

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 875 (Senator Garagiola)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Montgomery County - Deer Hunting on Private Lands - Sundays

This bill repeals the prohibition regarding deer hunting on private land in Montgomery County on Sundays. The bill also contains study and reporting requirements for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding the effectiveness of Sunday hunting.

The bill sunsets December 31, 2008.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's changes could be handled with existing budgeted resources. Revenues would not be materially affected.

Local Effect: The bill would not significantly affect Montgomery County operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: DNR establishes the open season to hunt forest and upland game birds and mammals by regulation each year. DNR may adopt regulations to enlarge, extend, restrict, or prohibit hunting wildlife. Except for specified persons and under specified conditions, hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is prohibited. Chapter 170 of 2003 authorized DNR to allow for deer hunting on private property on two Sundays (the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November, and the first Sunday of the deer firearms season). The Sunday hunting provisions do not apply in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's,

Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties or in Baltimore City. There are three seasons to hunt deer in Maryland: (1) deer bow hunting season; (2) deer firearms season; and (3) deer muzzle loader season.

Background: Because white-tailed deer thrive in habitat that is composed of woods and openings, and because hunter access in those areas is limited, recent suburban development has provided excellent deer habitat in the State, resulting in a significant increase in the deer population. The high population of deer has resulted in a marked increase in the number of human-deer conflicts, including deer-vehicle collisions, damage to crops and vegetation, and incidents of lyme disease. In addition, numerous research studies have documented negative ecological impacts on native vegetation and other species.

According to DNR, regulated hunting continues to be the most effective and cost-efficient strategy to manage abundant wildlife populations, especially deer. DNR advises that because it has exhausted the other options available, Sunday deer hunting is the last remaining and most important tool that can be employed to increase hunter participation and deer harvest.

According to DNR, the Sunday bow kill typically represents about 2 to 3% of the total bow kill for those counties where Sunday hunting is permitted; the Sunday firearms kill typically represents about 13% of the two-week firearms kill for those counties where Sunday hunting is permitted. DNR estimates that the bill could result in the harvest of an additional 200 to 250 deer.

Small Business Effect: Allowing Sunday deer hunting in Montgomery County could result in increased revenues for small businesses. A 2001 report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that Maryland deer hunting resulted in about \$80 million in retail sales in the State, or \$979 per deer harvested. The projected impact on the State's economy totaled \$156 million, or \$1,862 per deer harvested. In addition to businesses affected by hunting, the bill could also affect several other types of businesses. A 2001 survey by the Maryland Department of Agriculture found that farmers suffered crop losses of \$13.6 million due to deer (or about \$57 for each deer in the population). To the extent that the bill reduces crop damage, farmers would benefit. The bill could also affect vehicle owners, insurance companies, and businesses involved in the repair of vehicles. In 2001, approximately 4,200 deer were reportedly killed by vehicles (or about 1 deer killed for every 57 deer in the population). Each deer-vehicle collision results in an average of \$2,000 in collision damage. Property owners and businesses could also be affected to the extent that the bill reduces damage to ornamental shrubs and gardens.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 939 (Montgomery County Delegation) – Environmental Matters.

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

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ncs/hlb

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