

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 196 (Delegate Costa)
Environmental Matters

Anne Arundel County - Turkey Hunting - Fall Season

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a fall turkey hunting season for the portion of Anne Arundel County lying south of MD Route 214. The dates and bag limits must be consistent with the dates and bag limits established for the fall turkey season in Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties.

The bill takes effect July, 1, 2014.

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: 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. Currently, wild turkey hunting takes place during the fall – in only Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties and with a bag limit of one turkey – and the spring. During the 2013-2014 hunting season, turkey hunting is authorized October 26 through November 2, April 18 through May 23, April 12 (junior hunting only), and April 13 (junior hunting on private land in Calvert, Caroline, Charles, and St. Mary’s counties only; on public and private land in Dorchester County).

With specified exceptions, hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited. Among the exceptions, in Allegany and Garrett counties, a person may hunt turkey on the last Sunday in April and the first Sunday in May, except if it is Easter Sunday. Also, turkey hunting is authorized on private property in Calvert, Caroline, Charles, Dorchester, and St. Mary's counties on Sundays during the spring turkey hunting season. In Dorchester County an individual may hunt turkeys on Sundays on public land during the spring turkey hunting season; however, this authorization is limited to public lands designated for hunting by DNR.

Background: Maryland's spring turkey hunting season is generally a five-week period running from mid-April through May. During the spring hunting season, only male wild turkeys may be taken by hunters.

DNR's annual hunter mail survey estimates that the number of turkey hunters in Maryland has generally declined over the last 10 years. Spring turkey hunting participation peaked in the mid-1990s when the season was opened statewide and has gradually declined since then. The most recent hunter mail survey estimates that about 9,500 spring turkey hunters hunted 43,700 days during the 2012-2013 hunting season. Approximately 25% of spring hunters are typically successful in taking at least one turkey.

DNR reports that its Wildlife and Heritage Service is currently working on a regulatory concept that would open a winter turkey season statewide in January 2015. The season would run for one week and share the current fall bag limit of one, either sex turkey. The current concept would prohibit the use of rifles statewide. DNR advises that the concept will be presented to selected members of the public and the outdoor media in January 2014 and that it plans to hold several public meetings and an interactive Internet forum in March 2014.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 192 (Senator Reilly) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 24, 2014
ncs/lgc

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