



HB 173 - Natural Resources – Sunday Hunting
Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council
House Environment & Transportation Committee
February 12, 2020

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based, umbrella trade association of the entire horse industry in Maryland. Our membership includes over 40 breed, interest and discipline associations, plus horse farms and stables, horse-related businesses, and horse owners representing all facets of the Maryland equestrian community, from the owners of race horses and race tracks, to the owners of international level competition horses, local sport horses, trail horses or just beloved retired companion horses. The owner of Pimlico, Laurel and Rosecroft racetracks is a member, as are vets, tack stores, and other farms, businesses and enthusiasts throughout the state. As such, we stand for over 30,000 Marylanders. Every Maryland county, without exception, is home to hundreds to thousands of horses. (See footnote 1)¹ There are more horses per square mile in Maryland than in any state in the Union and our economic, environmental and cultural impact is immense. (See attached fact sheet.)

HB 173 has been touted as just a “clean up” of the admittedly very confusing and convoluted current statute governing Sunday hunting, with no change to existing law. If that were in fact the case, the Horse Council would be in support.

However, the bill does in fact make a MAJOR change to the current law. In the current statute, Sunday hunting is only authorized on public lands in six counties: Allegeny, Cecil, Frederick, Garrett, St. Mary’s (except State Parks), and Washington. The new bill would open public lands state wide to Sunday hunting, except for lands in the State Park System (State Parks, Natural Resource Management Areas (NRMAs), and Natural Environment Areas (NEAs)). So State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas throughout the state would become open to Sunday hunting. This would authorize Sunday hunting on almost 200,000 acres of public land throughout the state, where Sunday hunting is currently not authorized. Moreover, because the bill grants discretion to DNR (“the Department may allow . . .”) (new section (A)(1), page 5, line 29), instead of the current legislative mandate (“ . . . a person may not hunt . . . on Sundays.”) (current section (a)(1), page 2, lines 1-2), the bill strips the legislators and their local constituents of any right to exercise local control over Sunday hunting on State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas in their jurisdictions.

We submit that the current scheme controlling areas where Sunday hunting is permitted is the product of many years of negotiation and compromise, and that compromise was built to a very large extent on the notion that Sunday hunting should generally be permissible ON PRIVATE LAND ONLY, where local jurisdictions acquiesced. That compromise has been honored in most counties. This bill eviscerates that long standing legislative history and the public policy behind it.

¹ According to the 2010 Maryland Equine Census (current numbers are likely about 25% higher, based on current total statewide population): Allegany 350; Baltimore 8950; Carroll 6050; Frederick 7850; Garrett 1500; Harford 6200; Howard 4350; Montgomery 7900; Washington 3750; Anne Arundel 4500; Calvert 1350; Charles 1750; Prince George’s 7100; Saint Mary’s 2300; Caroline 1300; Cecil 6200; Kent 1200; Queen Anne’s 1700; Talbot 1500; Dorchester 350; Somerset 270; Wicomico 1800; Worcester 880

The Department (DNR) may argue that opening State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas throughout the state is a good trade off for the express statutory prohibition of Sunday hunting in the State Park System. However, DNR has been authorized to allow Sunday hunting on State Park lands in Allegeny, Cecil, Frederick, Garrett and Washington for years and has never done so, perhaps because it would not advance their deer population management goals, or perhaps because they are aware that the public would oppose Sunday hunting in State Parks. So the bill, in practice, offers nothing new regarding State Park lands, but increases opportunities for Sunday hunting on State Forest and WMA lands.

Accordingly, the Horse Council would support this bill if it were amended to correct the language to a simple re-codification of existing law. Additional information and proposed amendment language is attached.

Finally, there is also a curious changing of the wording that describes how Sunday hunting will be allowed in certain places. Previously, it was "The Department may allow a person to hunt any game bird or game mammal, except migratory game birds, on a Sunday during the open season for *that* game bird or game mammal" (See, e.g., Section (a) (8) (ii) (page 3, lines 28-30 of the bill), and (a) (13) (ii) (page 5, lines 19-21 of the bill)). [emphasis added] The new formulation is: "THE DEPARTMENT MAY ALLOW A PERSON TO HUNT ON EACH SUNDAY OF THE GAME BIRD AND GAME MAMMAL SEASONS IN . . ." Allegeny, Cecil, Garrett, St. Mary's and Washington. (See, e.g., new section (A) (1), page 5, lines 29-31 et seq.) This language could be read to allow hunting of any game bird or mammal throughout the game bird and mammal seasons as long as something is in season - so essentially all species, all year. Notably, the old formulation is retained in the section on raptors: • 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. (Page 8, lines 20-22). So why was it changed elsewhere?

