

# **Signed Hunting Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brian Sheats

Position: FAV

March 3, 2023

The Honorable Mr. Johnny Mautz  
402 James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Johnny Mautz,

Unfortunately I am unable to be here today; however, Mr. Brian Sheats was kind enough to speak on my behalf.

As an avid outdoors woman and lifetime resident of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, I urge you to support the revision of the law to allow hunting on Sundays during the applicable season.

As a committed member of my community, I work for our educational system. As you can imagine and are probably very well aware, those of us who work in our school systems are doing everything we can to make sure that our buildings are staffed on a daily basis. School hours are not our true working hours, therefore, the only opportunity I get to hunt is on a Saturday. However, my role within the school system is a building administrator, so my Saturdays are not always guaranteed to be used for activities of my choosing.

Recently, I made the comment to my loved ones that this would be my last season hunting. Paying the fees for my licenses is just not worth it anymore when my one day a week hunt is not always guaranteed. It is upsetting that I must make the decision to excel in my career or to participate in an activity that not only brings me joy, but also assists with the deer population and puts food on my table.

My fiancé is a hunting guide and an avid hunter himself, and many of my friends are farmers. I frequently travel from Wicomico County to Talbot County. It is no secret that our deer population is not decreasing here on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. When looking at the statistics for the 2022-2023 season for harvested whitetail deer, Wicomico County is down almost 20% from the previous season and Talbot County is down 2.5% from last season. If this change was made and there seems to be a sudden negative impact, just as it has been done in the past, a revision to the law could be made.

The law as it stands, is not conducive for working members of society. The law is actually encouraging people to take off from their jobs in order to participate in this recreational activity that has an important impact on our environment. As a taxpayer and an employee of an essential occupation within our community, I strongly suggest the consideration for this change.

As stated above, this letter is being read on my behalf. This is because I do not have the option to take off work in order to stand in front of you and speak today. Unfortunately, if I cannot take off to speak to those in charge of making this decision, I certainly cannot take off to hunt.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. O'Leary'.

Ms. Madison O'Leary  
443-523-6786  
26740 Porter Mill Road  
Hebron, MD 21830

# **sunday letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brian Sheats

Position: FAV

I would like to express my support for allowing hunting on every Sunday of the existing hunting seasons. As a father of three boys I am always looking for more opportunities to involve my children in the outdoors. When Sundays are not available for legal hunting my boys have very limited opportunities to get outdoors and enjoy our favorite activities. Between school, sports, and weather it is very difficult to get time in the field when Saturday is the only legal weekend option.

As it stands right now hunting is never allowed on Sunday on public land. I think it is worth while to note that public hunting lands are funded by hunters. We purchase our licenses and permits year after year and that money goes towards the management of public lands. If we are floating the bill we should have access seven days a week. We are the only ones with any skin in the game.

Thank you for your time!

Brian Sheats

5098 Campground Rd

Eden, MD 21822

# **Support of SB 796 - Wicomico County - Sunday Hunt**

Uploaded by: Colby Ferguson

Position: FAV



# Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

March 8, 2023

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of SB 796 - Wicomico County - Sunday Hunting and Archery Hunting Safety Zones**

On behalf of our Wicomico County Farm Bureau member families, I submit this written testimony in support of SB 796, legislation authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to allow a person to hunt game birds and mammals on each Sunday of the game bird and game mammal seasons in Wicomico County. It also authorizes the Department to allow Sunday hunting in Wicomico County on public land designated for hunting by the Department and adds Wicomico County to the list of counties in which the safety zone for archery hunters is 50 yards.

Crop damage created by deer is nearly \$50 per acre today. These numbers are even higher on the Eastern Shore. DNR reports show that more than 10% of the deer harvested this hunting season were done on Sundays. Opening Wicomico County to have these additional Sunday hunting dates will allow the hunters to help address the overpopulation of deer in Wicomico County.

**MDFB Policy:** We support statewide Sunday hunting on private lands.

**MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 796 & REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colby Ferguson'.

Colby Ferguson  
Director of Government Relations

*For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396*

# **SB 796 - Written Testimony from NSSF in Support of**

Uploaded by: John Pica

Position: FAV



**TREVOR W. SANTOS**

Director, Government Relations - State Affairs

tsantos@nssf.org | 202-220-1340 x205 | nssf.org

March 6, 2023

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Senate Education, Health and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

<b>SENATE BILL 796 SUPPORT</b>
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**Re: Senate Bill 796 – Wicomico County - Sunday Hunting**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

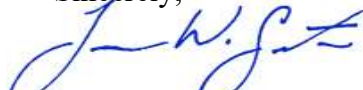
On behalf of the National Shooting Sports Foundation (“NSSF”), I submit these comments in support for Senate Bill 796 (“SB 796”) by Senators Carozza and Mautz. SB 796 would authorize the Department of Natural Resources to allow a person to hunt game birds and mammals on each Sunday of the game bird and game mammal seasons in Wicomico County and authorize the Department to allow Sunday hunting in Wicomico County on public land designated for hunting by the Department.

As the trade association for America’s firearms, ammunition, hunting, and recreational shooting sports industry, NSSF seeks to promote, protect, and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. We have a membership of thousands of manufacturers, distributors, firearms retailers, and shooting ranges. Our manufacturer members make the firearms used by law-abiding Maryland sportsmen and women, the U.S. military, and law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

This important piece of legislation will expand current Sunday hunting opportunities for sportsmen, women, and children in Wicomico County. Sunday hunting is an excellent vehicle to recruit new hunter-conservationists. Hunting, fishing, and other forms of outdoor recreation have proven physical, psychological, and educational benefits for our nation’s young people. Due to the greater prevalence of academic, athletic, and other competing activities that take place on Saturday, it is likely that allowing Sunday hunting will more than double the number of days children can hunt.

