



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

February 26, 2020

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 897 – Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund – Pets

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources provides the following information regarding House Bill 897. This bill would add damage to pets by a black bear as an eligible claim from the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund (Fund).

The Fund was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1996 and was originally established to support bear damage claims by livestock owners and grain producers. Today, the Fund relies on sale of black bear marketing items and donations from hunters. Revenues to the Fund have averaged around \$3,500 annually over the last ten years while claim requests from farmers ranged from \$4,600 to over \$50,000. The average payout to an individual farmer has been \$152 over the past three years.

In adding damage to pets, the bill retains the requirement to compensate farmers who sustain eligible bear damage to their crops or livestock. Due to limited nature of the Fund, payments would be allocated on a proportional basis to all claimants eligible to receive compensation.

Thank you for allowing the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to provide this information regarding House Bill 897.

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