

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 401

(Senators Waugh and Middleton)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environment and Transportation

Charles County and St. Mary's County - Deer Management Permit - Firearms

This bill authorizes a deer management permittee in Charles and St. Mary's counties to use a shotgun or breech loading center fired rifle approved by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to hunt deer *throughout the year*, including all deer hunting seasons, in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill does not directly affect governmental operations or finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal overall, but potential meaningful impact to farmers in Charles and St. Mary's counties from a reduction in crop damage stemming from increased deer harvests under deer management permits.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: In general, 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 muzzleloader season. Deer hunting with archery equipment extends from early September through the end of January. Firearms season is two weeks in November and December starting the

Saturday after Thanksgiving. There is also a two-day firearms season in January. There are two muzzleloader seasons: one in mid-October and a second in late December.

Maryland landowners or agricultural lessees that are experiencing severe economic loss from deer to commercially grown crops (including row crops, truck crops, pasture, nursery stock, orchards, and certain tree plantings) may be eligible to receive a deer management permit. Deer management permits allow the permittee to remove deer from the designated property outside the established deer hunting seasons and/or deer bag limits. These permits are issued by the Wildlife and Heritage Service within DNR.

A hunter with a deer management permit in Charles and St. Mary's counties may use a shotgun or a breech loading center fired rifle approved by DNR to hunt deer throughout *deer season* in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit. Additionally, a deer management permit holder in Charles and St. Mary's counties who leases land for crop cultivation may hunt deer on the leased land in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit. DNR may authorize individuals in Charles and St. Mary's counties to hunt deer on Sundays under a deer management permit.

According to DNR, regulated hunting is the most cost-effective deer population control mechanism available throughout most of the State.

Small Business Effect: Authorizing additional deer hunting in Charles and Dorchester counties may have a potential meaningful economic impact on some farmers in those counties by reducing crop damage. Most farms 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. 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.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Charles and St. Mary's counties, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Legislative Services

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