The passage of Senate Bill 796 will help ensure Maryland’s strong hunting heritage can be enjoyed and passed on to future generations of hunters and conservationists, and it is for these reasons that the National Shooting Sports Foundation supports the passage of Senate Bill 796.

Sincerely,



Trevor W. Santos



**23-0208 L Feldman - SB 796-Sunday Hunting.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laura Hurley

Position: FAV



## WICOMICO COUNTY, MARYLAND

P.O. BOX 870  
SALISBURY, MARYLAND 21803-0870  
410-548-4696  
FAX: 410-548-7872

### WICOMICO COUNTY COUNCIL

John T. Cannon, President/At-Large  
Shane T. Baker, Vice-President/District #3  
James Winn, At-Large  
Shanie Shields, District #1  
Jeff Merritt, District #2

Josh Hastings, District #4  
Joe Holloway, District #5  
Laura Hurley, Council Administrator

February 8, 2023

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Attn.: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Senate Bill No. 796-Sunday Hunting and Archery Hunting Safety Zones

Dear Honorable Chairman Feldman and Committee Members:

We are writing this letter in support of Senate Bill No. 796, as introduced, authorizing hunting on private and public property in Wicomico County on Sundays, including the 50-year archery hunting safety zone authorization.

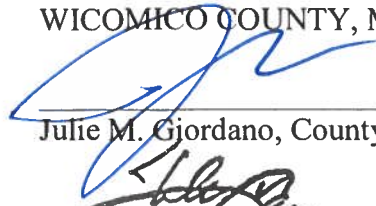
This Bill will help control the wildlife population in Wicomico County. When there is a high population of wildlife, there may be an increase in the number of deer-vehicle collisions, damaged crops and vegetation, and lyme disease. Hunting also contributes to the economy as hunters purchase hunting gear, clothes, trucks, ATVs and boats, which may increase revenues for small businesses, and it may benefit farmers that have suffered crop damage.

According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, "hunting with a gun is the third-safest sport when compared to 28 other popular sports, and has a lower injury rate than golf, volleyball, baseball, wrestling and tackle football. This, most likely, is due in large part to the requirements for successful completion of certified firearm and bow hunter education courses by younger hunters." As mentioned, hunting is relatively safe and has many benefits; therefore, we support hunting in Wicomico County on Sundays.

We thank you for your time and consideration of Senate Bill No. 796 as introduced. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Council Office at 410-548-4696.

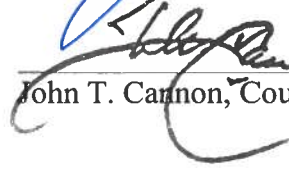
Sincerely,

WICOMICO COUNTY, MARYLAND



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Julie M. Giordano, County Executive



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John T. Cannon, Council President

cc: Wicomico County Council  
Wicomico County State Delegation

**23 MGPA\_SB796WicomicoHunting.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lindsay Thompson

Position: FAV



Maryland Grain Producers Association  
210 Fallen Horse Circle, Suite 100, Queenstown, MD 21658  
Lindsay.mdag@gmail.com (p) 443-262-8491  
www.marylandgrain.com

Date: March 8, 2023

Senate Bill 796 - Wicomico County - Natural Resources – Hunting

Committee: Education, Energy and Environment

MGPA Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. MGPA supports Senate Bill 824 which authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow hunting on Sundays in Wicomico County for game birds and mammals on private property and public land designated by DNR. The bill also decreases the archery hunting “safety zone” in Wicomico County from 150 yards to 50 yards.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates that farmers experience over \$10 million in crop damage annually with 75% of that being attributed to deer. Maryland’s deer population was estimated to be just over 200,000 white-tailed deer and 10,000 sika deer in 2022. In Wicomico County, sika deer can be particularly destructive. With the state acquisition of more and more land on the lower eastern shore and the lack of food and habitat being maintained, the pressure from deer and other wildlife on neighboring farmers’ fields has increased.

Most hunting occurs on weekends. Allowing deer hunting on Sundays on certain Wildlife Management Areas (WMA’s) that are leased to private hunt clubs for hunting would increase opportunity to harvest deer and therefore hopefully decrease the crop damage on surrounding farms. These WMA’s are large in acreage and often densely wooded and inaccessible for other activities and also leased during the hunting season which would eliminate the potential for hunter/recreational user conflict.

Additionally, with increased development across the shore, decreasing the archery safety zone would be beneficial for hunting opportunity.

MGPA respectfully requests your favorable report on Senate Bill 796.

**SB 796 MBS testimony (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Maribeth Kulynycz

Position: FAV



## **Maryland Bowhunters Society**

**P.O.Box 21**

**Willards , Maryland 21874**

March 8 2023

Good afternoon Mr Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen of the committee,

My name is Maribeth Kulynych and I am the executive secretary for the Maryland Bowhunters Society. I am testifying on behalf of the organization. MBS is in support of SB 796 (Wicomico county-natural resources hunting) in reference to expanding Sunday hunting and decreasing the 50 yard zone for archery.

