

Testimony of Joyce Bell, Easton, Talbot County, MD 21601

SB 475

OPPOSE

Good afternoon. My name is Joyce Bell. I live in Talbot County and I oppose this bill.

Talbot County already has 7 Sundays reserved for hunters. This bill would add **10** more Sundays – creating **17** uninterrupted weeks of hunting.

This bill purports to be “a huge economic engine” that would attract hunters to Talbot County to hunt. But the Legislative Services Fiscal Note states that this bill is not expected to materially affect state or local finances, and will have **minimal** overall impact on small businesses. From the hunters I talk to, unleased property to hunt is hard to find, so adding more Sundays would simply be for the convenience of existing hunters.

An increase in Sunday hunting might well cause spending to be reduced by non-hunters, the Wildlife Watchers who, according to US Fish and Wildlife Service US Census Bureau 2016 report, who make up 83% of the population. Comparison of expenditures to hunters and fisherman shows wildlife watchers (photographers, birders, hikers, etc) at the top, spending 75.9 billion, with fishermen spending 46.1 billion, followed last by hunters who spend 26.2 billion. Just google “growth of birdwatching” and you’ll find numerous articles on the “fastest growing hobby in the US”, especially among youth. Hunters are important, but wildlife watchers should be given consideration for their dollar contributions, too.

Even more important: an unintended consequence of hunting on **your** property might be that your **neighbors** have less use of **their** property – from dog walking to bird watching. Property lines in the woods are rarely marked and difficult to know – as is the case behind our property where 4 properties come together. Many horse owners don’t own horse trailers, and their own property is the only place they **can** ride, or even do business.

The horse industry's \$2.1 billion impact on Maryland's economy is huge. Horse farms make up 10% of Maryland's land, and pastures are among the best filtering devices to protect the Bay from runoff. Other advantages of pastures? They are excellent absorbers of carbon dioxide, they are critical habitat for many grassland bird species that are in severe decline, and they provide open space for all to enjoy.

DNR hunting accident reports are woefully incomplete. Here are a few of the unreported incidents (reported in other news sources: a biker was shot in the legs in Tuck. State Park (2014); a man walking his property was struck in the head by a bullet in Montgomery County (2016); a woman shooting a muskrat in her backyard grazed a man's shoulder as he walked in a bordering Patuxant River State Park (2016).

Brenda Kibler – a retired DNR officer, was quoted in an article in the Feb 14 issue of the Star Democrat: (QUOTE) “DNR was often short-staffed, and hunting accidents were common --there were constant hunting complaints...it was ridiculous -- and Sunday is a hard day to enforce because officers need days off, too, “ Ms. Kibler predicts DNR will be even more stretched if hunting is allowed on more Sundays .

How many more accidents would there be if the perception of danger didn't keep so many Marylanders inside -- and especially at a time when doctors in 34 states are praising the health benefits of being **outside in nature, even** handing out “green prescriptions”.

Please do not give this bill a favorable report. Respectfully,

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