

Chapter 284

(House Bill 606)

AN ACT concerning

Natural Resources – Local Forest Conservation Funds – Use of Money

FOR the purpose of repealing the requirement that, at the end of a certain time period, unused money in a local forest conservation fund be returned to certain persons for certain purposes; and generally relating to the use of money in a local forest conservation fund.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Natural Resources

Section 5–1610

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2005 Replacement Volume and 2009 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Natural Resources

5–1610.

- (a) In this section, “Fund” means the Forest Conservation Fund.
- (b) There is a Forest Conservation Fund in the Department.
- (c) Except as provided in subsection (h) of this section, if any person subject to this subtitle demonstrates to the satisfaction of the appropriate State or local authority that the requirements for reforestation or afforestation on–site or off–site cannot be reasonably accomplished, the person shall contribute money to the Fund:
 - (1) Until September 30, 2014, at a rate of 30 cents per square foot of the area of required planting; and
 - (2) After September 30, 2014, at a rate adjusted for inflation as determined by the Department annually by regulation.
- (d) Money collected by the State or a local authority under § 5–1608(c) or § 5–1612 of this subtitle for noncompliance with this subtitle or regulations adopted under this subtitle or for noncompliance with a forest conservation plan or the associated 2–year management agreement shall be deposited in the Fund.

(e) (1) The Department shall accomplish the reforestation or afforestation for which the money is deposited within 2 years or 3 growing seasons, as appropriate, after receipt of the money.

(2) Money deposited in the Fund under subsection (c) of this section shall remain in the Fund for a period of 2 years or 3 growing seasons, and at the end of that time period, any portion that has not been used to meet the afforestation or reforestation requirements shall be returned to the person who provided the money to be used for documented tree planting in the same county or watershed beyond that required by this subtitle or other applicable statutes.

(f) (1) (i) Money deposited in the Fund under subsection (c) of this section may only be spent on reforestation and afforestation, including site identification, acquisition, and preparation, maintenance of existing forests, and achieving urban canopy goals, and may not revert to the General Fund of the State.

(ii) Any investment earnings of the Fund shall be credited to the General Fund of the State.

(2) (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) or (iii) of this paragraph, the reforestation or afforestation requirement under this subsection shall occur in the county and watershed in which the project is located.

(ii) If the reforestation or afforestation cannot be reasonably accomplished in the county and watershed in which the project is located, then the reforestation or afforestation shall occur in the county or watershed in the State in which the project is located.

(iii) If the reforestation or afforestation cannot be reasonably accomplished in the county or watershed in which the project is located, then the reforestation or afforestation shall be accomplished through purchase of credits in, establishment, or maintenance of a forest mitigation bank in accordance with regulations of the Department. The Reforestation Fund may not be used to finance administrative activities associated with a mitigation bank and any credits created by the Reforestation Fund may not be sold to compensate for additional forest impacts.

(g) Money deposited in the Fund under subsection (d) of this section may be used by the Department for the purpose of implementing this subtitle.

(h) (1) In lieu of a State Forest Conservation Fund, any local authority with an approved forest conservation program may establish a forest conservation fund, to be administered by the local authority, to allow a payment by any person who has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the local authority that the requirements for reforestation and afforestation on-site and off-site cannot be reasonably accomplished.

(2) The rate shall be the same as the rate established for the State Forest Conservation Fund under subsection (c) of this section.

(i) [Money deposited in the local forest conservation fund under subsection (h) of this section shall remain in the fund for a period of 2 years or 3 growing seasons. At the end of that time period, any portion that has not been used to meet the afforestation or reforestation requirements shall be returned to the person who provided the money to be used for documented tree planting in the same county or watershed beyond that required by this subtitle or other applicable statutes.

(j)] (1) Money deposited in the local forest conservation fund under subsection (h) of this section may only be spent on reforestation and afforestation, including the costs directly related to site identification, acquisition, prepurchase, and preparation, maintenance of existing forests, and achieving urban canopy goals, and may not revert to any other local general fund.

(2) (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) or (iii) of this paragraph, the reforestation or afforestation requirement under this subsection shall occur in the county and watershed in which the project is located.

(ii) If the reforestation or afforestation cannot be reasonably accomplished in the county and watershed in which the project is located, then the reforestation or afforestation shall occur in the county or watershed in the State in which the project is located.

(iii) If the reforestation or afforestation cannot be reasonably accomplished in the county or watershed in which the project is located, then the reforestation or afforestation shall be accomplished through purchase of credits in, establishment, or maintenance of a forest mitigation bank in accordance with regulations of the local forest conservation program. The Reforestation Fund may not be used to finance administrative activities associated with a mitigation bank and any credits created by the Reforestation Fund may not be sold to compensate for additional forest impacts.

[(k)] (J) Money collected by the local authority under § 5-1608(c) of this subtitle for noncompliance with this subtitle or regulations or ordinances adopted under this subtitle for noncompliance with a forest conservation plan or the associated 2-year management agreement shall be deposited in the local fund. The rate shall be 30 cents per square foot of the area found to be in noncompliance with the required forest conservation.

[(l)] (K) Money deposited in a local forest conservation fund under subsection [(k)] (J) of this section may be used by the local authority for purposes related to implementing this subtitle.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2010.

Approved by the Governor, May 4, 2010.