Archery is considered one of the safest means of hunting and statistics stand by that. In archery the distance for taking an ethical shot is greatly decreased when compared to traditional firearms. It is also imperative for an archer to have a clear view of their target because something as small as a branch or even a vine can interfere with the flight of an arrow. Archery requires patience, precision, and timing to execute a clean shot. This means that shots taken during archery hunts are considered safer as the archer has time to survey their surroundings fully before taking a shot.

I am a hunter but I am also an equestrian, certified riding instructor, and trail guide. We ride year round, several times a week on public land and have never had a dangerous experience with a member of the hunting community. Every time we have encountered a hunter we have had great conversation and continue our ride without incident. We keep the seasons in mind and wear fluorescent orange as an added measure of safety. In all my experience both parties have shown nothing but respect for each other. It is refreshing to see people, who some imagine are on different ends of the spectrum, get along so well.

MBS is also in full support of the expansion of Sunday hunting in Worcester county. The majority of hunters work throughout the week, and with hectic school and sports schedules, often Saturdays and Sundays are the only chance to enjoy the outdoors. Today's youth spend more

time in front of their screens than ever before. The more chances we give them to get away from their phones and out in nature can benefit families immensely.

It is also worth noting that the deer population across Maryland is substantial. This leads to dangerous vehicular accidents as well as damage to crops. It has been shown that the most effective means of keeping the deer population in check is during regular hunting seasons. Many would say that crop damage permits are the answer, but the timing of deer seasons is crucial. The season is held when fawns are old enough to survive on their own and ends before does reach full gestation. Crop damage permits filled over the spring and summer can often lead to some pretty sad situations for does and fawns. And the temperature is so warm it makes retrieving the meat a real difficulty. Allowing these Sunday hunting opportunities would expand the efforts to keep population numbers at a sustainable level. And deter further efforts to seek more extreme means such as night time crop damage hunting. And most importantly provide food for many families who may be struggling to get by with the prices at the grocery store steadily climbing.

Thank you for your time and effort.

Maribeth Kulynycz  
MBS Executive Secretary



**SB 796\_mgoldstein\_fav 2023.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mathew Goldstein

Position: FAV



Secular Maryland

secularmaryland@tutanota.com

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March 08, 2023

**SB /96 - SUPPORT**

Wicomico County - Sunday Hunting and Archery Hunting Safety Zones

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Maryland bans, or otherwise limits, the sale of automobiles and other vehicles (Business Regulation Code Ann. §18–101), and the sale of alcohol (Alcoholic Beverages Code Ann. §11–102), on Sundays. Financial institutions must be closed on Sunday (Financial Institutions Code Ann. §5–704). Maryland is one of eleven states where hunting is still banned or otherwise restricted on Sunday (Natural Resources Code Ann. §10-410). Counties (and Baltimore) have requested, and usually obtained, a variety of exemptions from some of these Sunday activity restrictions from the General Assembly. Secular Maryland supports these requests to reduce or eliminate Sunday activity restrictions. We disagree with the state level Sunday activity restriction defaults.

Sunday is a special day of the week for many Christians. For other citizens the day of rest and worship may be Friday or Saturday, and for some citizens there is no god to worship or no fixed day of rest each week. Maryland law can be, and should be, more accommodating to this diversity of belief among its citizens. Legally banning business and leisure activity on Sundays favors a majority religious practice. Favoring a majority religious practice is not a proper goal of the laws. To the fullest extent feasible, our laws should confer equal accommodations to minority religious practices along with non-religious and anti-religion beliefs.

The decisions regarding which day to hunt, to buy or sell alcohol, to buy or sell vehicles, to initiate and process financial transactions, etc., are best left to the citizens. State lawmakers can require one day off every week without specifying a particular day of the week by delegating that decision to the affected businesses. Hunting restrictions to accommodate horseback riding, hiking, and the like during the hunting season can be defined for particular hours throughout the week or rotated to different days for each week of the month instead of being on every Sunday.

Respectfully,  
Mathew Goldstein  
3838 Early Glow Ln  
Bowie, MD

# **SB 796 Testimony - Wicomico Hunting - Carozza\_FINA**

Uploaded by: Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Position: FAV

MARY BETH CAROZZA  
Legislative District 38  
Somerset, Wicomico,  
and Worcester Counties

Education, Energy, and  
the Environment Committee

Executive Nominations Committee



Annapolis Office  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 316  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3645 · 301-858-3645  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3645  
Fax 410-841-3006 · 301-858-3006  
MaryBeth.Carozza@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 8, 2023

The Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
SB 796 – Wicomico County – Sunday Hunting and Archery Hunting Safety Zones  
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and my fellow members of the distinguished Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee for allowing me to present Senate Bill 796 – Wicomico County – Sunday Hunting and Archery Hunting Safety Zones.

This is a local bill that would add Wicomico County to the list of five Maryland Counties that are allowed to hunt game birds and mammals on each Sunday during the open season designated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, which includes Allegany, Cecil, Garrett, St. Mary's, and Washington counties. This bill also decreases the archery hunting "safety zone" in Wicomico County from 150 yards to 50 yards from an occupied dwelling or camp, aligning with the archery "safety zone" laws in Allegany, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Montgomery, St. Mary's, and Washington counties.

This legislation would give Wicomico County families more time to hunt during a limited season for game bird and game mammals and simply provide Wicomico County hunters the same benefits of several other counties in the State. While game bird and game mammals are regulated by the State, this would not include migratory waterfowl since they are regulated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The vast majority of hunters work throughout the week so their only chance to help balance game bird and game mammal populations is on the weekend.

