

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader

House Bill 401 (Harford County Delegation)  
Environment and Transportation Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Harford County - Hunting - Deer Management Permits

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This bill allows a person who is hunting under a deer management permit in Harford County 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. Additionally, a permittee who leases State land in Harford County for crop cultivation may hunt deer on the leased land in the locations and under conditions set forth in the permit. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** This bill does not materially affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** The bill does not materially affect local government operations or finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal overall, but potential meaningful impact to farmers in Harford County, as discussed below.

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Analysis

Current Law:

*Hunting Seasons – Generally*

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.

### *Deer Management Permits*

Maryland landowners or agricultural lessees who 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. Regulations adopted in 2015 expanded the circumstances under which a deer management permit may be issued to include significant ecological damage to specified native plant communities. Deer management permits allow the permittee or his/her agent to remove deer from the designated property outside any deer bag limits and/or the established deer hunting seasons, including on any Sunday throughout the year. These permits are issued by the Wildlife and Heritage Service within DNR; there is no permit fee.

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

There were 50 deer management permits issued in Harford County in 2017. A total of 313 deer were harvested that year under the authority of those deer management permits.

**Small Business Effect:** Authorizing additional deer hunting and the use of approved rifles in Harford County may have a potential meaningful economic impact on some farmers in that county 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):** Harford County; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 15, 2019  
sb/lgc Third Reader - March 8, 2019

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Analysis by: Kathleen P. Kennedy

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