

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 654 (Wicomico County Delegation)
Environment and Transportation

Wicomico County - Sunday Hunting Time Restrictions - Repeal

This bill repeals existing restrictions on the times during which the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may authorize a person in Wicomico County to hunt game birds and game mammals on Sundays on private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR. This authorizes DNR to allow a person to hunt on each Sunday of the game bird and game mammal seasons in Wicomico County on private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR without time restrictions. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

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 overall, but potential meaningful for certain small businesses in Wicomico County, as discussed below.

Analysis

Current Law: Hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited in the State, with specified exceptions. For an overview of Sunday hunting laws in the State, please see the **Appendix – Sunday Hunting in Maryland.**

Small Business Effect: Authorizing additional hunting in Wicomico County may have a meaningful economic impact on certain types of businesses. The 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation conducted by the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service (FWS) indicated that the average hunter in the State spent \$49 per hunting day on trip-related expenditures (food and lodging, transportation, and other trip costs) in 2011, and hunters in the State spent \$50.2 million total on trip-related expenditures and \$264 million on hunting overall in 2011 (including trip-related, equipment, and any other expenditures). While FWS's more recent surveys, in 2016 and 2022, have not included state-specific spending/cost information, if it is assumed that hunting spending/costs in Maryland increased by a similar or greater amount between 2011 and 2022 compared to the increase in national spending/costs during that period, hunters spent at least \$67 per hunting day on trip-related expenditures in 2022.

In addition to businesses directly affected by hunting, to the extent the bill results in a decrease in the deer population in Wicomico County, the bill may also affect several other types of businesses, such as farms (due to a reduction in crop damage) and businesses that own or repair vehicles (due to a reduction in deer-vehicle collisions).

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Wicomico County; Department of Natural Resources; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2025
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Appendix – Sunday Hunting in Maryland

Sunday Hunting, Generally

Hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited, with specified exceptions. Chapter 95 of 2020 reorganized and clarified statutory provisions related to Sunday hunting in the State. Chapter 95 also (1) explicitly stated that a person may not hunt on public lands within the State park system on a Sunday and (2) authorized the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to set all of the seasons for Sunday hunting.

Game Birds and Mammals on Private Property and Public Land

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Allegany, Cecil, Garrett, St. Mary's, and Washington counties during the open season for these animals on private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting in Frederick County from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year on private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Dorchester County during the open season for these animals on private property. DNR also may allow Sunday turkey hunting in Dorchester County during the spring turkey hunting season on public land designated for hunting by DNR. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on each Sunday of the deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January, inclusive, or (2) on each Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Calvert, Caroline, Charles, and Queen Anne's counties during the open season for these animals on private property. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on each Sunday of the deer firearms season; (2) on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season; and (3) on each Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Somerset County during the open season for these animals on private property and public land leased to a hunt club. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on each Sunday of the deer firearms season and (2) on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Wicomico County during the open season for these animals on private property and public land designated for hunting by DNR. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on the first Sunday of the deer firearms season and (2) on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season.

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Worcester County during the open season for these animals on private property and public land designated for hunting by DNR. In general, Sunday hunting may only occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. However, the time restriction does not apply (1) on each Sunday of the deer firearms season and (2) on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season.

Deer on Private Property

All Seasons: DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Carroll County in all deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year; (2) in Kent County on each Sunday in all deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. (however, the time restriction does not apply to a participant in the junior deer hunt, on one Sunday in the deer firearms season as designated by DNR, and on each Sunday during the deer bow hunting season and the deer muzzle loader season); (3) in Montgomery County on each Sunday in all deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. (however, the time restriction does not apply to a participant in the junior deer hunt, and on one Sunday in the deer firearms season and the deer bow hunting season as designated by DNR); and (4) in Talbot County on each Sunday in all deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. (however, the time restriction does not apply to a participant in the junior deer hunt, on one Sunday in the deer firearms season as designated by DNR, and on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season).

Firearms Season: DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Harford County on each Sunday of the deer firearms season and (2) in Anne Arundel County on the first Sunday of the deer firearms season.

Bow Season: DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Harford County on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November of the deer bow season and (2) in Anne Arundel County on the first Sunday in November of the deer bow season.

Turkey on Private Property

DNR may allow Sunday turkey hunting on private property on Sundays during the spring turkey hunting season in Carroll and Kent counties and from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. in Talbot County.

Miscellaneous

Junior Hunt: DNR may allow a person who is age 16 or younger and is participating in a junior hunt to hunt on a Sunday.

Traditional Sunday Hunting: DNR may allow the following persons to hunt game birds and mammals on a Sunday: (1) a person using State-certified raptors to hunt game birds or mammals during open season for these animals; (2) an unarmed person participating in an organized fox chase; and (3) a person using a regulated shooting ground to hunt pen-reared game birds or tower-released flighted mallard ducks.

Deer Management Permit Holders: DNR may allow a person with a deer management permit to shoot deer on any Sunday throughout the year in accordance with the terms of the permit.

Express Prohibitions

In general, a person may not hunt on a Sunday in Baltimore City or Baltimore, Howard, or Prince George's counties. This prohibition in these counties does not apply to the above-described acts of traditional Sunday hunting. In addition, a person with a deer management permit may shoot deer under the permit on a Sunday in these counties. Further, a person may not hunt migratory game birds on a Sunday, and a person may not hunt on public land within the State park system on a Sunday.

Background on Deer Hunting in Maryland

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. This has resulted in growing 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. Deer also cause agricultural damage.