Populations of white-tail deer have risen dramatically in response to a lack of natural predators and protective game laws, leading to a severe loss in forest diversity, more vehicular accidents, and crop damage. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation there are between 1-2 million animal collisions a year, resulting in 200 human deaths, tens of thousands of injuries, and more than \$8 billion in vehicle damages. In 2018, an estimated 11,184 deer were killed by cars in just Maryland alone. These types of accidents are more likely to occur specifically with white-tail deer on long stretches of busy rural roads.

Crop damage is also a major economic concern for our farmers on the Eastern Shore. Deer do not have upper incisors, so they do not make a clean cut when they browse a plant, leaving tooth marks in crops as well as forest plants that eventually lead to rot. It is estimated that crop damage caused by deer costs nearly \$50 per acre, and these numbers are even higher on the Eastern Shore.

Allowing Sunday hunting on certain Wildlife Management Areas leased to private hunting clubs would increase opportunity to harvest deer and decrease the damage they cause. These Wildlife Management Areas are large, densely wooded, and inaccessible to many other outdoor activities, including horseback riding. Further, the hunting tracts and horse trails are largely separate in Wicomico County as the public land where hunting occurs is leased to the hunting clubs during hunting season. Horseback riders are not restricted by Maryland law and can already enjoy all fifty-two Sundays every year. We are just asking for our hunters to be allowed to use their own hunting tracts during open season designated by the Department of Natural Resources.

Regarding the archery “safety zone” provision, archery is considered one of the safest means of hunting. The distance for taking an ethical shot is greatly reduced compared to traditional firearms as it is imperative to have a clear view of the target because something as small as a branch or even a vine can interfere with the flight of an arrow. Archery requires patience, precision, and timing to execute a clean shot, meaning that archers survey their surroundings fully and intently before ever releasing the arrow. And while bows have a range that is farther than 50 yards, they are most accurate, and therefore safest, within 50 yards.

I truly appreciate your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully ask for a swift and favorable report on SB 796.

# **Chesapeake PWH Testimony March 8 in OPPOSITION to**

Uploaded by: Jacquie cowan

Position: UNF



# *Riding To a Different Beat*

## **WRITTEN and ORAL TESTIMONY OPPOSED to ALL HUNTING on SUNDAYS**

**March 8, 2023 in the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee**

SB 0155 Prince George County

SB 0323 Calvert County

SB 0777 Mid-Shore

SB 0796 Wicomico County

SB 0824 Worcester County

The Chesapeake Plantation Walking Horse Club is an equestrian trail riding organization who has opposed all efforts to open Sundays for hunting. Because most of our average 300 Maryland family memberships work, go to school, and have other weekday obligations, our organized Club rides are held on the weekends. When all Sundays were preserved for non-hunting activities we held our rides on Sundays during hunting season out of respect to the hunters and to be safe. The continued efforts to add more species, seasons and Sundays are making it more and more difficult for us to safely hold our Club events. We are just one of many more riding, hiking, biking and other interest clubs.

***I do want to be clear ... we are not opposed to hunting, just the unequitable establishment of more hunting opportunities that directly impacts others' right to pursue their own outdoor activities in a safe and peaceful environment.***

Our rides average 15 miles covering a lot of trails and territory. We now have to find areas that we can be sure are not hunted; but even the popular park perimeter trails do not fulfill this safety need because they border private lands being hunted. Public access trails criss-cross woods and fields that may be hunted. Unless there are signs posted "Hunting Today", how do we know where is safe and where is not? Some Counties, like Anne Arundel, offer very few public equestrian trails so we depend on networks of private land trails.

**Many of Maryland's trail riders do not own trailers or have time to leave their boarding facilities to take a ride.**

They depend on safe access to the area around their facilities to exercise and enjoy their horses. Facilities that cannot offer this can lose their clients and income. One such operation I know has lost 85% of their boarders.

**Trail horses are not "born" ... they are trained through hours and years of exposure and practice** — not in the arena, but in the woods and fields. Like human athletes, horses must be conditioned. The possibility of hunting 7 days a week it is becoming harder to find the time and safety for training.

**Farmers do not need Sundays to protect their crops.** They can do so throughout the year by acquiring a Deer Management Permit (DMP) from the Department of Natural Resources.

**There are many more negative experiences and accidents than are shown in reports.** Our Club was riding the C&O Canal where hunting is not allowed. Hunters in a field adjacent to the Tow Path fired shots purposely over our heads. My neighbor's bedroom window was shattered in the middle of the night by a poacher illegally hunting the neighboring hay field without permission, again reported to County Police. Both these instances were reported to the County Police, but may not have been forwarded on to the Department of Natural Resources for recording.

— continued —

***The Chesapeake Plantation Walking Horse Club welcomes enthusiasts of all breeds and riding disciplines to join in our fun. Membership benefits include Monthly Trail Rides \* Friendly Help \* Camping \* Clinics \* Good Friends and Community.***

***Proud member the Maryland Horse Council \* National Walking Horse Association \* Friends of the Sound Horse***





**Not all waterfowl are hunted from blinds and boats.** Pictured here are geese being hunted in the open fields. This looks very much like Wye Island NRMA , also a popular area for trail riding, biking and hiking the same fields. Similar fields border other public lands like Cedarville State Forest, Rosaryville and Tuckahoe State Parks.

