

# SENATE BILL 634

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SB 983/24 – EEE

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CF HB 741

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By: **Senators Lewis Young, M. Washington, and Watson**

Introduced and read first time: January 25, 2025

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Hunting – Nonlead Ammunition, Fox Chasing, and Deer Management**

3 FOR the purpose of altering the definition of “hunt” to include the sport of fox chasing;  
4 establishing the Deer Management Assistance Program in the Department of  
5 Natural Resources; requiring the Department of Budget and Management, on or  
6 before a certain date, to increase the number of full-time employees in the  
7 Department of Natural Resources to administer the Program; requiring the  
8 Department of Natural Resources to require, through a certain phasing-out process,  
9 the use of nonlead ammunition for the hunting of all game species on or before a  
10 certain date; establishing a certain exemption and a certain requirement for any  
11 person who participates in unarmed fox chasing; and generally relating to hunting.

12 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
13 Article – Natural Resources  
14 Section 10–101(a)  
15 Annotated Code of Maryland  
16 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

17 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
18 Article – Natural Resources  
19 Section 10–101(k) and 10–408  
20 Annotated Code of Maryland  
21 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

22 BY adding to  
23 Article – Natural Resources  
24 Section 10–214 and 10–410(q)  
25 Annotated Code of Maryland  
26 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
2 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

3 **Article – Natural Resources**

4 10–101.

5 (a) In this title the following words have the meanings indicated.

6 (k) [(1)] “**Hunt**” means to pursue, capture, catch, kill, gig, trap, shoot, or attempt  
7 to pursue, capture, catch, kill, gig, trap, or shoot, or in any manner reduce any bird or  
8 mammal to personal possession.

9 [(2)] “**Hunt**” excludes the sport of fox chasing.]

10 **10–214.**

11 **(A) IN THIS SECTION, “PROGRAM” MEANS THE DEER MANAGEMENT**  
12 **ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

13 **(B) THERE IS A DEER MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN THE**  
14 **DEPARTMENT.**

15 **(C) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO EDUCATE AND ASSIST FARMERS**  
16 **WITH DEER MANAGEMENT AND HUNTING ON PRIVATE LAND.**

17 **(D) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2026, THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND**  
18 **MANAGEMENT SHALL INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES IN THE**  
19 **DEPARTMENT BY ONE PERMANENT, CLASSIFIED POSITION TO ADMINISTER THE**  
20 **PROGRAM.**

21 10–408.

22 (a) **(1)** In this section[, “**handgun**”] **THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE**  
23 **MEANING INDICATED.**

24 **(2) “HANDGUN” means a firearm:**

25 [(1)] **(I)** With a barrel length not exceeding 6 inches; and

26 [(2)] **(II)** That does not have a scope or an electronic device attached.

27 **(3) “NONLEAD AMMUNITION” INCLUDES:**

1                   **(I) AMMUNITION IN WHICH THERE IS LESS THAN 1% LEAD**  
2 **CONTENT; AND**

3                   **(II) ANY FEDERALLY APPROVED NONTOXIC AMMUNITION.**

4           (b)   (1)   Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the Department  
5 shall:

6                   (i)   Prescribe by regulation the means or weapons for hunting  
7 designated wildlife; and

8                   (ii)   Set forth any restrictions relating to weapons used to hunt  
9 designated wildlife, including the amount [and], size, **AND TYPE** of ammunition for  
10 designated game birds or mammals.

11                   (2)   The Department may not prohibit a licensed bow hunter from openly  
12 carrying a handgun that the hunter is otherwise authorized to carry under § 4-203 of the  
13 Criminal Law Article if the bow hunter:

14                   (i)   Is at least 21 years old;

15                   (ii)   Is hunting in deer management Region A as defined by the  
16 Department's Guide to Hunting and Trapping;

17                   (iii)   Is carrying the handgun for personal protection; and

18                   (iv)   Does not use the handgun to kill wildlife wounded by a vertical  
19 bow or crossbow.

20           (c)   The Department shall make the regulations available for distribution with  
21 each hunting license purchased.

22           (d)   This section does not authorize the Department to restrict the use of firearms  
23 except in the activity of hunting designated wildlife.

24           **(E) (1) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2029, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL REQUIRE**  
25 **THE USE OF NONLEAD AMMUNITION FOR THE HUNTING OF ALL GAME SPECIES.**

26                   **(2) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT**  
27 **THIS SUBSECTION.**

28 10-410.

29           **(Q) ANY PERSON WHO PARTICIPATES IN UNARMED FOX CHASING:**

1           **(1) IS EXEMPT FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF § 10-301.1(A)(1) OF**  
2 **THIS TITLE; AND**

3           **(2) SHALL POSSESS A RESIDENT OR NONRESIDENT FULL SEASON**  
4 **HUNTING LICENSE.**

5           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

6           (a) On or before July 1, 2026, the Department of Natural Resources shall adopt  
7 regulations requiring the use of nonlead ammunition for hunting pen-raised birds on  
8 regulated shooting areas.

9           (b) On or before July 1, 2027, the Department of Natural Resources shall adopt  
10 regulations requiring the use of nonlead ammunition for hunting upland game birds.

11           (c) On or before July 1, 2028, the Department of Natural Resources shall adopt  
12 regulations requiring nonlead ammunition for hunting webless migratory game bird  
13 species and wild turkey.

14           (d) On or before July 1, 2029, the Department of Natural Resources shall adopt  
15 regulations requiring the use of nonlead ammunition for muzzleloaders, rifles, and  
16 shotguns used for hunting deer and any other game species not specified in subsections (a)  
17 through (c) of this section.

18           SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July  
19 1, 2025.