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By: **Delegates Weir, Cane, Jennings, and ~~Stull~~ Stull, and Elmore**

Introduced and read first time: February 11, 2005

Assigned to: Environmental Matters

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 21, 2005

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CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 ~~Natural Resources—Hunting—Closure of State Lands~~  
 3 **The Maryland Hunting Heritage Protection Act**

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

13 BY adding to  
 14 Article - Natural Resources  
 15 Section 10-212  
 16 Annotated Code of Maryland  
 17 (2000 Replacement Volume and 2004 Supplement)

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

20 **Article - Natural Resources**

21 10-212.

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

1 (1) HUNTING IS AN IMPORTANT AND TRADITIONAL ACTIVITY IN WHICH  
2 14,000,000 AMERICANS WHO ARE AT LEAST 16 YEARS OLD PARTICIPATE;

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

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

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

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

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

19 (B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

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

24 (2) MANAGE LAND UNDER ITS AUTHORITY TO SUPPORT, PROMOTE, AND  
25 ENHANCE HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES TO THE EXTENT AUTHORIZED UNDER STATE  
26 LAW; AND

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

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

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

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

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