**Let me address the specific bills before you today:**

**SB 0155 ... Prince George's County ...** intends to open all 16 Sundays for deer hunting from October through mid January. In past years your Prince George Representatives have not accepted previous efforts to open Sundays to hunting and preserved Sundays for their non-hunting constituents to enjoy the County's beautiful outdoors.

**SB 0323 ... Calvert County ...** intends to repeal the previous agreement struck to end hunting on all Sundays for all species at 10:30am giving the greater non-hunting population the chance to engage in their outdoor past times safely in peace and quiet, which could simply be a family picnic in their own backyard.

**SB 0777 ... Mid-Shore ...** also intends to repeal the 10:30 statute in Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot and Wicomico Counties for all species on all Sundays. This means hunting 7 days a week pretty much all year. When do the non-hunting families get to pursue their outdoor hobbies?

**SB 0796 ... Wicomico County ...** will allow hunting of all species on all Sundays on both private and public lands. Once again, when will trail riders and other non-hunters be able to experience the safe and beautiful quiet outdoors?

**SB 0824 ... Worcester County ...** will also allow hunting of all species on all Sundays on both private and public lands.

**Please understand — we are not standing in opposition to hunting — what we are pleading for is time to pursue our passions as well.** Most of Maryland's trails are considered "Shared Use" with hikers, bikers, and equestrians enjoying together and respectfully. Where is the equity for all Marylanders if these bills pass and take away the one day that used to be reserved for the greater non-hunting families and Clubs?

***I will finish up here with 2 questions for you:***

***1- Why should just 2% of the Maryland population receive special consideration to hunt 7 days a week?***

***2- Would you take your children, grand children or dog for a walk in the woods if there might be hunting?***

Thank you for your attention and consideration. As you make your decisions on these bills, please keep in mind your entire constituency, most of whom do not hunt and would prefer to spend their outdoor time in peace and safety. I am more than happy to answer any questions and provide more information as you may wish.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jacquie Cowan

410-215-4979 jacquiecowan@comcast.net

**hunting accident report 2007-2021.pages.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jane Seigler

Position: UNF

# Excerpts from 15 years of DNR's Annual Hunting Accident Reports

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/nrp/pages/hunting-incident-reports.aspx>

## 2021

— A 58-year old Washington County Deer Hunter (Firearms Season) was actively hunting in a wooded area when they were struck in the thigh with a round from another firearm. NRP investigation revealed that the victim was shot in the thigh by a 10-year old relative in their hunting party who had mistaken the victim for game. Victim was transported to the hospital for non-life threatening injuries. No charges were filed against the shooter.

## 2020

--- A Frederick County resident observed damage to the exterior of their residence, which was consistent with that of pellet strikes from a shotgun. While investigating officers located no hunting activity in the area, the incident did occur during the end of spring turkey season. No further suspect / hunter information was developed throughout the investigation.

— A Kent County resident observed damage to their vehicle's windshield, which was consistent with that of pellet strikes from a shotgun. Nearby waterfowl hunters were interviewed and denied any involvement, which was confirmed through an on-scene investigation. The area in question is known for waterfowl hunting and there were reports of numerous shots leading up to the incident. No further suspect / hunter information was developed throughout the investigation.

— A Kent County waterfowl hunter, returning from a hunt, observed damage to their parked vehicle's tailgate, which consisted of a rifle round lodged into the plastic molding of said tailgate. Nearby waterfowl hunters were interviewed and denied any involvement, which was confirmed through an on-scene investigation. The area in question is known for waterfowl hunting. No further suspect / hunter information was developed throughout the investigation.

— A 17 year-old Wicomico County Waterfowl Hunter was underway in a vessel with other hunters when they were struck with shotgun pellets. Investigation revealed that other members of the victim's hunting party were on shore and approximately 50-60 yards away when a 20 year-old fired a shot towards the victim's vessel in an alleged attempt to scare him and his hunting party. The victim sustained non-life threatening injuries. Natural resources / criminal charges were filed against the shooter in this incident.

— A 14 year-old Somerset County Turkey Hunter (Firearms - Junior Hunt Days) was on foot and stalking turkeys with other juvenile hunters and under adult supervision. As the juveniles were walking 50-70 yards apart, under thick tree cover and out of sight from one another, a 14-year old shooter observed a turkey and fired their shotgun twice at said game. As a result, shotgun pellets ultimately struck the victim. The shooter was not aware that the victim was in the background. The victim sustained non-life threatening injuries.

## 2019

---- A 61-year-old Washington County Woodchuck Hunter was shooting from the front of their residence off a picnic table for support when one shot went errant and struck a person fishing at an adjacent pond, grazing

their shoulder. The victim was approximately two tenths of a mile away obscured by heavy brush and tree cover. Rimfire .22 long rifle ammunition from a rifle was the implement used.

--- An unknown Washington County Deer Hunter (Archery season) shot a crossbow bolt through a Honda SUV while it was parked in the victims driveway. Apparently the shot took place after sunset the evening before the damage was observed. Deer frequent the lawn of this residence and other residences within the neighborhood most evenings. No suspect(s) were observed at the time of the damage.

---- A Montgomery County residence received a broken window caused by a stray bullet fired from a rifle. The projectile was recovered on scene lodged in between two plates of glass. No suspects at the time of the shooting but several shots were reported just before the window received damage.

