

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1446

(Delegates Otto and McDermott)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Somerset and Worcester Counties - Deer Hunting on Private Property - Sundays

This bill authorizes deer hunting on private property in Somerset and Worcester counties (1) with a bow and arrow or crossbow on the first Sunday in November; and (2) on each Sunday of the deer firearms season.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2012.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: The Department of Natural Resources (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. 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. Among the exceptions, in Allegany, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, a person may hunt deer on private property with a bow and arrow or crossbow during open season on the last three Sundays in October and the second Sunday in November.

In Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties, individuals are authorized to hunt deer on private property on the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November and each Sunday in the deer firearms season. In addition, DNR may allow deer hunting on private property on the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November and the first Sunday of the deer firearms season. This provision, however, does not apply in Baltimore, Howard, and Prince George's counties and in Baltimore City.

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 an escalation of deer populations in suburban areas. 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, and Sunday hunting has contributed positively to managing the State's white-tailed deer population in the 20 counties where it is now permitted.

Hunters have harvested over 32,000 deer on Sundays over the past nine years, with 5,854 deer harvested on Sundays during the 2011-2012 hunting season. Over 1,100 deer have been harvested each year on the county-specific Sundays when bow hunting is permitted, and nearly 5,000 deer have been harvested each year on the Sundays when firearms hunting is permitted. 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.

DNR advises that increased hunting opportunities help reduce the deer population and also acknowledges the importance of Sunday hunting in years when poor weather conditions are experienced on preceding Saturdays. DNR estimates that the bill could result in the harvest of 25 to 50 additional deer in Somerset County and 50 to 75 additional deer in Worcester County each year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 20, 2012
mc/lgc

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