

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2001 Session

**FISCAL NOTE**

Senate Bill 560 (Senator Colburn, *et al.*)  
Economic and Environmental Affairs

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**Canada Goose Hunting - Season and Bag Limits - Federal Maximums**

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This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in establishing and publishing the annual open season for Canada geese, to conform to the longest season authorized by the federal migratory bird rules and regulations adopted annually by the Secretary of the Interior of the United States. The bag limit for Canada geese must conform to the highest bag limit authorized by those rules and regulations, up to but not to exceed a bag limit of two birds.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** In the short term, potential increase in special and federal fund revenues from additional license and stamp sales.

**Local Effect:** The bill would not directly affect local operations or finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Meaningful.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Annually, DNR must establish and publish the open season, excepting Sundays, for doves, mergansers, woodcock, and wetland game birds, including wild waterfowl, in conformity with the federal migratory bird rules and regulations adopted annually by the Secretary of the Interior of the United States. DNR must also establish and publish by April 25 of each year the bag limits per day for game birds and mammals by regulation for the ensuing year. The bag limits for ducks, geese, brant, railbirds,

woodcock, mergansers, doves, and snipe may conform to the federal migratory bird rules and regulations adopted annually by the Secretary of the Interior of the United States.

**Background:** Each year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) establishes hunting season guidelines for waterfowl consistent with continental, flyway, and regional population status and distribution. These guidelines include the maximum allowable number of hunting days, maximum bag limits, and the earliest and latest dates the season can begin and end. States, however, are allowed to select dates and bag limits from within the guidelines and may establish regulations that are more stringent than the federal guidelines. In Maryland and Delaware, this is significant because the majority of migratory Canada geese for the flyway winter-over in these two states.

In 1994, the USFWS imposed a mandatory moratorium on migratory Canada goose hunting on the Eastern Seaboard. In 1999, the USFWS lifted the moratorium and modified the federal guidelines to allow for a limited six-day hunting season for the Atlantic Population (AP) Canada geese in Maryland and Delaware. The daily bag limit set at that time was one goose per day. The maximum number of geese that could be hunted was 12,500 in Maryland, and 2,700 in Delaware. Although the federal guidelines allowed for minimal hunting, Maryland and Delaware continued the moratorium for AP geese. The hunting of resident Canada geese is allowed.

**State Fiscal Effect:** By removing the State moratorium and establishing the maximum federal guidelines as the State's guidelines for hunting Canada geese (up to a bag limit of two birds), the bill could affect special and federal fund revenues. In the short term, opening the season for migratory Canada geese could result in an increase in the number of hunting licenses and waterfowl stamps purchased. To the extent that this happens, special fund revenues would increase. Hunting license fees vary by type but generally range from \$6.50 to \$120.50. The fee for the State waterfowl stamp is \$6.00. All fees are paid into the Wildlife Management and Protection Fund. Because DNR receives federal funds based in part on the number of licensed hunters in the State, if the bill increases the number of licensed hunters, federal fund revenues will also increase.

**Small Business Effect:** By lifting the State moratorium and establishing the maximum federal guidelines as the State's guidelines for hunting Canada geese (up to a bag limit of two birds), the bill is anticipated to have a meaningful impact on small businesses in areas where waterfowl hunting is popular. Although a precise estimate of the impact cannot be made at this time and is dependent on the actual seasons established by the federal government, at one time the Canada goose hunting industry in Maryland was estimated at \$40 million annually. This estimate, however, was based on longer hunting seasons with higher daily bag limits. According to DNR, in 1996 trip and equipment

expenditures for migratory bird hunting in Maryland were estimated at \$21 million annually.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation was introduced during the 2000 session as SB 630. The bill received an unfavorable report from the House Environmental Matters Committee.

**Cross File:** None.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader – February 28, 2001  
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