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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 372 (Substitute S-1)
Sponsor: Senator Patricia L. Birkholz
Committee: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs

Date Completed: 4-29-03

CONTENT

The bill would add Part 360 to the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to require the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), in conjunction with the Department of Natural Resources, to administer an "Adopt-A-Watershed Program" in which volunteer groups would participate in cleanup, conservation, and pollution prevention activities.

The bill would define "watershed" as that part of the drainage area of a body of water located within the State.

The Program would have to be directed primarily toward encouraging and facilitating the involvement of volunteer groups in protecting bodies of water through watershed-based cleanup, pollution prevention, and conservation activities; and assisting volunteer groups in selecting a specific watershed in which to conduct these activities. The Program also would have to include public informational activities.

The DEQ would have to administer the Program in conjunction and cooperation with other State programs designed to protect water resources. In doing so, the Department would have to ensure that the scope of the Program did not overlap or conflict with other similar water quality programs it was administering. The DEQ also would have to seek funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and other available funding sources to administer the Program.

The DEQ could enter into agreements with volunteer groups to implement the Program. An agreement would have to identify the watershed and describe the group's responsibilities, including all of the following: cleanup, pollution prevention, and conservation activities in the watershed; programs, seminars, and other educational and promotional activities; environmental testing and monitoring activities in the watershed; and fund-raising.

In implementing the Program, the DEQ could provide volunteer groups with funding; support personnel; environmental testing and monitoring equipment; signs identifying the watershed and volunteer group; and training materials and other educational and promotional material.

The DEQ would have to provide volunteer groups with data information sheets, and request that the groups record the following information on the sheets: the specific location of the watershed; wildlife in the watershed; the group's environmental testing and monitoring activities; the group's cleanup, pollution prevention, and conservation activities; and other information that would assist the Department in administering the Program.

The DEQ would have to compile information from the data information sheets and include it in an annual report on the implementation and progress of the Program. The Department would

have to provide a copy of the report to the Governor, Senate, and House of Representatives, post the report on a website, and make copies of the report available to the public upon request.

The DEQ could promulgate rules to implement the Program.

The bill states a legislative intent to do both of the following:

- "Encourage a watershed management approach in caring for the water resources of the state. Since water flowing throughout a watershed drains into the same body of water, pollution sources throughout the watershed can affect water quality in that body of water. Shifting the focus to watershed management provides a stable foundation for confronting the source or sources of persistent water quality issues."
- "Encourage the meaningful involvement of the public in protection and restoration efforts. A watershed approach encourages regional awareness and support for protection of water resources, while streamlining the workload and saving time and money."

Proposed MCL 324.36001-324.36007

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

This bill would create a new program within the Department of Environmental Quality. While most of the work would be completed by volunteer groups, the Department would serve in an administrative role, which would require staff time and materials. The bill states that the Department "may provide" funding, support personnel, equipment, signs, training, and educational materials for the program. No funding would be available unless an appropriation were made, and existing resources would have to be used for the other activities. The level of support services provided by the Department would depend upon the agreements between the Department and each volunteer group. The bill would direct the Department to seek funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency or other sources for administration of the program.

Fiscal Analyst: Jessica Runnels

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.