## 2018

No relevant reports

## 2017

--- A 26 year old Talbot County deer hunter (firearms season) shot at two deer with 12 gauge shotgun slugs. The first deer was struck and ran 40 yards before collapsing, the second deer was shot at but the first slug went over its back, the second shot dropped the deer in the location where it was standing. Apparently the slug that missed struck an occupied residence just to one side of the front door. Upon a 911 call a sheriff's department deputy had searched and located the lone hunter. After an investigation by NRP the hunter was charged with negligent hunting and discharging a firearm within the safety zone. Property damage only

--- An unknown Carroll County deer hunter (firearms season) sent a 7mm projectile through the side of a residence, through the bedroom wall, through a wooden dresser, then through a closet wall before coming to rest in a pile of towels in the closet. Two people were in the bedroom at the time but neither was injured. A search of nearby farms was unsuccessful in locating any hunter(s). Property damage only

--- A 52 year old Cecil County deer hunter (late firearms season) took two shots at a deer with a 30/30 rifle toward the direction of a neighboring farm. One of the shots (both of which missed the deer) struck a dining room window of the adjacent residence and stopped, being found on the windowsill. During the investigation it was determined that the round that struck the window had ricocheted off of the ground. The distance from the shooter to the house was 398 yards.

(DNR's on-line annual report for 2017 is identical to DNR'S 2016's report – the 2016 appears to be missing)

## 2015

--- A 16 year old Allegany County turkey hunter fired two (2) shots from a 12 gauge shotgun at what they believed to be the white head of a spring gobbler. The shot traveled approximately 53 yards and struck a 70 year old camouflaged turkey hunter in the face. This hunter had walked into the woods, sat down and was listening for turkey's completely camouflaged except for the side of his face which is what the shooter was observing and mistook for a turkey. Non-Fatal

## 2014

--- A 50 year old Carroll County Fox Hunter sent a 6mm rifle round through a patio glass door. The round went through a vinyl garden hose and a plastic lawn chair before going through the door and striking a kitchen chair. The homeowner was the only occupant in the residence at the time and they were in bed sleeping.

--- A 52 year old Kent County Turkey Hunter (Spring Season) took two shots at a gobbler out in an open field. The second shot was at the bird while in flight. One pellet struck the storm door of an adjacent house causing the glass to shatter. The homeowner was present in the home at the time.

## 2013

--- A 47 year old Calvert County rabbit hunter received a gunshot (shotgun) wound to his body/thigh/head when he was shot by a 15 year old hunting partner. A party of 4 was hunting with the aid of a dog when a rabbit ran between the men who were approximately 40 yards apart. The shooter stated that he could not see the other hunter when he shot at the rabbit

--- A 52 year old Charles County deer hunter shot his 22 year old son with a rifle across an open field. The shooter and the victim had been hunting together and at dusk the shooter fired out at movement in the field which he mistook for a deer. was walking through the field prior to ending the hunt and returning to the vehicles.

--- A 28 year old Charles County deer hunter while hunting within the safety zone ---discharged his shotgun resulting in the rifled slug passing through a window of the residence striking a chandelier in the dining room and becoming embedded in a wall. Thankfully the residence was vacant at the time of the incident.

--- A rifle round was recovered from a Frederick County home during the second day of the extended fire arms deer season. The round went through the wall of the home and struck a sliding glass door causing it to shatter. The round was recovered at the scene by the sheriff's department. The nearest wooded area was over 400 yards away. Property Damage Only

--- A rifle round was recovered from a "second" Frederick County home during the extended firearms deer season. The round entered through the front wall of the residence blew out the drywall in the living room at which time the bullet came to rest on the floor and was recovered by the homeowner. The bullet was a full metal jacket round (illegal to use on big game)

## 2012

--- A 62 year old Harford County landowner was struck by a random shot on their property. Upon investigation it was determined the landowner had been hearing a volley of shots repeatedly behind her home. As she and her husband went outside to investigate, a piece of shot struck her in the left forearm. Law enforcement responded and never found hunters in the area. The landowners advised no one had permission to be there, therefore trespassers were suspected to be the shooters. No suspects were located nor arrests made. The victim suffered a very minor wound to her forearm. Non Fatal.

--- A home in Dorchester County was struck by a projectile: Upon investigation it was determined the homeowner heard shots and found a French door in the back of their home was shattered due a projectile striking the lower left hand pane. The area behind the home is a public hunting area. No suspects were ever located. It was also never determined hunters caused this situation.

## 2011

--- A 41 year old Carroll County woman was struck in the right leg by a stray projectile while she was in her back yard. Upon investigation it was determined two individuals were plinking and shooting at squirrels & birds with a .22 cal. rifle in a wooded area behind her residence. Due to an unsafe backstop, it was determined their projectile traveled approximately .26 miles to the victim's property causing the leg injury. Squirrel season was closed at the time of this incident. Charges pending. Non fatal.

--- A 57 year old Dorchester County deer hunter shot his 57 year old hunting companion who he had mistaken for a deer: Upon investigation it was determined the shooter and victim had split up to hunt deer. Both hunters were wearing fluorescent orange when they departed each others company. The shooter had gone approximately 95 yards to his stand, climbed into it and began to hunt deer. The shooter observed a dark movement coming towards his location. The shooter was using a .30-06 scoped rifle. The shooter advised he determined he was shooting at a deer by looking through his scope, and shot at center mass.

--- A 48 year old Caroline County deer hunter shot his 46 year old hunting companion that he had mistaken for a deer: Upon investigation it was determined the shooter heard a disturbance of brush and saw movement, thinking it was a deer. The shooter fired a crossbow bolt at the movement at a distance of 62 yards, striking the victim in his left tibia. The time of the incident was four minutes after legal shooting hours. The shooter was charged with Negligent Hunting. Non Fatal.

