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INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

COUNTY AGENCY LEGISLATIVE COMMENT REQUEST FORM

Reviewing Agency: Department of the Enviornment

Bill / Resolution Number: CB-023-2025

Bill Summary: AN ACT CONCERNING WILDLIFE AND ANIMAL CONTROL for the purpose of creating a study and fee for protecting wildlife, general health, safety, and welfare of the citizens impacted by wildlife within the county, and the creation of a joint action plan to limit, control, and protect wildlife within the county.

Agency Impact:

Will this bill impact your Agency financially or operationally, or your Agency's mission?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undeterminable at this time

If yes, please select the appropriate impact: ☐ Positive Impact ☒ Negative Impact ☐ No Impact

Discussion of Impact: This legislation would bring Animal Services Division, ASD, into an area of work where it does not have expertise, wildlife. The Department of Natural Resources, DNR, currently handles wildlife within Prince George's County. ASD handles sick or injured wildlife, excluding deer, as a pass through to transport them to wildlife non-profits who help them so they can be released back into the wild. DNR has the expertise within the wildlife legal framework such as COMAR 08.02.06.01 dealing with the ownership of snapping turtles in Maryland, a case we needed their expertise for recently, or when multiple alligators were seized in Hyattsville. DNR regularly navigates the county, state, federal, and sometimes international legal framework for wildlife. Canada Geese and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is one example of how complicated dealing with wildlife can be.

ASD has expertise with domestic and livestock animals. Dealing with livestock within the county is a significant issue for us as most Animal Control Officers, ACOs, do not have past experience with livestock and require significant training. Training ACOs to handle goats, sheep, pigs, cows, and horses that we encounter running at large regularly is a year's long process to get to comfort. Adding wildlife to ASDs operations would require the creation of a ranger division of animal control. M-NCPPC and DNR already have this function as a part of their normal operations. Rangers are specifically trained to deal with wildlife and have expertise on the surrounding legal framework. There is also an implication in this legislation that ASD would deal with wetlands and waterways as those are key areas for wildlife.

COMAR grants DNR some specific areas of supervision for the State of Maryland and associated commissions: 08.01.01.03 Forest and Park Advisory Commission; 08.01.01.05 Wildlife Advisory Commission for the State of Maryland. I do not believe this can move forward without direct engagement with DNR. In addition to DNR there is a patchwork of agencies who own land in Prince George's County that would have to be involved in a comprehensive plan such as Federal Government (USDA, Census, NASA, etc), State Government (UMD),

WSSC, Board of Ed, and State Highway. Significant consensus and review of the relevant legal framework would need to be investigated as to the feasibility of the county wide program for wildlife. Development may border land not under county law.

As the legislation is written we believe the primary outcome would be the culling of wildlife to make space for development or directly following development as wildlife is displaced. "Limiting" and "controlling" wildlife within the county implies that step. ASD does not have the expertise with wildlife. We commonly get what the public believes are nuisance calls within the county on deer eating someone's flowers, a fox in the backyard, ground hogs living under sheds and/or eating plants in a garden, or birds nesting in awnings of homes. While all of these may be issues for that homeowner, they are products of living in a healthy and biodiverse environment. As the county's population continues to grow, and that growth is in agricultural areas mainly in the south these complaints will rise. Residents will be entering environments not previously densely populated where wildlife has been for hundreds of years if not longer.

Fiscal Impact: To enforce this legislation ASD would have to stand up a ranger division. We would need a minimum of 8 rangers, each with a vehicle, and significant training and continuing education. Annual cost for staffing, continuing education, equipment, and county charges is $875k. $800k is staffing cost, $15k annually in staffing cost, $10k annually in equipment, and $50k in other charges such as Fleet, OIT, and other general upkeep. Staffing is estimated at $100k per staff member, inclusive of benefits. There would be a first-year cost of $665k for vehicles and training. Each staff member would need a vehicle estimated at $70k per vehicle as they would need to be built to be significantly off road to deal with wildlife. Training would be $10k to include animal control and specific wildlife training. There would be an estimated $25k in equipment needs an initiation of this team. If there is any aspect of this legislation which would continue to imply having to deal with wetlands or waterways there would be a significant increase in cost for boats and other associated gear for that environment.

Agency Position Recommendation:

☐ Support ☒ Oppose ☐ Support with Amendments ☐ No position

Additional Information:

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Karen Williams Gooden, Esq.: Legislative Counsel

Date: 10/14/25