

SENATE BILL 643

M2

6lr2993
CF 6lr2234

By: **Senator Bailey**

Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2026

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources – Hunting – Management**

3 FOR the purpose of providing that the Department of Natural Resources may authorize the
4 reduction of the deer population on certain property with deer damage using certain
5 methods; altering the time restrictions for Sunday deer hunting in certain counties
6 during deer firearms season; repealing the prohibition against hunting migratory
7 game birds on Sundays and authorizing the Department to allow Sunday hunting
8 for migratory game birds, subject to a certain requirement; repealing certain
9 provisions of law governing Sunday hunting on a county-by-county basis and
10 authorizing the Department to adopt regulations allowing Sunday hunting during
11 game bird and game mammal seasons, subject to a certain standard; and generally
12 relating to hunting management.

13 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
14 Article – Natural Resources
15 Section 10–206 and 10–410(a)
16 Annotated Code of Maryland
17 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

18 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
19 Article – Natural Resources
20 Section 10–410(a)
21 Annotated Code of Maryland
22 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)
23 (As enacted by Section 1 of this Act)

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

26 **Article – Natural Resources**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 10-206.

2 (A) The Department may reduce the wildlife population in any county, election
3 district, or other identifiable area of the State after a thorough investigation reveals that
4 protected wildlife is seriously injurious to agricultural or other interests in the affected
5 area. The method of reducing the wildlife population is at the Department's discretion,
6 except that trapping is preferred whenever feasible. The Department shall dispose of
7 wildlife taken pursuant to the provisions of this section as the Department deems
8 advisable.

9 (B) (1) IN THIS SUBSECTION, "DEER DAMAGE" INCLUDES:

10 (I) WIDESPREAD DAMAGE CAUSED BY DEER, INCLUDING THE
11 ELIMINATION OF FOREST UNDERSTORY, TREE REGENERATION, AND NATIVE
12 PLANTS; AND

13 (II) THE DESTRUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL CROPS OR
14 LANDSCAPING, INCLUDING ORNAMENTAL LANDSCAPING, CAUSED BY DEER.

15 (2) THE DEPARTMENT MAY AUTHORIZE THE REDUCTION OF THE
16 DEER POPULATION ON ANY SINGLE, CONTIGUOUS PROPERTY OF AT LEAST 10 ACRES
17 WHERE THE DEPARTMENT HAS DOCUMENTED DEER DAMAGE.

18 (3) (I) THE METHOD OF REDUCING THE DEER POPULATION:

19 1. IS AT THE DEPARTMENT'S DISCRETION; AND

20 2. SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS
21 PARAGRAPH, MAY INCLUDE THE ISSUANCE OF A PERMIT TO A PROPERTY OWNER, OR
22 THE PROPERTY OWNER'S EMPLOYEE, LESSEE, OR AGENT, TO SHOOT DEER ON THE
23 PROPERTY ON SUNDAYS.

24 (II) A PERMIT ISSUED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I)2 OF THIS
25 PARAGRAPH SHALL PROHIBIT DEER HUNTING ON SUNDAYS DURING DEER
26 FIREARMS SEASON WITHIN 25 YARDS OF A DEPARTMENT TRAIL DESIGNATED FOR
27 EQUESTRIAN USE.

28 (4) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

29 (I) MAP AREAS OF THE STATE TO WHICH A PERMIT MAY APPLY
30 UNDER THIS SUBSECTION; AND

31 (II) MAKE THE MAPS READILY AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC.

1 10–410.

2 (a) (1) (i) The Department may allow a person to hunt on each Sunday of
3 the game bird and game mammal seasons in:

4 1. Allegany County;

5 2. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Calvert
6 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

7 3. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Caroline
8 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

9 4. Cecil County;

10 5. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Charles
11 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

12 6. Subject to subparagraph (iv) of this paragraph, Dorchester
13 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

14 7. Garrett County;

15 8. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Queen
16 Anne's County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

17 9. St. Mary's County;

18 10. Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, Somerset
19 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

20 11. Washington County;

21 12. Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, Worcester
22 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.; and

23 13. Subject to subparagraph (v) of this paragraph, Wicomico
24 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.

25 (ii) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)10 and 12 of this
26 paragraph do not apply:

27 1. On each Sunday of the deer firearms season; and

28 2. On the last three Sundays in October and the first two
29 Sundays in November of the deer bow hunting season.

