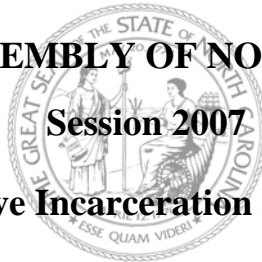


GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA



Session 2007

Legislative Incarceration Fiscal Note

(G.S. 120-36.7)

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 862 (Third Edition)

SHORT TITLE: Amend Plant Protection and Conservation Act.-AB

SPONSOR(S): Representative Hill

	FISCAL IMPACT				
	Yes (X)	No ()	No Estimate Available ()		
	<u>FY 2007-08</u>	<u>FY 2008-09</u>	<u>FY 2009-10</u>	<u>FY 2010-11</u>	<u>FY 2011-12</u>
REVENUES					
Agriculture	No estimate available. See Assumptions and Methodology.				
EXPENDITURES					
Correction	No significant fiscal impact anticipated. See Assumptions and Methodology.				
Judicial					
TOTAL EXPENDITURES:	Amount cannot be determined.				
ADDITIONAL PRISON BEDS: (cumulative)*	None anticipated.				
POSITIONS: (cumulative)	Amount cannot be determined.				
PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT(S) & PROGRAM(S) AFFECTED: Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Department of Correction; Judicial Branch.					
EFFECTIVE DATE: December 1, 2007.					
<i>*This fiscal analysis is independent of the impact of other criminal penalty bills being considered by the General Assembly, which could also increase the projected prison population and thus the availability of prison beds in future years. The Fiscal Research Division is tracking the cumulative effect of all criminal penalty bills on the prison system as well as the Judicial Department.</i>					

BILL SUMMARY: Amends GS 106-202.15 to include in the duties of the North Carolina Plant Conservation Board maintaining a list of protected plant species that includes each plant’s status. Also includes the duty of establishing permit fees. Removes reference to 1980 publishing duties and to entering cross references in the species list. Amends GS 106-202.17 to require that the Scientific Committee (Committee) include a member of a conservation organization, instead of a

member of specifically listed organizations. Amends GS 106-202.18 to give the Committee authority to review and comment on, but not veto, state agency projects that have the potential to affect protected plants (was, review and comment on botanical aspects of environmental impact statements). Amends GS 106-202.19 to increase the penalty for violations of the Plant Protection and Conservation Act (Act) from a Class 3 misdemeanor with a fine only to a Class 2 misdemeanor. Amends GS 106-202.19 to allow an agent of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to inspect papers and records related to the Act. Make technical changes. Effective October 1, 2007.

Second edition (House committee substitute) changes the effective date from October 1, 2007 to offenses committed on or after December 1, 2007.

Third edition (House committee substitute) makes the following changes to the second edition: Provides that the Scientific Committee has the power and duty to review and comment on environmental impact statements prepared by state agencies on projects that may affect protected plants. Current law provides for review and comment on botanical aspects of environmental impact statements prepared by state and other agencies as appropriate. The previous editions of the bill provided for review and comment on projects in N.C. proposed by state or other agencies that could affect protected plants or habitats and specified that approval by the committee or the North Carolina Plant Conservation Board is not required. Makes technical changes.

Source: Bill Digest H.B. 862 (03/14/0200).

ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY:

Revenues:

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Plant Industry Division is responsible for the listing and protection of North Carolina's endangered plants and threatened plant species. Guided by the 1979 Plant Conservation and Protection Act, the Division maintains a list of endangered, threatened, and special concern plant species for the State and enforces regulations and issues permits concerning State-listed plant species.

Currently, fees are not assessed on permits related to the collection, propagation and sale of protected plants. Under the proposed legislation, the Plant Conservation Board would be given the authority to set fees for these permits. Additionally, the Plant Conservation Board has the authority to adopt rules to create new types of permits. Therefore, because the level of permit fees has not been determined, no fiscal estimate can be provided.

