



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Charles Glass, Deputy Secretary

March 16, 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan
Vice Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 173 – Natural Resources – Sunday Hunting

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources supports House Bill 173 and respectfully requests a favorable committee report.

This bill would clarify and standardize Sunday hunting opportunities during legal seasons on private and certain public properties in Maryland. The bill uses existing statutory authority and streamlines the extensive subtitle into a more readable and comprehensive section. The bill does not change or otherwise expand or restrict the existing requirements for Sunday hunting - with two exceptions.

The bill specifically prohibits Sunday hunting on any land in the Maryland State Park system. This includes more than 135,000 acres designated as State Park, Natural Resources Management Area and Natural Environmental Area. The bill retains the option for the Department to open Wildlife Management areas in those counties where they are not currently opened and would also allow the three remaining State Forest complexes to be opened if the Department so desired. Further, the bill affirmatively codifies the prohibition against Sunday hunting in Baltimore, Howard and Prince George's county.

In 2003, passage of House Bill 679 allowed two days of deer hunting on Sunday in 12 counties, on the first Sunday of the deer-bow season in November, and the first Sunday of the deer firearms season. In 2014, the passage of Senate Bill 472 authorized the Department of Natural Resources to allow Sunday hunting for all game species, except waterfowl, in Allegany, Garrett and Washington counties by regulation. That same year, the passage of Senate Bill 473 authorized the Department of Natural Resources to allow Sunday hunting for deer in Frederick County by regulation.

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Changes to the Sunday hunting statute have been proposed every year and expanded the opportunities to hunt on Sunday across Maryland. Proposed changes included adding more Sundays in certain counties and opening certain counties to Sunday deer hunting. Legislation now authorizes Sunday hunting in one form or another in 20 of Maryland's 23 counties.

The Department currently authorizes Sunday hunting on a number of days where the legislature has granted the authority. Interestingly, the Department has always had broad statutory authority to set seasons for all species on every day of the year – except for a handful of Sundays. Except for the closure of State Parks and expansion in Wildlife Management Areas and State Forests, this bill will not expand or restrict the existing Departmental or legislative authority but it will eliminate the confusion borne of the hodge-podge of currently codified language.

For the above reasons, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources respectfully requests the Committee to grant House Bill 173 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,
James W. McKittrick
Director, Legislative and Constituent Services