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By: **Delegates Weir, Cane, Jennings, and Stull**  
Introduced and read first time: February 11, 2005  
Assigned to: Environmental Matters

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A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources - Hunting - Closure of State Lands**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of Natural Resources to keep certain  
4 land open for hunting unless the Department makes certain findings or except  
5 as required by law; requiring the Department to manage certain land to  
6 support, promote, and enhance hunting opportunities to a certain extent;  
7 requiring the Department to manage certain land to prevent any net loss of  
8 acreage available for hunting opportunities on certain land; requiring the  
9 Department to submit to the General Assembly a certain annual report;  
10 declaring certain findings of the General Assembly; and generally relating to  
11 certain closures of State land to hunting.

12 BY adding to

13 Article - Natural Resources  
14 Section 10-212  
15 Annotated Code of Maryland  
16 (2000 Replacement Volume and 2004 Supplement)

17 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
18 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

19 **Article - Natural Resources**

20 10-212.

21 (A) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES THAT:

22 (1) HUNTING IS AN IMPORTANT AND TRADITIONAL ACTIVITY IN WHICH  
23 14,000,000 AMERICANS WHO ARE AT LEAST 16 YEARS OLD PARTICIPATE;

24 (2) HUNTERS HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE AMONG THE FOREMOST  
25 SUPPORTERS OF SOUND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION PRACTICES  
26 IN THE UNITED STATES;

1           (3)     HUNTERS AND HUNTING ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE DIRECT  
2 ASSISTANCE TO WILDLIFE MANAGERS AND ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS OF FEDERAL,  
3 STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS;

4           (4)     FEES FOR HUNTING LICENSES, PERMITS, AND STAMPS, AND TAXES  
5 ON GOODS USED BY HUNTERS, HAVE GENERATED BILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR  
6 WILDLIFE CONSERVATION, RESEARCH, AND MANAGEMENT;

7           (5)     HUNTING IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF EFFECTIVE WILDLIFE  
8 MANAGEMENT, AS IT IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR REDUCING CONFLICTS BETWEEN  
9 PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE AND PROVIDES INCENTIVES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF  
10 WILDLIFE, HABITATS, AND ECOSYSTEMS ON WHICH WILDLIFE DEPENDS; AND

11          (6)     HUNTING IS AN ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE ACTIVITY THAT  
12 OCCURS AND CAN BE PROVIDED FOR ON STATE PUBLIC LANDS WITHOUT ADVERSE  
13 EFFECTS ON OTHER USES OF THE LANDS.

14        (B)     THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

15           (1)     KEEP LAND MANAGED BY THE DEPARTMENT OPEN FOR HUNTING  
16 UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT DETERMINES THAT THE LAND MUST BE CLOSED FOR  
17 REASONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY, FISH OR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT, OR HOMELAND  
18 SECURITY, OR AS OTHERWISE REQUIRED BY LAW;

19           (2)     MANAGE LAND UNDER ITS AUTHORITY TO SUPPORT, PROMOTE, AND  
20 ENHANCE HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES TO THE EXTENT AUTHORIZED UNDER STATE  
21 LAW; AND

22           (3)     MANAGE LAND UNDER ITS AUTHORITY TO PREVENT, TO THE  
23 GREATEST PRACTICAL EXTENT, ANY NET LOSS OF ACREAGE AVAILABLE FOR  
24 HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES ON LAND MANAGED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

25        (C)     BY OCTOBER 1, 2006, AND EACH YEAR THEREAFTER, THE DEPARTMENT  
26 SHALL SUBMIT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1246 OF THE  
27 STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, A REPORT DESCRIBING THE LAND MANAGED BY THE  
28 DEPARTMENT THAT:

29           (1)     THE DEPARTMENT CLOSED TO HUNTING DURING THE PREVIOUS  
30 YEAR AND THE REASONS FOR THE CLOSURES; AND

31           (2)     TO COMPLY WITH SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, THE  
32 DEPARTMENT OPENED TO HUNTING DURING THE PREVIOUS YEAR TO COMPENSATE  
33 FOR THE ACREAGE CLOSED AS DESCRIBED UNDER ITEM (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

34        SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
35 October 1, 2005.