The Maryland Horse Council urges the Committee to insist that this bill be amended to effectuate a straightforward re-codification of existing law, with no substantive changes.

Respectfully submitted,

The Maryland Horse Council

Proposed Amendment to HB 173

The proposed amendment language is below. To compare with existing law, see the bill on page 3, lines 26-31, page 4, lines 1-9 (covering Allegeny, Cecil, Frederick, Garrett and Washington), and page 5, lines 18 - 23 (St. Mary's - public land except state parks).

Amendment:

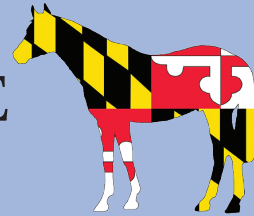
On page 9, strike lines 14 and 15: (14) A PERSON MAY NOT HUNT ON PUBLIC LAND WITHIN THE STATE PARK SYSTEM ON SUNDAY,

and insert:

(14) A PERSON MAY NOT HUNT ON PUBLIC LAND ON SUNDAY, EXCEPT ON PUBLIC LAND THAT IS DESIGNATED FOR SUNDAY HUNTING BY THE DEPARTMENT IN ALLEGENY, CECIL, FREDERICK, GARRETT AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES, AND ON PUBLIC LAND EXCEPT FOR STATE PARKS THAT IS DESIGNATED FOR SUNDAY HUNTING BY THE DEPARTMENT IN ST. MARY'S COUNTY.



THE MARYLAND HORSE INDUSTRY



Thoroughbred & Standardbred horse racing & breeding ♦ trail riding ♦ steeplechase ♦ sport horse competitions ♦ rodeo ♦ carriage driving ♦ therapy programs ♦ recreation ♦ rescue and more

A Dynamic Agricultural Entity

705,000 ACRES



25% of the State's agricultural land

Pastures are among the best filtering devices to protect the Chesapeake Bay from harmful runoff

10% of Maryland land



\$80,000,000 on feed, hay and straw

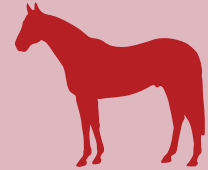
88,000 equine acres preserved forever as farmland



Number of Horses in Maryland

101,457

Horses in Maryland - making MD the number one state in terms of the number of horses per square mile!



10.5 horses per square mile!

200

Equine Orgs. Statewide

16,000

Horse Farms & Stables

35

different equine disciplines

40

 breeds

Integral to the State's Economy



\$2.1 Billion

Economic Impact



\$78m

 in tax revenue

28,000

 industry jobs

\$1B

 spent by participants

A Global Equine Identity



51.8% of households in MD contain horse enthusiasts



10,000 Youths served by MD's Educational Programs

1,500 4H Horse Projects

765 Licensed Riding & Boarding Stables

55 High School Interscholastic Teams

22 Pony Clubs

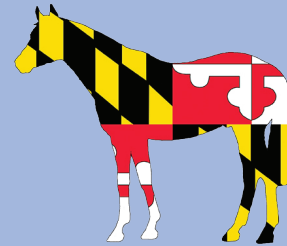
12 College Equine Teams & Clubs



MD is home to International gems:

Triple Crown Race - the Preakness since 1875
International 5-Star at Fair Hill in 2020

THE MARYLAND HORSE INDUSTRY ECONOMIC IMPACT



The Racing Sector



Adds **\$365 million** in value to the state economy



Racing Sector Total Economic Impact of:
\$572 million



Supports
5,214 jobs

The Competition Sector

Competition Sector Total Economic Impact of:

\$270 million



Supports **3,346 jobs**



Adds **\$162 million** in value to the state economy



The Recreation Sector



Supports
4,971 jobs



Adds **\$234 million** in value to the state economy

Recreation Sector Total Economic Impact of:
\$382 million



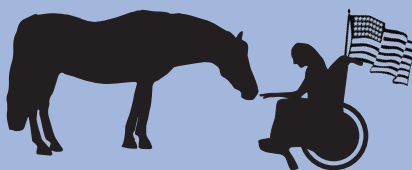
The Equine Therapy Sector



Adds

\$8.4 million

in value to the state economy



40

Therapeutic Riding Centers Including over a dozen Veterans groups

Information provided by

The American Horse Council Foundation 2017

Institute for Governmental Service and Research University of Maryland 2017

Maryland Equine Census, USDA 2010