

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 860 (Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo, *et al.*)  
Environmental Matters

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Natural Resources - Baiting Deer - Restrictions

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This bill prohibits a person from using food, salt, or other mineral-based attractants for the purpose of attracting deer, unless the person is engaged in lawful hunting activities or population control activities authorized by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The bill may not be construed to limit DNR's authority to restrict the use of bait in chronic wasting disease management areas. A person violating the provisions of the bill is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction is subject of a fine of up to \$500, with costs imposed in the discretion of the court.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2014.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Potential minimal increase in general fund revenues due to the bill's penalty provision for those cases heard in the District Court. No effect on expenditures; the Natural Resources Police can enforce the bill with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Baiting deer is legal, except on State-owned or State-controlled properties, or areas where it is specifically prohibited due to chronic wasting disease (a portion of Allegany County).

**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.

DNR advises that a 2012 telephone survey of Maryland residents, conducted by Responsive Management, Inc., indicated that 40% of respondents had experienced problems with wildlife in their neighborhood or on their property within the past five years. Deer was the primary species causing problems to these respondents. Damage to gardens, yards, and agricultural crops were the main problems caused by deer as identified in the survey.

The 2012 survey also estimated that 3% of Maryland residents have a vehicle collision with deer in a single year. Vehicles struck an estimated 31,300 deer in Maryland last year. The insurance industry estimates that each deer-vehicle collision results in an average of about \$3,400 in collision damage. The industry projects total annual damage in Maryland due to deer-vehicle collisions at \$106 million.

DNR's toll-free nuisance wildlife hotline, operated under contract by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, received 330 complaints about deer from October 1, 2011, through September 30, 2012. Over 80% of those calls were from metropolitan counties.

The 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation estimated that 1.2 million people participated in wildlife watching around their homes in Maryland. The 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation survey estimated that approximately \$14.8 million was spent on food for wildlife other than birds, including, squirrels, raccoons, deer, and other mammals.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 16, 2014  
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