--- A 16 year old Dorchester County deer hunter shot his 19 year old hunting companion while shooting at a running deer: Upon investigation 8 hunters had organized a deer drive in a marshy dense wooded area. 5 hunters were pushing deer while 3 were standers. As a deer passed between two standers, the shooter shot at a running deer, striking his hunting companion in both femurs with a .12 ga. shotgun using #4 buckshot at a distance of 60 yards. The shooter advised he never saw the victim. Both hunters were wearing daylight fluorescent orange. Non Fatal.

--- A 56 year old Dorchester County turkey hunter shot his 36 year old hunting companion, mistaking him for game: Upon investigation it was determined the two hunters entered their hunting area and posted three turkey decoys in an open field. They then split up to hunt the area and the shooter advised he did not see which direction the victim went. After a period of time the shooter saw three turkeys to the right of the decoys 40 yards away. The shooter advised he could not see the birds at all times. After an hour he called his companion on a cell phone to ask him if he saw the birds. Immediately after their conversation, the shooter saw a movement then shot. He had shot his hunting companion. The movement he saw was the victim putting his cell phone away. The victim was shot at a distance of 38 yards. The victim received 24 #4 shotgun pellets which were fired from the shooters 12 .ga shotgun. The victim was struck in the right side of his body receiving wounds in his head, neck, shoulder, torso, calf, knee, and ankle. The shooter was charged with Negligent Hunting. Non Fatal.

--- A 13 year old Dorchester County deer hunter, while shooting at a deer, struck a home in the background: Upon investigation the shooter discharged a .45 cal. muzzleloader at a deer 6 minutes after legal shooting hours. The projectile, missing the deer, traveled 242 yards striking a house 48 inches from the ground. As the projectile entered the house, it penetrated exterior and interior walls and lodged in a recliner. A resident in the home was sitting in the chair at the time and received a redmark on their shoulder where the projectile stopped on impact. Non Fatal

## 2010

--- During the 2010 Firearm Deer Season, residents of a home located in the area of Walkersville (Frederick County), reported their house had been struck by a projectile: Upon investigation it was determined the home had been struck by a projectile doing damage to the exterior & interior walls. Interviews were conducted with seven hunters who were in the vicinity of the area the day before hunting deer as regarding their actions that

day. It was never determined who may have been the shooter, but one scenario did reveal a hunter had fired a .30.30 rifle at a deer pointed in the direction that the home approximately 3,940 feet away. No evidence was found to support charges. Non Fatal.

--- A 45 year old Frederick County deer hunter, while shooting at a deer, struck a home in the background: Upon investigation the shooter had discharged a .12 gauge shotgun using slugs at a herd of deer. The gun jammed, the shooter cleared the gun, turned and shot at another deer in the direction of the home. The shooter advised he had become disoriented as to the direction he was shooting. The slug entered the home at a distance of 114 yards, traveled through the exterior and two interior walls, through two rooms, and into appliances and home furnishings. No one was in the home at the time of the incident. The shooter was charged with Negligent Hunting and Hunting within 150 yards of a dwelling (Safety Zone). Non Fatal.

--- A 53 year old Howard County deer hunter was shot by his 36 year old hunting companion. The shooter shot at a standing deer with a .12 gauge slug in an open field at approximately 243 yards. The bullet missed the deer, striking the victim sitting in a wooden ground blind at the opposite end of the field. The victim received injuries to his right arm and hand. Non Fatal. Charges pending an investigation

--- A 46 year old Queen Anne's County deer hunting was shot by his 25 year old hunting companion. With both subjects participating in a deer drive, the shooter shot at a running deer twice with a .20 gauge shotgun slug. A slug traveled 70 yards, striking the victim positioned at the opposite end of the field in the left leg. Non Fatal. Negligent Hunting charges pending.

--- A 55 year old Dorchester County rabbit hunter was shot by his 55 year old hunting companion. The shooter shot at a running rabbit with a .20 gauge shotgun in a thicket. The shot pellets traveled approximately 30 to 40 feet through the thicket striking the victim. The victim received injuries to the right side of his head, neck, eye, arm and left

--- A Frederick County garage window was struck by a bullet from an unknown source. An investigation could not recover the projectile nor related evidence. This incident occurred during the firearm's deer season.

## 2009

--- A 57 year-old goose hunter in Kent County was shot by another hunter while attempting to retrieve a wounded goose. The victim received a minor wound to the face from a shotgun pellet which deflected off the water striking the victim.

--- A window was broken at an occupied daycare facility from a slug fired by a shotgun in Howard County. Several hunters were found in the area and interviewed by several police agencies. Negligent hunting charges were filed, but the States Attorney elected not to prosecute due to insufficient evidence.

--- A window in a house was struck and broken by a sabot round fired by a deer hunter in Talbot County. The investigation found that in this case , the hunter was not negligent and charges were not filed.

--- While checking vacant buildings, several Frederick County Sheriff Deputy vehicles were struck by shot gun pellets causing minor damage. Several individuals who were hunting quail in the area were located and charges were filed by the States Attorney's office for Reckless Endangerment.

--- A 69 year-old deer hunter in Dorchester County found himself in the middle of a deer drive on a wildlife refuge. After hearing several shots the hunter realized that his shotgun had been struck on the barrel and magazine by lead shot. The shooter was never found or located.

