownose ray fishing contest” means any competition, tournament, or derby with the objective of catching or killing cownose rays for (1) prizes or other inducements or (2) entertainment purposes. The Secretary of Natural Resources must adopt regulations to implement the bill.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill can be implemented with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: State statute and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulations do not specifically regulate the cownose ray fishery, though DNR is considering adopting regulations. The regulatory actions currently under consideration would prohibit the use of specified projectile gear, such as archery equipment, for taking cownose rays during the period from July 1 through December 31. DNR is authorized in statute to, after consultation with the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission and the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission, adopt regulations to define and govern the use of

recreational fishing gear and certain types of commercial fishing gear, including bowfishing gear.

DNR indicates that cownose rays are a migratory species and use the Chesapeake Bay as a nursery habitat between May and October, with male cownose rays leaving the bay in late June through early July. After July 1, the cownose rays in the bay are predominantly pregnant females and young-of-the-year pups.

An October 2016 DNR summary of potential actions that could be taken to regulate the cownose ray fishery included an option of requiring cownose ray tournament and charter operators to obtain a permit from, and report to, DNR in order for the department to gather data to better understand the impact of tournaments and charters on the fishery. That option is not included in the current actions being considered, however.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: Although SB 268 (Senator Young, *et al.* - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs) is designated as a cross file, it is not identical.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; Maryland Charter Boat Association; Department of Legislative Services

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mm/lgc

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