

LEGISLATIVE SERVICES AGENCY
OFFICE OF FISCAL AND MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS
FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

LS 6685
BILL NUMBER: SB 224

NOTE PREPARED: Jan 27, 2026
BILL AMENDED: Jan 27, 2026

SUBJECT: Department of Natural Resources.

FIRST AUTHOR: Sen. Glick

BILL STATUS: CR Adopted - 1st House

FIRST SPONSOR:

FUNDS AFFECTED: **GENERAL**
 DEDICATED
 FEDERAL

IMPACT: State & Local

Summary of Legislation: *(Amended) Various Provisions:* The bill defines various terms. It amends and removes various definitions. It makes various changes to Natural Resources Commission (NRC) procedures. It makes various changes to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) powers and duties. It allows the Division of Water to perform certain functions on behalf of the NRC. It requires the NRC to coordinate with the DNR for purposes of a reporting requirement regarding conservancy districts. It removes the Hometown Indiana Grant Program.

Boating and Off-Road: The bill amends various boating and wakeboard regulations. It raises the financial threshold for certain actions in a boating accident from \$750 to \$2,000. It raises the financial threshold for certain actions in an off-road vehicle accident from \$750 to \$2,500.

Landowner Liability for Recreational Use: The bill establishes various restrictions on landowner liability to recreational users. It provides that various restrictions on landowner liability do not apply to a parcel of land assessed as residential land.

Fish and Wildlife: The bill removes the penalty for a person who acts as a hunting guide without a guide license. It makes conforming changes.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026.

Explanation of State Expenditures: *(Revised) Summary:* The bill makes various changes that could impact expenditures or workload indeterminately. The changes should be able to be accomplished using existing staff and resources.

Additional Information:

Provisions Potentially Increasing Expenditures or Workload:

(Revised) Various Provisions: The bill requires the Division of Water, on behalf of the NRC, to hold the

public hearing required for a proposed watershed development commission or conservancy district. The bill specifies a NRC meeting or public hearing is subject to the Open Door Law (IC 5-14-1.5). The bill requires the DNR Director to adopt provisional rules, interim rules, and approve for preliminary adoption regular administrative rules for readoption that do not contain changes. The bill expands IC 14-11-4 (procedures governing certain licenses) to apply to the article regulating levees, dams, and drainage and to apply to the chapter regulating navigable waterways. These procedures include requirement about public hearings and notices to owners of real property that is adjacent to the affected real property.

Provisions Potentially Decreasing Expenditures or Workload:

(Revised) Limits on Liability for Recreational Use: The bill reduces the state's liability when a person, or their property, is injured on state-owned land, which could decrease potential future expenditures.

Boating and Off-Road Accidents: The bill could minimally reduce workload for the Law Enforcement Division of the DNR, and the Indiana State Police, as it raises the financial threshold for property damages in a boating accident (increased from \$750 to \$2,000) and an off-road vehicle accident (increased from \$750 to \$2,500), which determine when an accident needs to be reported to law enforcement.

Potentially No Impact:

Various Provisions: The bill repeals the Hometown Indiana Grant Program. This program is not currently funded.

Explanation of State Revenues: *(Revised) Court Fee Revenue:* The bill could impact the number of civil cases that are filed indeterminately. It removes the limits to liability for *residential* landowners when a person is injured on their property, which could increase civil cases. However, it expands limits to liability for other landowners when a person is injured on their property, providing that the landowner does not assume responsibility or incur liability for the condition of the land and adding the purposes of exercising and cycling to the list of recreational activities for which a person would be on the land.

The bill also repeals the Class B infraction for operating as a hunting guide without a hunting guide license. This violation would now be Class C infractions or Class C misdemeanors (knowing or intentional violations) under general fish and wildlife violation statutes. Any impact from this change should be minimal.

Court fee revenue per case ranges from \$85.50 to \$138, depending on whether the offense is an infraction, a misdemeanor/felony, or the case is a civil and depends on whether the case is filed in a court of record or a municipal court. The following linked documents describe the fees and revenue distribution for -
Infractions and criminal cases: [Court fees imposed in criminal, juvenile, and civil violation cases](#).
Civil cases: [Court fees imposed in civil, probate, and small claims cases](#).

Explanation of Local Expenditures: *(Revised) Court Caseloads:* The bill could impact court caseload indeterminately by removing limits to liability for *residential* landowners and expanding limits to liability for other landowners.

(Revised) Limits on Liability for Recreational Use: The bill reduces a local unit's liability when a person, or their property, is injured on their land, which could decrease potential future expenditures.

(Revised) Penalty Provisions: A Class C misdemeanor is punishable by up to 60 days in jail.

Explanation of Local Revenues: *(Revised) Court Fee Revenue:* The bill could impact the number of civil cases that are filed indeterminately by removing limits to liability for *residential* landowners and expanding limits to liability for other landowners. The bill also increases the offense of operating without a hunting guide license from a Class B infraction to a Class C infraction or Class C misdemeanor. (See also *Explanation of State Revenue*).

The amounts of court fee revenue per case depends on whether the offense is an infraction or a misdemeanor/felony, or the case is a civil and depends on whether the case is filed in a court of record or a municipal court. The following linked documents describe the fees and revenue distribution for - Infractions and criminal cases: [Court fees imposed in criminal, juvenile, and civil violation cases](#). Civil cases: [Court fees imposed in civil, probate, and small claims cases](#).

State Agencies Affected: Attorney General, Department of Natural Resources, Indiana State Police, Natural Resources Commission.

Local Agencies Affected: Trial courts, city and town courts, local law enforcement agencies.

Information Sources:

<https://www.railstotrails.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Legal-Research-Digest-Liability-Aspects-of-Bikeways.pdf>.

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