



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

Bill Number: House Bill 875

Short Title: Hunting and Fishing – Recreational License Fees - Moratorium

Department's Position: Oppose

Explanation of Department's Position

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (Department or DNR) provides the following opposition to HB 875. This bill would provide recreational fishing and hunting licenses for free for 11 months of FY23 and one month of FY24.

These special funds, Fisheries Research and Development Fund, are critical to the department's ability to continue its mission and provide federal and state statutorily mandated natural resource management. Additionally, the bill would impact the department's federal funding through Wallop-Breaux, which would affect additional programs at the department. On average, over a 5year period the sale of residential hunting licenses has generated \$3,299,476 in special fund revenues. That annualized amount, which is also used as a grant match, allowed us to capture an additional \$2,474,607 a year in federal funding through the Pittman-Robertson Act. **Factoring in both those potential revenue losses this bill would eliminate approximately \$5,774,083 from our annual operating budget. Essentially cutting it by almost 50%.**

For example, most of Fishing and Boating Service's programs use special funds, but three programs run 100% on special funds. All the programs would be affected by this bill with these three being the most impacted. 1) Freshwater Fisheries Management 2) Inland Fisheries Resource Conservation 3) Estuarine & Marine Fisheries. **Without the majority of funding for FY23, the Department would need to determine which programs could fiscally continue.**

This bill would have direct fiscal impacts to Wildlife and Heritage Service as approximately half of all their funding for programs comes from special funds. The Wildlife and Heritage Service is the single unit of state government responsible for all wildlife management in Maryland. No other agency has authority for our resident species, including thousands of plants, animals and insects. Through a state and federal matching fund model, the unit is responsible for the conservation of well-known mammals like white-tailed deer and black bear. The team also

owns the responsibility for the rarest plants and animals in Maryland, including the Eastern Hellbender and Bog Turtle. Literally thousands of individual species of plants, animals, and invertebrates and the habitats they occupy, make up the portfolio managed by the unique funding borne of hunting license revenues and the federal match to those stateside dollars.

If this bill were to pass it would have a deleterious and detrimental effect on the Department and the state. We respectfully request that the committee oppose.

For any additional information, please contact our Legislative and Constituent Services Director, Bunky Luffman.