(iii) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)2, 3, 5, and 8 of this paragraph do not apply:

1. On each Sunday during 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.

(iv) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)6 of this paragraph do not apply:

1. On each Sunday of the deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January, inclusive; and

2. On each Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season.

(v) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)(13) of this paragraph do not apply:

1. **A.** On the first Sunday of the deer firearms season; and

B. ON THE REMAINING SUNDAYS OF THE DEER FIREARMS SEASON, FOR WHICH THE TIME RESTRICTIONS SHALL BE FROM 30 MINUTES BEFORE SUNRISE UNTIL 10:30 A.M. AND FROM 3:00 P.M. UNTIL SUNSET; AND

2. On the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November of the deer bow hunting season.

(2) The Department may allow a person to hunt deer on each Sunday of the deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January, inclusive, in:

(i) Carroll County; and

(ii) Frederick County.

(3) (i) Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the Department may allow a person to hunt deer on each Sunday of the deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. in:

1. Kent County;

2. Montgomery County; and

1 3. Talbot County.

2 (ii) The time restrictions under this paragraph do not apply:

3 1. To a participant in a junior deer hunt authorized under
4 this subtitle;

5 2. **A.** On one Sunday designated by the Department
6 during the deer firearms season; **AND**

7 **B. ON THE REMAINING SUNDAYS OF THE DEER**
8 **FIREARMS SEASON, FOR WHICH THE TIME RESTRICTIONS SHALL BE FROM 30**
9 **MINUTES BEFORE SUNRISE UNTIL 10:30 A.M. AND FROM 3:00 P.M. UNTIL SUNSET;**

10 3. In Kent County, on each Sunday during the deer bow
11 hunting season and the deer muzzle loader season;

12 4. In Montgomery County, on one Sunday designated by the
13 Department during the deer bow hunting season; and

14 5. In Talbot County, on the last three Sundays in October
15 and the first two Sundays in November during the bow hunting season.

16 (4) The Department may allow a person to hunt deer during the deer
17 firearms season:

18 (i) On each Sunday in Harford County; and

19 (ii) On the first Sunday in Anne Arundel County.

20 (5) The Department may allow a person to hunt deer during the deer bow
21 hunting season on:

22 (i) The last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in
23 November in Harford County; and

24 (ii) The first Sunday in November in Anne Arundel County.

25 (6) The Department may allow a person to hunt turkey on each Sunday of
26 the spring turkey hunting season in:

27 (i) Carroll County;

28 (ii) Kent County; and

(iii) Talbot County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.

(7) Notwithstanding any other provision of this subtitle, the Department may allow a person with [a]:

(I) A deer management permit ISSUED UNDER § 10–206(A) OF THIS TITLE to shoot deer on any Sunday throughout the year in accordance with the terms of the permit; AND

(II) A DEER DAMAGE PERMIT ISSUED UNDER § 10–206(B) OF THIS TITLE TO SHOOT DEER ON ANY SUNDAY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE PERMIT.

(8) The Department may allow a person using a State certified raptor to hunt game birds or mammals on each Sunday during the open season for the game birds or mammals.

(9) The Department may allow an unarmed person participating in an organized fox chase to chase foxes on Sunday.

(10) The Department may allow a person shooting pen-reared game birds or tower-released flighted mallard ducks to hunt on Sunday at a regulated shooting ground in accordance with § 10–906 of this title.

(11) The Department may allow a person who is 16 years old or younger to hunt on Sunday if participating in a junior hunt established by the Department in accordance with this subtitle.

(12) Except as provided in paragraphs (8) through (10) of this subsection and subject to paragraph (7) of this subsection, a person may not hunt on Sunday in:

(i) Baltimore City;

(ii) Baltimore County;

(iii) Howard County; or

(iv) Prince George's County.

(13) (I) [A person may not] SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, THE DEPARTMENT MAY ALLOW A PERSON TO hunt migratory game birds on Sunday.

(II) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ALLOW THE FOLLOWING PERSONS TO HUNT MIGRATORY CANADA GEESE (ATLANTIC POPULATION) ON SUNDAYS DURING THE OPEN SEASON:

- 1 1. **JUNIOR HUNTERS;**
- 2 2. **SENIOR HUNTERS;**
- 3 3. **APPRENTICE HUNTERS; AND**
- 4 4. **FULL-TIME STUDENTS WHO HOLD A HUNTING**
- 5 **LICENSE.**

6 (14) A person may not hunt on public land within the State park system on
7 Sunday.

