

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Enrolled - Revised

House Bill 1427

(Delegate McMillan, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Natural Resources - Apprentice Hunting License - Establishment

This bill establishes a one-time, nonrenewable, apprentice hunting license that allows the purchaser to hunt all legal game birds and mammals in a single season without the purchase of additional stamps (unless the purchaser is hunting migratory game birds or deer during bow and arrow or black powder season). The bill establishes various requirements relating to the license. The apprentice hunting license fee is \$10 for residents and \$20 for nonresidents. A person who has previously been issued any hunting license in Maryland is not eligible for an apprentice hunting license.

This bill takes effect July 1, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues for the Wildlife Management and Protection Fund increase by an estimated \$100,000 annually beginning in FY 2018 from the sale of apprentice hunting licenses and associated license fees. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) can issue the new licenses with existing budgeted resources; thus, expenditures are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
SF Revenue	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A person must satisfactorily complete a short online or electronic course of instruction in competency in firearms and hunter safety that is approved by DNR prior to obtaining an apprentice hunting license. A person may only hunt under the apprentice license if (1) accompanied and directly supervised by a person who is at least age 18 and has a valid resident nonapprentice hunting license and (2) the person accompanying the apprentice hunter maintains close visual and verbal contact with, provides adequate direction to, and is in a position to immediately assume control of the firearm of the apprentice hunting licensee. However, if an apprentice hunting licensee has a certificate of competency in firearms and hunter safety, the licensee may hunt without supervision (unless the licensee is participating in a DNR-approved junior hunt).

Current Law: 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 during any appropriate season without the purchase of additional stamps, unless the purchaser is hunting migratory game birds, wild waterfowl, or deer during bow and arrow season or black powder season, in which case specified stamps are required. 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 for a hunting license.

DNR establishes junior hunt days just for hunters younger than a certain age to hunt accompanied by a mentor. All young hunters participating in the junior hunting days must (1) have completed a hunter education course; (2) possess a valid hunting license (or be exempt from the license requirements); and (3) be accompanied in the field by an individual who:

- is at least age 21;
- possesses a valid Maryland hunting license, or is exempt from the license requirements; and
- is not afield with a firearm, bow, or other hunting device.

Hunters who are age 16 or younger may participate in the junior deer and turkey hunt days if they have completed a hunter education course and possess the printed receipt showing proof of purchase of the valid hunting license, or are exempt from the license requirements and have completed a hunter education course.

Hunters who are age 15 or younger may participate in the junior waterfowl hunt days if they possess a valid hunting license or are exempt from the license requirements. The

hunters must possess the printed receipt showing proof of purchase of the Maryland Migratory Game Bird Stamp.

A hunting license is valid for the period from August 1 through July 31 each year. Funds generated from any license, stamp, application, or permit fee under wildlife provisions in the Natural Resources Article must be credited to the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund and used for the scientific investigation, protection, propagation, and management of wildlife.

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.

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. This has resulted in growing 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. Deer also cause agricultural damage.

According to DNR, regulated hunting is the most cost-effective deer population control mechanism available throughout most of the State and hunting has contributed positively to managing the State's white-tailed deer population.

State Revenues: Special fund revenues for the Wildlife Management and Protection Fund increase by approximately \$100,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2018 due to the sale of the apprentice hunting license and associated fees. This estimate assumes that DNR issues 5,000 resident apprentice hunting licenses annually at \$10 each and 2,500 nonresident apprentice hunting licenses annually at \$20 each.

The estimate assumes that the number of licenses issued each year remains constant.

Small Business Effect: Authorizing the sale of an apprentice hunting license may have a meaningful economic impact on certain types of businesses throughout the State. 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 2011, the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation estimated that hunters in Maryland spent more than \$260 million annually on food, lodging, equipment, and transportation.

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's 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.

The bill may also affect vehicle owners and businesses involved in the repair of vehicles. DNR estimates that there was an average of more than 32,000 deer-vehicle collisions in each of the last five years and that the average cost per collision is \$3,995. The car insurance industry projected total annual damage in Maryland due to deer-vehicle collisions is \$119 million. Reducing the deer population likely reduces the number of deer-vehicle collisions, which has a positive impact on vehicle owners and a corresponding negative impact on vehicle repair businesses.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1223 of 2016, a similar bill, passed the House with amendments but received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Cross File: None.

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