

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 473

(Senator Edwards, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

Frederick County - Deer Hunting - Sundays

This bill expands the authority of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow deer hunting on Sundays in Frederick County by allowing deer hunting from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year on specified private property and public land that is designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2014.

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 or finances.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

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, individuals are 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.

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 600 to 750 additional deer on Sundays in Frederick County each year.

Small Business Effect: Authorizing additional deer hunting in Frederick County may have a potential meaningful economic impact on certain types of businesses in that county. DNR estimates that deer hunters in the State spent more than \$100 million on food, lodging, equipment, and transportation in 2006, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that, in 2011, the average hunter in Maryland spent \$49 per hunting day on trip-related expenditures and \$9.67 on ammunition.

In addition to businesses directly affected by hunting, the bill may also affect several other types of businesses. Most farms, for example, are small businesses. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service estimated that Maryland deer caused \$7.7 million in agricultural damage statewide, and that in the North Central region of Maryland, where Fredrick County is located, deer caused 80% of the \$4.3 million in wildlife-related crop damage. Based on past estimates of crop damage losses, DNR estimates that an individual deer causes \$33.05 in agricultural damage annually. To the extent that the bill reduces crop damage, farmers benefit.

The bill may also affect vehicle owners and businesses involved in the repair of vehicles. DNR estimates that there were 31,300 deer-vehicle collisions in 2013 and that the average cost per collision is \$3,400. Reducing the deer population in the affected county will likely reduce the number of deer-vehicle collisions, which will have a positive impact on vehicle owners and a corresponding negative impact on vehicle repair businesses.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 432 (Delegate Beitzel, *et al.*) - Environmental Matters.

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

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