

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 355

(Delegate Schulz, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Natural Resources - Hunting - Junior Deer Hunt

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a junior deer hunt on a consecutive Saturday and Sunday during a deer hunting season via regulation, by July 1 annually. A junior deer hunt may not occur on a Sunday in a county that does not authorize deer hunting on that Sunday. Individuals may participate in the junior deer hunt if they (1) are younger than age 17; (2) possess a valid hunting license or are exempt from license requirements; and (3) are accompanied by a person who meets specified requirements. The bill authorizes junior deer hunt participants to use a firearm to hunt deer on the days of the hunt.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2011.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: DNR establishes the open season to hunt forest and upland game birds and mammals by regulation each year. DNR may adopt regulations to enlarge, extend, restrict, or prohibit hunting wildlife. There are three seasons to hunt deer in Maryland: deer bow hunting season, deer firearms season, and deer muzzle loader season.

With specified exceptions, hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited. Among the exceptions, in Allegany, Calvert, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, a person may hunt deer on private property with a bow and arrow or crossbow during open season on the last three Sundays in October and the second Sunday in November.

In Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties, individuals are authorized to hunt deer on private property on the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November and each Sunday in the deer firearms season.

In addition, DNR may allow deer hunting on private property on the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November and the first Sunday of the deer firearms season. This provision, however, does not apply in Baltimore, Carroll, Howard, and Prince George's counties and in Baltimore City.

Current regulations establish junior deer hunt days on Saturday, November 13, 2010, and Saturday, November 12, 2011. On these two days, white-tailed and sika deer firearms hunting is open exclusively to hunters who are (1) younger than age 17; (2) possess a valid hunting license or are exempt from license requirements; and (3) accompanied by an adult who is unarmed, licensed, or exempt from license requirements and at least age 21.

Background: Because white-tailed deer thrive in habitat that is composed of woods and openings and because hunter access in those areas is limited, suburban development has provided excellent deer habitat in the State, resulting in an escalation of deer populations in suburban areas. Higher populations of deer can lead to a greater number of negative interactions with suburban residents such as deer-vehicle collisions and vegetation damage.

According to DNR, regulated hunting remains the most cost-effective deer population control mechanism available throughout most of the State, and Sunday hunting has contributed positively to managing the State's white-tailed deer population in the 19 counties where it is now permitted.

Between 5,000 and 6,000 junior hunters harvest approximately 2,000 deer during a Saturday junior deer hunt. DNR advises that increased hunting opportunities help reduce the deer population and also acknowledges the importance of Sunday hunting in years when poor weather conditions are experienced on preceding Saturdays. Based on typical Sunday firearms hunting trends, DNR estimates the bill may result in the harvest of an additional 300 to 400 deer each year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 21, 2011
mlm/lgc Revised - House Third Reader - March 17, 2011

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