

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 656 (Delegates Weir and Guns)

Environmental Matters

Natural Resources - Wild Waterfowl - Blind Sites

This bill amends current law relating to blind sites and blind site licensees. Specifically, it allows a riparian landowner who owns less than 250 yards of continuous shoreline to establish an offshore blind site if no other shoreline is licensed within 125 yards of the blind site. The bill also prohibits a person, while hunting or attempting to hunt wild waterfowl, from possessing shotgun shells that are loaded with shot not approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2000.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential minimal increase in special fund revenues from blind site license fees. Enforcement could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None. The bill's prohibition is already federal law, so small businesses selling shot will not lose any revenue as a result of the bill.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill amends current law to provide that:

- a riparian landowner who owns less than 250 yards of continuous shoreline may establish an offshore blind site if no other shoreline is licensed within 125 yards of the blind site;
- a riparian landowner who owns less than 250 yards of continuous shoreline may not

- locate an offshore blind site closer than 125 yards from the nearest licensed shoreline;
- riparian landowners may lease or assign their rights to license their riparian shoreline;
- all applications to license riparian shoreline must be approved by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in accordance with applicable laws and regulations; and
- reflective material is not required to be displayed or attached to the outside of a stationary blind while it is occupied and being used for hunting.

The bill clarifies current law to specify that a licensee shall have the sole right to establish offshore stationary blinds or blind sites within 300 yards of the licensed shoreline or one-third the distance to the opposite shore, whichever is less. In the Chesapeake Bay in Anne Arundel and Calvert counties, and in Prospect Bay in Queen Anne's County, the licensee is given the sole right to establish offshore stationary blinds or blind sites within 800 yards of the licensed shoreline. The bill also clarifies current provisions relating to conflicts between applicants and the location of required markings on offshore blind sites.

Current Law: Only persons owning at least 250 yards of continuous shoreline may erect an offshore stationary blind or blind site. A riparian owner who owns less than 250 yards of continuous shoreline may erect an offshore stationary blind or blind site if the riparian landowner has the written consent of adjoining riparian landowners to achieve the required 250 yards of continuous shoreline. Riparian owners may lease or assign their rights to an offshore stationary blind or blind site. Without the written permission of the adjacent landowner, riparian owners may not locate an offshore stationary blind or blind site within 125 yards of the property line or where the line would be if it were extended out over the water perpendicular to the shore at the point where the property line reaches the water's edge. Offshore stationary blind sites must be marked with the licensee's name and license number and marked on each side with at least 100 square inches of clearly visible reflective material attached to the stationary blind at least three feet above the high water mark. Federal law prohibits a waterfowl hunter from possessing shotgun shells that are loaded with shot not approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

State Revenues: The bill allows a riparian landowner who owns less than 250 yards of continuous shoreline to establish an offshore blind site if no other shoreline is licensed within 125 yards of the blind site. To the extent that these landowners do not currently have blind site licenses and, as a result of the bill, purchase a blind site license, it could result in an increase in special fund revenues. Current fees for blind site licenses are \$20. However, because these landowners may, under current law, license blind sites with the consent of adjacent landowners, it is reasonable to assume that only a minimal number of landowners would purchase a license as a result of the bill. Accordingly, special fund revenues are anticipated to increase minimally, if at all. License fees are paid into the Wildlife Protection and Management Fund.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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