

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 671 (Senator Hafer)
Economic and Environmental Affairs

Public Hunting Lands and Funds - Conversion Prohibited

This bill provides that hunting may not be prohibited on State forest land or Wildlife Management Areas that are purchased with any funds derived from the sale of hunting licenses or permits, nor may such lands be converted into land on which hunting may be prohibited. Further, the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund may not be used for expenditures that are not related to hunting.

The bill is effective July 1, 1997.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Indeterminate effect on State finances as discussed below.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None. The bill would not directly impact small businesses.

Fiscal Analysis

State Effect: A majority of Wildlife Management Areas have been purchased with revenues from hunting licenses and permits. Under this bill, hunting may not be prohibited in these areas. However, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) advises that a few Wildlife Management Areas are partially or completely closed to hunting. In some cases, a determination has been made that the land is most advantageously used for a wildlife refuge and/or research purposes. In others, the size and location of the area has ruled out hunting due to safety considerations. In these cases, it is not clear what DNR would do with the affected acreage, since under the bill's provisions the department could not sell the land if the sale would impinge on hunting opportunities.

The bill also restricts the use of funds in the Wildlife Management and Protection Fund to

expenditures related to hunting. However, this fund receives revenues from sources other than hunting licenses and permits. The fund is currently used for purposes such as scientific investigation, protection, propagation, and management of wildlife. Under the provisions of the bill, many of these activities would need to be alternatively funded.

DNR advises that no State forest lands have been purchased using revenues derived from hunting permits and fees.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fiscal Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 19, 1997

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