

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 847 (Senator Mautz)  
Education, Energy, and the Environment

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Dorchester County - Sunday Hunting - Repeal of Time Restrictions

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This bill repeals existing restrictions on the times during which the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may authorize a person to hunt game birds and game mammals on Sundays in Dorchester County; as a result, in Dorchester County, there are no time restrictions on Sunday hunting. The bill also *repeals existing exemptions* to restrictions on the times during which DNR may authorize a person to hunt deer on Sundays in *Wicomico County*; as a result, all Sunday hunting in *Wicomico County* is authorized only from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

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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:** Minimal overall, but potential meaningful impact on certain small businesses in Dorchester and Wicomico counties.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited in the State, with specified exceptions. For an overview of Sunday hunting laws in the State, please see the **Appendix – Sunday Hunting in Maryland**.

**Small Business Effect:** Authorizing additional Sunday hunting in Dorchester County may have a meaningful positive economic impact on certain types of businesses. However, restricting Sunday deer hunting in Wicomico County may have a meaningful negative

impact on certain types of businesses. 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. In 2011, the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation estimated that hunters in Maryland spend more than \$260 million annually on food, lodging, equipment, and transportation.

In addition to businesses directly affected by hunting, to the extent the bill results in a decrease in the deer population in Dorchester County or an increase in the deer population in Wicomico County, the bill may also affect several other types of businesses, such as farms (due to crop damage caused by deer) and businesses that own or repair vehicles (due to the number of deer-vehicle collisions that may occur).

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years; however, legislation with similar provisions has been proposed. See SB 777 and HB 1118 of 2023.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 1500 (Dorchester County Delegation) - Rules and Executive Nominations.

**Information Source(s):** Dorchester County; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 25, 2024  
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## **Appendix – Sunday Hunting in Maryland**

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### **Sunday Hunting, Generally**

Hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited, with specified exceptions. Chapter 95 of 2020 reorganized and clarified statutory provisions related to Sunday hunting in the State. Chapter 95 also (1) explicitly stated that a person may not hunt on public lands within the State park system on a Sunday and (2) authorized the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to set all of the seasons for Sunday hunting.

### **Game Birds and Mammals on Private Property and Public Land**

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Allegany, Cecil, Garrett, St. Mary's, and Washington counties during the open season for these animals on private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting in Frederick County from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year on private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Dorchester County during the open season for these animals on private property. DNR also may allow Sunday turkey hunting in Dorchester County during the spring turkey hunting season on public land designated for hunting by DNR. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on each Sunday of the deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January, inclusive, or (2) on each Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Calvert, Caroline, Charles, and Queen Anne's counties during the open season for these animals on private property. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on each Sunday of the deer firearms season; (2) on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season; and (3) on each Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Somerset County during the open season for these animals on private property and public land leased to a hunt club. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on each Sunday of the deer firearms season and (2) on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Wicomico County during the open season for these animals on private property and public land designated for hunting by DNR. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on the first Sunday of the deer firearms season and (2) on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Worcester County during the open season for these animals on private property and public land designated for hunting by DNR. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on each Sunday of the deer firearms season and (2) on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season.

### **Deer on Private Property**

*All Seasons:* DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Carroll County in all deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year; (2) in Kent County on each Sunday in all deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. (however, the time restriction does not apply to a participant in the junior deer hunt, on one Sunday in the deer firearms season as designated by DNR, and on each Sunday during the deer bow hunting season and the deer muzzle loader season); (3) in Montgomery County on each Sunday in all deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. (however, the time restriction does not apply to a participant in the junior deer hunt, and on one Sunday in the deer firearms season and the deer bow hunting season as designated by DNR); and (4) in Talbot County on each Sunday in all deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. (however, the time restriction does not apply to a participant in the junior deer hunt, on one Sunday in the deer firearms season as designated by DNR, and on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season).

*Firearms Season:* DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Harford County on each Sunday of the deer firearms season and (2) in Anne Arundel County on the first Sunday of the deer firearms season.

*Bow Season:* DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Harford County on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November of the deer bow season and (2) in Anne Arundel County on the first Sunday in November of the deer bow season.

### **Turkey on Private Property**

DNR may allow Sunday turkey hunting on private property on Sundays during the spring turkey hunting season in Carroll and Kent counties and from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. in Talbot County.

### **Miscellaneous**

*Junior Hunt:* DNR may allow a person who is age 16 or younger and is participating in a junior hunt to hunt on a Sunday.

*Traditional Sunday Hunting:* DNR may allow the following persons to hunt game birds and mammals on a Sunday: (1) a person using State-certified raptors to hunt game birds or mammals during open season for these animals; (2) an unarmed person participating in an organized fox chase; and (3) a person using a regulated shooting ground to hunt pen-reared game birds or tower-released flighted mallard ducks.

*Deer Management Permit Holders:* DNR may allow a person with a deer management permit to shoot deer on any Sunday throughout the year in accordance with the terms of the permit.

### **Express Prohibitions**

In general, a person may not hunt on a Sunday in Baltimore City or Baltimore, Howard, or Prince George's counties. This prohibition in these counties does not apply to the above-described acts of traditional Sunday hunting. In addition, a person with a deer management permit may shoot deer under the permit on a Sunday in these counties. Further, a person may not hunt migratory game birds on a Sunday, and a person may not hunt on public land within the State park system on a Sunday.

## **Background on Deer Hunting in Maryland**

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.