

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 788

(Eastern Shore Delegation)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Natural Resources - Hunting - Deer Management Permits

This emergency bill makes several changes to deer management permit provisions. The bill (1) authorizes a person hunting deer under a deer management permit to hunt on any Sunday throughout the year, including all deer hunting seasons; (2) grants deer management permit privileges to an *agent* of a holder of a deer management permit; and (3) makes clarifying and stylistic changes related to the bill's provisions.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential minimal operational impact on the Department of Natural Resource (DNR) to the extent that DNR receives an increased number of calls, complaints, and general confusion related to hunting outside of established hunting seasons and on Sundays – particularly in counties where Sunday hunting is not normally permitted, even during hunting seasons. DNR's Natural Resources Police can handle any such increase with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Potential minimal operational impact to the extent that local police receive an increased number of calls, complaints, and general confusion related to hunting outside of established hunting seasons and on Sundays – particularly in counties where Sunday hunting is not normally permitted, even during hunting seasons. It is likely that local police can handle any such increase with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law/Background:

Hunting Seasons – Generally

In general, 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 muzzleloader season. Deer hunting with archery equipment extends from early September through the end of January. Firearms season is two weeks in November and December starting the Saturday after Thanksgiving. There is also a two-day firearms season in January. There are two muzzleloader seasons: one in mid-October and a second in late December.

Sunday Hunting

Hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited, with specified exceptions. In Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Charles, Dorchester, Harford, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, 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, Caroline, Charles, Harford, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, and Worcester counties, a person may 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 statewide (with the exception of Baltimore City and Baltimore, Howard, and Prince George's counties) on the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November, and the first Sunday of the deer firearms season. In Carroll County, DNR may authorize deer hunting on Sundays on private property from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year.

DNR may allow hunting on Sundays in Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties for any game bird or mammal, except migratory and wetland game birds, during the open season for these animals on specified private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR. Additionally, DNR is authorized to allow Sunday deer hunting in Frederick County from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year on specified private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

Deer Management Permits

Maryland landowners or agricultural lessees that are experiencing severe economic loss from deer to commercially grown crops (including row crops, truck crops, pasture, nursery stock, orchards, and certain tree plantings) may be eligible to receive a deer management permit. Deer management permits allow the permittee to remove deer from the designated property outside the established deer hunting seasons and/or deer bag limits. These permits are issued by the Wildlife and Heritage Service within DNR; there is no permit fee.

A hunter with a deer management permit in Charles and St. Mary's counties may use a shotgun or a breech loading center fired rifle approved by DNR to hunt deer throughout the year in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit. Additionally, a deer management permit holder in Charles and St. Mary's counties who leases State land for crop cultivation may hunt deer on the leased land in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit. DNR may authorize individuals in Charles and St. Mary's counties to hunt deer on Sundays under a deer management permit.

DNR advises that in 2015, a total of 1,665 deer management permits were issued statewide. Of the 32,000 deer that were authorized to be hunted under the permits, a total of 8,535 were taken. According to DNR, while regulated hunting is the most cost-effective deer population control mechanism available throughout the State, deer management permits are a valuable tool for farmers.

Small Business Effect: Authorizing additional deer hunting throughout the State may have a potential meaningful economic impact on Maryland farmers by reducing crop damage. Most farms are small businesses. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service estimated that Maryland deer caused \$7.7 million in agricultural damage statewide. Based on past estimates of crop damage losses, DNR estimates that an individual deer causes \$33.05 in agricultural damage annually. To the extent that the bill reduces crop damage, farmers benefit.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 844 (Senator Mathias) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Charles and St. Mary's counties; Department of Natural Resources; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Department of Legislative Services

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