

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 449 (Senator Folden)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Frederick and Washington Counties - Bow Hunting - Openly Carrying
Handguns

This bill specifies that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may not prohibit a licensed bow hunter from openly carrying a handgun that the hunter is otherwise authorized to carry if the bow hunter is (1) hunting in Frederick or Washington counties during deer hunting season and (2) meets specified requirements currently applicable to a bow hunter carrying a handgun while hunting in deer management Region A. **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: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Department of Natural Resources Regulation of Means or Weapons for Hunting

DNR must prescribe by regulation the means or weapons for hunting designated wildlife and establish any restrictions relating to weapons used to hunt designated wildlife, including the amount and size of ammunition for designated game birds or mammals. These requirements do not authorize DNR to restrict the use of firearms except in the

activity of hunting designated wildlife. DNR may not prohibit a licensed bow hunter from openly carrying a handgun that the hunter is otherwise authorized to carry if the bow hunter (1) is at least age 21; (2) is hunting in deer management Region A as defined by the department's *Guide to Hunting and Trapping*; (3) is carrying the handgun for personal protection; and (4) does not use the handgun to kill wildlife wounded by a vertical bow or crossbow.

Restrictions on Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting a Handgun, Generally

With specified exceptions and subject to a range of penalties for violations, a person is generally prohibited from wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun, whether concealed or open, on or about the person. One exception, unless otherwise prohibited, is when a person is issued a handgun permit by the Secretary of State Police, under Title 5, Subtitle 3 of the Public Safety Article. Other exceptions include wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun by a law enforcement officer, specified individuals in the course of employment and military service, and individuals carrying a court order requiring the surrender of the handgun under specified circumstances.

Additional Comments: DNR advises that current law allows bow hunters to carry handguns to protect themselves from bears while hunting in deer management Region A, which includes Allegany and Garrett counties and the western portion of Washington County. The bill expands this authorization to the remainder of Washington and Frederick counties.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 611 and HB 1480 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: HB 511 (Frederick County Delegation) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Frederick and Washington Counties; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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