8 (15) (i) The Department may not allow a person to hunt on public land
9 designated for hunting by the Department on Sunday except in:

- 10 1. Allegany County;
- 11 2. Cecil County;
- 12 3. Garrett County;
- 13 4. St. Mary's County;
- 14 5. Washington County;
- 15 6. Dorchester County, for turkey during the spring turkey
- 16 hunting season;
- 17 7. Frederick County, for deer from the first Sunday in
- 18 October through the second Sunday in January of the following year, inclusive;
- 19 8. Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, Somerset
- 20 County, on public land leased to a hunt club from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30
- 21 a.m.;
- 22 9. Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, Worcester
- 23 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.; and
- 24 10. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Wicomico
- 25 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.

26 (ii) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)8 and 9 of this
27 paragraph do not apply:

- 28 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 of the deer bow hunting season.

(iii) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)10 of this paragraph do not apply:

1. A. On the first Sunday of the deer firearms season; and

B. ON THE REMAINING SUNDAYS OF THE DEER FIREARMS SEASON, FOR WHICH THE TIME RESTRICTIONS SHALL BE FROM 30 MINUTES BEFORE SUNRISE UNTIL 10:30 A.M. AND FROM 3:00 P.M. UNTIL SUNSET; AND

2. On the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November of the deer bow hunting season.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Natural Resources

10–410.

(a) [(1) (i) The Department may allow a person to hunt on each Sunday of the game bird and game mammal seasons in:

1. Allegany County;

2. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Calvert County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

3. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Caroline County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

4. Cecil County;

5. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Charles County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

6. Subject to subparagraph (iv) of this paragraph, Dorchester County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

7. Garrett County;

1 8. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Queen
2 Anne's County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

3 9. St. Mary's County;

4 10. Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, Somerset
5 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;

6 11. Washington County;

7 12. Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, Worcester
8 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.; and

9 13. Subject to subparagraph (v) of this paragraph, Wicomico
10 County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.

11 (ii) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)10 and 12 of this
12 paragraph do not apply:

13 1. On each Sunday of the deer firearms season; and

14 2. On the last three Sundays in October and the first two
15 Sundays in November of the deer bow hunting season.

16 (iii) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)2, 3, 5, and 8 of this
17 paragraph do not apply:

18 1. On each Sunday during the deer firearms season;

19 2. On the last three Sundays in October and the first two
20 Sundays in November during the deer bow hunting season; and

21 3. On each Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season.

22 (iv) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)6 of this paragraph
23 do not apply:

24 1. On each Sunday of the deer hunting seasons from the first
25 Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January, inclusive; and

26 2. On each Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season.

27 (v) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)(13) of this
28 paragraph do not apply:

29 1. A. On the first Sunday of the deer firearms season; and

1 B. On the remaining Sundays of the deer firearms season, for
2 which the time restrictions shall be from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. and
3 from 3:00 p.m. until sunset; and

4 2. On the last three Sundays in October and the first two
5 Sundays in November of the deer bow hunting season.

6 (2) The Department may allow a person to hunt deer on each Sunday of the
7 deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in
8 January, inclusive, in:

9 (i) Carroll County; and

10 (ii) Frederick County.

11 (3) (i) Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the Department
12 may allow a person to hunt deer on each Sunday of the deer hunting seasons from 30
13 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. in:

14 1. Kent County;

15 2. Montgomery County; and

16 3. Talbot County.

17 (ii) The time restrictions under this paragraph do not apply:

18 1. To a participant in a junior deer hunt authorized under
19 this subtitle;

20 2. A. On one Sunday designated by the Department
21 during the deer firearms season; and

22 B. On the remaining Sundays of the deer firearms season, for
23 which the time restrictions shall be from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. and
24 from 3:00 p.m. until sunset;

25 3. In Kent County, on each Sunday during the deer bow
26 hunting season and the deer muzzle loader season;

27 4. In Montgomery County, on one Sunday designated by the
28 Department during the deer bow hunting season; and

29 5. In Talbot County, on the last three Sundays in October
30 and the first two Sundays in November during the bow hunting season.

