

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 890 (Delegates O'Donnell and Holmes)
Environmental Matters

Natural Resources - Deer Hunting - Sundays

This emergency bill expands the authority of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow deer hunting on private property in all counties except Baltimore, Howard, and Prince George's counties and Baltimore City by authorizing Sunday deer hunting from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year. The bill also repeals provisions of law that authorize a person to hunt deer on specified Sundays in specified counties. Currently, only in Carroll County are individuals authorized to hunt deer on Sundays on private property from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year

Fiscal Summary

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

Local Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect local operations for 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, Caroline, Carroll, Charles,

Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Queen Anne's, 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, Caroline, Charles, Harford, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, and Worcester 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, Howard, and Prince George's counties and in Baltimore City. In Carroll County, DNR may authorize individuals to hunt deer on Sundays on private property from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year.

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 20 counties where it is now permitted.

Hunters have harvested over 42,000 deer on Sundays since becoming a legal hunting day in 2003. Deer hunters harvested 6,255 deer on Sundays during the 2012-2013 hunting season and will harvest approximately that many again during the 2013-2014 season. Archery hunters harvested 1,172 deer on Sundays during the 2012-2013 hunting season, while firearm hunters harvested 4,169 deer on Sundays. Junior hunters harvested 914 deer on the Sunday of the Junior Hunt Weekend. The Sunday firearms harvest typically represents about 10% to 15% of the total two-week firearms harvest each year in those counties that permit Sunday hunting.

DNR estimates that the bill could result in the harvest of 1,200 to 2,400 additional deer in all counties except Baltimore, Howard, and Prince George's counties and Baltimore City each year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1518 of 2010 received an unfavorable report from the House Environmental Matters Committee.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 16, 2014
mc/lgc

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