

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

Senate Bill 1141 (Senator Astle, *et al.*)
 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Natural Resources - Hunting Licenses - Fox Hunting and Chasing

This bill includes in the definition of “hunt,” to chase or pursue a fox, in any manner, whether armed or unarmed. The bill also requires any unarmed person participating in an organized foxhunt to obtain a hunter’s license and applicable stamps or permits by repealing the current law exemption for such an individual.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues for the Wildlife Management and Protection Fund within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) increase by \$7,500 in FY 2017 and by \$89,600 annually thereafter from the sale of additional hunting licenses. DNR can issue the additional hunting licenses and enforce the bill with existing budgeted resources; thus, expenditures are not directly affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
SF Revenue	\$7,500	\$89,600	\$89,600	\$89,600	\$89,600
Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	\$7,500	\$89,600	\$89,600	\$89,600	\$89,600

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

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

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: “Hunt” means to pursue, capture, catch, kill, gig, trap, shoot, or attempt to pursue, capture, catch, kill, gig, trap, or shoot, or in any manner reduce any bird or mammal to personal possession. “Hunt” excludes the sport of fox chasing. With certain exceptions, a person may not hunt or attempt to hunt during open season and in any permitted manner any game birds and mammals in the State without a resident or nonresident hunter’s license. Resident and nonresident hunting licenses enable the purchaser to hunt all legal game birds and mammals, including fox, during any appropriate season. In general, unless grandfathered by having obtained a license prior to July 1, 1977, all hunters must obtain a certificate of competency in firearms and hunter safety in order to be eligible to purchase a hunting license.

Generally, in order to hunt or chase a fox, which is a fur-bearing mammal, a resident or a nonresident must first obtain a furbearer permit from DNR. Maryland residents do not need a trapping permit in order to trap furbearers in the State, but must have either an individual furbearer permit or be authorized under a group furbearer permit. A group furbearer permit is only available to a group that is chasing fox, not hunting fox. Nonresidents must have, among other license and permit requirements, a nonresident trapping license to trap furbearers in the State. Any unarmed person participating in an organized foxhunt is exempt from the requirement to obtain a hunter’s license.

Varying fees apply for hunting licenses and stamps. A resident hunting license is \$24.50, a resident senior hunting license is \$5.00, and a resident junior hunting license is \$10.50. A nonresident hunting license is \$130.00, a nonresident three-day hunting license is \$45.00, and a nonresident junior hunting license is \$32.50. An individual furbearer permit is \$5, and a group furbearer permit is \$10.

DNR establishes the open season to hunt forest and upland game birds and mammals, including fur-bearing mammals such as foxes, by regulation each year. DNR may adopt regulations to enlarge, extend, restrict, or prohibit hunting wildlife. The fox hunting and trapping season for the 2016-2017 hunting season varies by county. In Charles and Dorchester counties, the season is year round. In Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne’s, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, the season is November 15, 2016, through February 15, 2017. For Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George’s, St. Mary’s, and Washington counties, the season is November 1, 2016, through February 1, 2017. However, unarmed fox chasing can occur year round.

State Revenues: DNR special fund revenues from hunting license fees increase by an estimated \$7,470 in fiscal 2017, which accounts for the bill’s June 1, 2017 effective date, and by an estimated \$89,640 annually thereafter from the sale of additional hunting

licenses. The information and assumptions used in calculating the estimate are stated below:

- during the 2015-2016 hunting season, 212 resident group furbearer permits and 29 nonresident group furbearer permits were issued, most of which were for fox chasing;
- although groups can range in size from 2 to 50 people, this estimate assumes that each group contains 10 people;
- the number of group furbearer permits issued each year remains constant, despite the fact that individuals must now purchase a hunting license to participate;
- each person under a group furbearer permit must purchase a hunting license as a result of the bill; and
- DNR issues 2,120 additional resident hunting licenses annually at \$24.50 each and 290 additional nonresident hunting licenses at \$130.00 each.

To the extent the actual number of hunting licenses issued as a result of the bill varies from the above estimate, special fund revenues from license fees vary accordingly. In addition, this analysis does not reflect any fees retained by agents; under current law, an agent is entitled to keep \$1.50 from each hunting license sold by the agent.

Small Business Effect: Any small business that supports individuals who participate in fox chases may be negatively affected to the extent that the bill's requirements reduce participation, although any such impact is speculative. On the other hand, some small businesses that sell hunting licenses may benefit from additional hunting license sales.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1629 (Delegates Beitzel and Carey) - Rules and Executive Nominations.

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

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Analysis by: Kathleen P. Kennedy

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510