(4) The Department may allow a person to hunt deer during the deer firearms season:

(i) On each Sunday in Harford County; and

(ii) On the first Sunday in Anne Arundel County.

(5) The Department may allow a person to hunt deer during the deer bow hunting season on:

(i) The last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November in Harford County; and

(ii) The first Sunday in November in Anne Arundel County.

(6) The Department may allow a person to hunt turkey on each Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season in:

(i) Carroll County;

(ii) Kent County; and

(iii) Talbot County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.]

(1) (I) SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS ALLOWING PERSONS TO HUNT ON SUNDAYS DURING THE GAME BIRD AND GAME MAMMAL SEASONS.

(II) THE REGULATIONS ADOPTED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION SHALL AT A MINIMUM ALLOW SUNDAY HUNTING ON THE HOURS AND DAYS AUTHORIZED FOR SUNDAY HUNTING BY SPECIES, HUNTING SEASON, AND COUNTY ON JUNE 30, 2027.

[(7)] (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this subtitle, the Department may allow a person with:

(i) A deer management permit issued under § 10–206(a) of this title to shoot deer on any Sunday throughout the year in accordance with the terms of the permit; and

(ii) A deer damage permit issued under § 10–206(b) of this title to shoot deer on any Sunday throughout the year in accordance with the terms of the permit.

[(8)] (3) The Department may allow a person using a State certified raptor to hunt game birds or mammals on each Sunday during the open season for the game birds or mammals.

1 **[(9)] (4)** The Department may allow an unarmed person participating in
2 an organized fox chase to chase foxes on Sunday.

3 **[(10)] (5)** The Department may allow a person shooting pen-reared game
4 birds or tower-released flighted mallard ducks to hunt on Sunday at a regulated shooting
5 ground in accordance with § 10-906 of this title.

6 **[(11)] (6)** The Department may allow a person who is 16 years old or
7 younger to hunt on Sunday if participating in a junior hunt established by the Department
8 in accordance with this subtitle.

9 **[(12)] (7)** Except as provided in paragraphs **[(8)] (3)** through **[(10)] (5)** of
10 this subsection and subject to paragraph **[(7)] (2)** of this subsection, a person may not hunt
11 on Sunday in:

- 12 (i) Baltimore City;
- 13 (ii) Baltimore County;
- 14 (iii) Howard County; or
- 15 (iv) Prince George's County.

16 **[(13)] (8)** (i) Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the
17 Department may allow a person to hunt migratory game birds on Sunday.

18 (ii) The Department shall allow the following persons to hunt
19 migratory Canada geese (Atlantic population) on Sundays during the open season:

- 20 1. Junior hunters;
- 21 2. Senior hunters;
- 22 3. Apprentice hunters; and
- 23 4. Full-time students who hold a hunting license.

24 **[(14)] (9)** A person may not hunt on public land within the State park
25 system on Sunday.

26 **[(15)] (i)** The Department may not allow a person to hunt on public land
27 designated for hunting by the Department on Sunday except in:

- 28 1. Allegany County;

2. Cecil County;
3. Garrett County;
4. St. Mary's County;
5. Washington County;
6. Dorchester County, for turkey during the spring turkey hunting season;
7. Frederick County, for deer from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year, inclusive;
8. Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, Somerset County, on public land leased to a hunt club from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.;
9. Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, Worcester County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.; and
10. Subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, Wicomico County, from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.

(ii) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)8 and 9 of this paragraph do 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 of the deer bow hunting season.

(iii) The time restrictions under subparagraph (i)10 of this paragraph do not apply:

1. A. On the first Sunday of the deer firearms season; and
- B. On the remaining Sundays of the deer firearms season, for which the time restrictions shall be from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. and from 3:00 p.m. until sunset; and
2. On the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November of the deer bow hunting season.]

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, on or before December 1, 2029, the Department of Natural Resources shall:

1 (1) report to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the
2 State Government Article, on the effectiveness of this Act on deer management and
3 balancing stakeholder interests; and

4 (2) include in the report input from all relevant stakeholders.

5 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section 2 of this Act shall take
6 effect July 1, 2027. It shall remain effective for a period of 3 years and, at the end of June
7 30, 2030, Section 2 of this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly,
8 shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

9 SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, except as provided in Section
10 4 of this Act, this Act shall take effect July 1, 2026.