



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

FISCAL NOTE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1605

PRINTERS NO. 2320

PRIME SPONSOR: James

COST / (SAVINGS)

FUND	FY 2015/16	FY 2016/17
General Fund	\$0	\$0

SUMMARY: House Bill 1605, Printer's Number 2320, formally establishes the Heritage Area Program within and outlines administration and funding guidelines for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

ANALYSIS: This bill is a freestanding act that formally establishes the Heritage Area Program within and outlines administration and funding guidelines for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). It requires DCNR to adopt goals, guidelines and policies for the program, and to discuss these annually with each heritage area. The bill also requires DCNR to allocate funds for the management, planning, development and protection of the program, and to establish partnerships between governmental and nongovernmental agencies. Heritage areas may also use funding to provide a grant to another entity for these purposes.

The agency is to allocate all funds appropriated annually by the General Assembly for the Heritage Areas program and each heritage area is to receive a minimum amount of funding through the program established by the program goals, guidelines and policies. DCNR may not use more than 5% of the funding appropriated annually for the program for administrative expenses, including the development of a strategic plan or other appropriate initiative related to the administration of the program. The bill also repeals Article XVI-J (relating to Heritage Areas) of the Fiscal Code (Act 176 of 1929) and acts as a continuation of it.

This legislation would take effect immediately upon enactment.

FISCAL IMPACT: Enactment of this legislation will have no adverse fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds. The Heritage Area Program was established in 1988 and has generally been supported through annual appropriations as part of DCNR's budget. The program last received \$2.250 million in FY2014-15 to support the Commonwealth's 12 state-designated Heritage Areas.

However, funding for the program was proposed to be eliminated under the Governor's Executive Budgets for FY2015-16 and FY2016-17. In the event the program does not receive a General Fund appropriation, the Heritage Areas can submit grant requests for project funding

to the department's Community Conservation Partnership Program, which is supported by the Environmental Stewardship Fund.

PREPARED BY: Jeffrey Clukey
House Appropriations Committee (R)

DATE: March 16, 2016

Estimates are calculated using the best information available. Actual costs and revenue impact incurred may vary from estimates.