

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 335

(Senators Bailey and Mautz)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Environment and Transportation

Natural Resources - Canada Geese - Bag Limits

This bill establishes that during the migratory Canada goose (Atlantic population) hunting season, the bag limit for all Canada geese in the State, including geese found in the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone and the Atlantic Population Hunt Zone, must conform to the bag limit for Atlantic population Canada geese adopted annually by the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The bill, however, does not apply in Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington counties and the portion of Carroll County geographically west of Route 31 and Route 97. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025, and terminates June 30, 2030.**

Fiscal Summary

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

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

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: Under the Natural Resources Article, a Canada goose is considered a wetland game bird, which is a type of migratory game bird. A “migratory game bird” means any wetland game bird, dove, or woodcock. A “wetland game bird” means brant, coots, ducks, gallinules, geese, mergansers, rails, snipe, and swan. A Maryland migratory game bird stamp, in addition to a hunting license, is required to hunt all migratory game birds.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulations (COMAR [08.03.03.02](#)) establish that the State's seasons, bag limits, and possession limits for migratory game birds conform to regulations adopted by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

Under USFWS's 2024-2025 migratory bird hunting regulations ([89 Fed. Reg. 70,545](#)), apart from special early seasons in September, the Canada goose hunting seasons and bag/possession limits in Maryland are:

- Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone – (1) season (referred to in DNR's guide to hunting and trapping as the Late Resident Canada Goose Season) – November 23 to 29 and December 16 to March 10; (2) bag limit – 5; and (3) possession limit – 15; and
- Atlantic Population Hunt Zone – (1) season (referred to in DNR's guide to hunting and trapping as the Migratory Canada Goose (Atlantic Population) Season) – December 20 to January 4, and January 15 to February 1; (2) bag limit – two; and (3) possession limit – six.

The Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone includes Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, Montgomery, and Washington counties, as well as the western halves of Carroll, Charles, and Prince George's counties.

The Atlantic Population Hunt Zone includes the entire Eastern Shore (Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester counties), as well as Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Harford, Howard, and St. Mary's counties. It also covers the eastern halves of Carroll, Charles, and Prince George's counties.

Small Business Effect: DNR indicates that the higher bag limit in the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone, where the Canada geese are primarily resident geese (the geese in the Atlantic Population Hunt Zone are primarily wintering, migratory geese), is intended to reduce the resident goose population and the damage and complaints caused by the geese. The bill's requirement that the bag limit in the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone be the same as the bag limit in the Atlantic Population Hunt Zone during the Migratory Canada Goose (Atlantic Population) Season, except in Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington counties and part of Carroll County, reduces the number of geese that can be harvested during that time (December 20 to January 4, and January 15 to February 1) in Montgomery County as well as the western halves of Charles and Prince Georges' counties (the remaining area of the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone), potentially negatively affecting small businesses, including farms, that are negatively affected by resident geese.

DNR estimates that, for the portion of the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone within Montgomery County and the western halves of Charles and

Prince George's counties, on average 669 geese were harvested each year and 156 hunters hunted on a combined 618 days each year from 2013 to 2022. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, estimated that resident Canada geese were responsible for \$500,000 in agricultural damage in Maryland.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 42 of 2022.

Designated Cross File: HB 892 (Delegate Jacobs, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 2, 2025

rh/sdk Third Reader - March 26, 2025

Revised - Amendment(s) - March 26, 2025

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