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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 744 (Substitute S-1)
Sponsor: Senator Patricia L. Birkholz
Committee: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs

Date Completed: 10-28-03

CONTENT

The bill would amend Part 25 (Environmental Education) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to require the establishment of the Teacher Environmental and Conservation Honors (T.E.A.C.H.) program to recognize Michigan teachers who demonstrate teaching excellence in K-12 environmental education; and provide that an award could include a grant of up to \$5,000 for use in the implementation of environmental education projects.

The Coordinator of Environmental Education within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would have to establish and administer the T.E.A.C.H. award and the corresponding grant program. For fiscal years ending September 30, 2004, 2005, and 2006, \$50,000 from the Environmental Education Fund would have to be used each year for the grants. (The Fund consists of 25% of civil fines collected annually under Part 31 (Water Resources Protection), Part 111 (Hazardous Waste Management) and Part 115 (Solid Waste Management), and is capped at \$150,000 per fiscal year.)

Nominations for awards would have to be submitted to the Coordinator in a manner required by the Coordinator and contain information he or she required. Any person could nominate an eligible teacher for a T.E.A.C.H. award. "Eligible teacher" would mean an individual who taught environmental education to K-12 aged youth in a public or private school, or through a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

A T.E.A.C.H. award recipient also would be eligible for a grant to implement a specific environmental education project. A grant application would have to be submitted at the same time as the nomination, and include a specific project proposal describing how the grant would be used. A grant would have to be used for the implementation of an environmental education project that focused on providing a learning experience for students to become better stewards of the State's natural resources. The maximum amount of a grant would be \$5,000, but award recipients would be eligible to receive more than one grant. Environmental education projects in any of the following areas would have to be considered for grants: Great Lakes or water quality, land conservation, and air quality.

The Coordinator would have to attempt to provide for an equitable distribution of T.E.A.C.H. awards given to teachers from all parts of the State, and an equitable distribution of grants to teachers from organizations and schools of varying sizes.

From among the T.E.A.C.H. award recipients, each year the Coordinator would have to select one to be honored as the State's "Environmental Education Teacher of the Year". The Coordinator would have to provide appropriate recognition to the recipient of the award.

By October 31, 2005, the DNR would have to prepare and submit to the Legislature a report that evaluated the T.E.A.C.H. award and grant program. The report would have to specify all of the following: the name of each T.E.A.C.H. award recipient and the school where he or she taught on the date the award was given; the amount of each grant awarded and how it was used; and the DNR's evaluation of the T.E.A.C.H. award and grant program, and whether they should be continued.

MCL 324.2505

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would not increase or decrease revenue to the State, but would divert \$50,000 of annual revenue in the Environmental Education Fund to a new award program for three years. The Fund receives \$150,000 annually from selected civil fines and is used to operate a clearinghouse of environmental education materials and make them available to educators in the State.

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.