General - Expenditures

G.S. 106-202.19, Unlawful acts; penalties; enforcement, makes it a Class 3 misdemeanor (punished by a fine only) for a person to violate any of the provisions of Article 19B of Chapter 106 of the General Statutes, or any rule of the North Carolina Plant Conservation Board adopted pursuant to Article 19B. Accordingly, because this bill reclassifies violation to a Class 2 misdemeanor offense, any additional charge would be expected to generate some additional fiscal impact.

The Administrative Office of the Courts presently does not maintain an offense code for G.S. 106-202.19, indicating that such offense is infrequently charged and/or infrequently results in conviction. *Thus, given the nature of offense and proposed penalty level, Fiscal Research does not anticipate a significant impact due to this proposed legislation.*

Department of Correction: Division of Prisons

Because Class 2 misdemeanants serve their designated terms of incarceration within local jails, any resultant active sentence due to this proposal should not impact the state's prison population.¹ The potential impact on local jail populations is unknown.

In FY 2005-06, 17% of Class 2 misdemeanor convictions resulted in active sentences, with an average estimated time served of 13 days. To the extent that future convictions for the proposed offense were to result in active sentences longer than 30 days, the Department of Correction could incur some additional costs for county reimbursement. However, given the typical length for Class 2 misdemeanor active sentences, Fiscal Research does not anticipate a significant increase in reimbursements due to this proposal.

Department of Correction: Division of Community Corrections

In FY 2005-06, 83% of Class 2 misdemeanor convictions resulted in either intermediate or community punishments, predominantly special, intensive, or general supervision probation. *Thus, if future convictions under G.S. 106-202.19 were to occur, the Division of Community Corrections (DCC) could assume some additional costs for offenders placed under its supervision.* However, it is not known how many offenders would be sentenced to intermediate or community punishments, to which type, or for how long.

Presently, general supervision of intermediate and community offenders by a probation officer costs DCC \$1.96 per offender, per day; no cost is assumed for those receiving unsupervised probation, or who are ordered only to pay fines, fees, or restitution. DCC also incurs a daily cost of \$0.69 per offender sentenced to the Community Service Work Program. However, the daily cost per offender on intermediate sanction is much higher, ranging from \$7.71 to \$14.97 depending on the type of sanction. Intensive supervision probation is the most frequently used intermediate sanction, and costs an estimated \$14.97 per offender, per day. On average, intensive supervision lasts six-months, with general supervision assumed for a designated period thereafter.

Judicial

Under current law, violations are subject only to fines, in the amounts specified by the statute. As amended, violations would be subject to incarceration (depending on prior conviction level, from one to 60 days, G.S.15A-1340.23) as well as a fine. In addition, this bill could also increase the amount of fine a person would be subject to. Fines now range from \$100 to \$500 for a first offense, and from \$500 to \$1,000 for subsequent offenses. As amended, the amount of fine imposed could reach \$1,000 for all offenses (the maximum fine amount for Class 2 misdemeanors in G.S. 15A-1340.23).

¹ Active sentences between 1-90 days are served in local jails. The Department of Correction reimburses counties \$18 per day for offenders housed longer than 30 days (between 30 and 90). Sentences longer than 90 days are to be served in state prison; however, when bed shortages demand it, the State may lease needed beds from counties.

The AOC presently does not have an offense code in its automated system for G.S. 106-202, which is some indication that there are relatively few charges. Nevertheless, the proposed penalty enhancement is expected to be accompanied by more vigorous defense and prosecution, resulting in increased court time and the costs of case disposal. Moreover, all indigent costs assumed would constitute additional costs, since these would not have been incurred under current law (no chance of incarceration).

Presently, the estimated cost per Class 2 misdemeanor trial is \$2,770; the estimated cost per plea is \$230. Actual costs may vary from this general estimate, which includes indigent defense costs.

SOURCES OF DATA: Department of Agriculture and Consumers Services; Department of Correction; Judicial Branch; North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission; and Office of State Construction.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS: None

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