

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 878

(Senators Glassman and Jacobs)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

Harford County - Deer Hunting on Private Property - Sundays

This bill allows for deer hunting on private property in Harford County on the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November and the first Sunday of the deer firearms season.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's changes would not materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: The bill would not materially affect Harford County finances.

Small Business Effect: Potentially meaningful positive impact.

Analysis

Current Law: The Department of Natural Resources 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. There are three seasons to hunt deer in Maryland: • deer bow hunting season; • deer firearms season; and • deer muzzle loader season.

With specified exceptions, hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally 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 Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, and Prince George's counties or in Baltimore City.

In Dorchester, St. Mary's, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, a person may hunt deer on private land with a bow and arrow during open season on the last three Sundays in October and the second Sunday in November.

Background: Because white-tailed deer thrive in habitat that is composed of woods and openings, and because hunter access in those areas is limited, suburban development has provided excellent deer habitat in the State, resulting in a significant increase in the deer population. Higher populations of deer can lead to a greater number of negative interactions with suburban residents such as deer-vehicle collisions and vegetation damage.

According to DNR, regulated hunting remains the most cost effective deer population control mechanism available throughout most of the State. The first five years of Sunday hunting have contributed positively to managing the State's white-tailed deer population in the 17 counties where it is now legal.

Between 99 and 470 deer have been killed each year on the county-specific Sundays when bow hunting is permitted, and between 2,000 and 3,700 deer have been killed each year on the one Sunday when firearms hunting is permitted. During the 2007-2008 hunting season, DNR indicates that approximately 4,000 deer were harvested on Sundays. In the counties in which Sunday hunting is permitted, the Sunday firearms harvest typically represents about 10% to 15% of the total two-week firearms harvest each year.

It is unclear to what extent more deer are harvested in a season because of Sunday hunting. However, DNR notes both the importance of increasing hunting opportunities in order to manage the deer population and the ability of Sunday hunting to increase the deer harvest in years when poor weather conditions are experienced on preceding Saturdays.

Small Business Effect: By providing for Sunday deer hunting in Harford County, the bill could result in an increase in revenues for small businesses. According to DNR, it is estimated that more than \$100 million was spent by deer hunters in the State on food, lodging, equipment, and transportation in 2006. In addition to businesses affected by hunting, the bill could also affect several other types of businesses. Most farms, for example, are small businesses. DNR indicates that a 2005 survey estimated that deer caused nearly \$9 million in agricultural damage in Maryland (about \$38 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 and businesses involved in the repair of vehicles. In 2006, 11,553 deer were reported killed by vehicles (or about one deer killed for every 23 deer in the population). DNR estimates that the total number of deer-vehicle collisions each year is between 20,000 and 30,000, with each collision resulting in an average of \$2,000 in 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: Similar legislation was introduced as SB 188/HB 632 of 2007. HB 632 passed the House but was not acted on by the Senate. SB 188 received a hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee but no further action was taken.

Cross File: HB 1482 (Harford County Delegation) – Environmental Matters.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 10, 2008
mll/lgc

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