## 2008

— A 47 year-old Allegany County deer hunter, walking into the woods without hunter orange, was shot by a 32 year-old hunter. The shooter heard noise, saw movement through the trees and shot the victim without identifying the target. Fatal.

— A 40 year-old Talbot County goose hunter was shot by his hunting partner when the shooter, from outside the blind, shot at a wounded goose. The victim in the blind was in the line of fire. One pellet entered his eye and lodged in his brain. Non-fatal.

— A 64 year-old Garrett County deer hunter was shot in the abdomen by another hunter who mistook the victim for a deer. Shooter was charged with negligent hunting. Non-fatal.

## 2007

— A 51 year-old Caroline County quail hunter shot his hunting partner when a quail flew between them. The victim received 4 pellets to his upper body.

— A 54 year-old Talbot County deer hunter was shot by his hunting partner when a deer ran between them and the shooter shot at the deer. The shooter hit the deer and shrapnel from the slug hit the victim in the hand causing minor injuries.

— A 59 year-old Queen Anne's County deer hunter was shot by his hunting partner when a deer ran between them. The victim was below field level, climbing a hill out of site of the shooter. He received neck injuries.

— A 38 year-old Garrett County deer hunter was shot in the shoulder by his 16 year-old hunting partner when the victim was moving through bushes and mistaken for game. Victim was not wearing fluorescent orange.

— A 64 year-old Charles County Turkey hunter was shot by his hunting partner when the victim started to retrieve a turkey and was mistaken for another turkey by the shooter. Victim received 4 pellet wounds to various parts of the body.

## INCIDENTS -- NOT REPORTED IN DNR ACCIDENT REPORTS (2016 to present)– that were recorded in other news sources:

### **--- MD: Woman attempting to shoot groundhog accidentally hits man fishing at park**

May 28, 2019

The Maryland Natural Resource Police are investigating an incident of a bullet that grazed a man in the shoulder on Sunday afternoon.

According to police, a 61-year-old woman was shooting a groundhog in her backyard, which borders the Smithsburg Lions Community Park.

The woman missed and the bullet ricocheted across the water and struck a 28-year-old man who was fishing.

Officials said there doesn't seem to be any issues with limitation, however the shooter is responsible for anything in background, like in this case, the park....



--- **Fatality** : Maryland Natural Resources police were investigating a fatal hunting accident in Frederick County on Saturday, the opening day of deer season for firearms. Police said the rifle of a first-time hunter from Altadena, Calif., was accidentally discharged while he was deer hunting on private property on Eylers Valley Flint Road near Thurmont. Police identified the victim as Vincent Cavallo, 32.

Cavallo and his uncle were hunting in separate areas of the property when the uncle heard a gunshot. He went to check on his nephew and found him dead, DNR police spokeswoman Candy Thomson said. Police were called to the scene at 9:24 a.m.

Police said the victim is believed to have slipped or dropped the gun and it discharged, hitting him in the head. His body was taken to the medical examiner's office. Natural Resources police were assisted by the Frederick County Sheriff's Department in the investigation.

[lorraine.mirabella@baltsun.com](mailto:lorraine.mirabella@baltsun.com)

--- Author: Scott Broom

Published: 6:07 PM EDT October 24, 2016

The mystery is still not solved after an 87-year old man was apparently struck (ed. note: in the head) by a shotgun pellet or bullet fragment while walking on his property in rural Montgomery County Saturday. Authorities suspect a hunting accident, but they don't know who fired the shot or from where. Residents and hunters say they are deeply concerned by the incident. The victim's property is on the boundary of the Patuxent River State Park where hunting with firearms is permitted. Hunters may not fire guns within 150 yards of an occupied dwelling without a residents' permission, even if the hunter is on another property or public land nearby. Maryland averages 2-3 hunting accidents involving firearms annually. The victim is almost always a hunter.

NOTE: see more of this episode at:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/man-87-in-marylands-montgomery-county-struck-by-a-small-metallic-projectile/2016/10/22/bc0e5974-98c8-11e6-bc79-af1cd3d2984b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/man-87-in-marylands-montgomery-county-struck-by-a-small-metallic-projectile/2016/10/22/bc0e5974-98c8-11e6-bc79-af1cd3d2984b_story.html)

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.wusa9.com/amp/article/news/local/mystery-surrounds-shooting-of-elderly-md-man-walking-home/65-340868641>

--- **Fatality**: Oct 11, 2015 - WASHINGTON — A 75-year-old huntsman was fatally *shot during* a hunting trip Saturday in Queen Anne's County, ... *Marvin Bowen Coppage*, a resident of *Henderson*, was hired to lead a guided *pheasant and chukar* hunt.

--- 2014 A mountain biker was peppered by bird shot while riding his bike in the Tuckahoe State Park on Maryland's Eastern (related by Tuckahoe park staff) knowledge)

Citizen report:

Date: March 15, 2019 at 9:15:38 AM EDT

To: <mwc.dnr@maryland.gov>, <animalcontrol@howardcountymd.gov>, <hcpdcrimetips@howardcountymd.gov>

Subject: Hunting Violation in Western Howard County

Hello,

I want to report a hunting violation that I encountered yesterday afternoon between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. in the Woodbine parcel of the Patuxent State Park.

I was in the park on horseback and one or two people began shooting firearms near the trail head that is immediately north of the farm at 4505 Jennings Chapel Road.

I hollered several times so that they could hear that I was there and stop shooting long enough for me to get out of the park. They were shooting between me and the closest way out of the park so my way was totally blocked.

They did not stop shooting even as I hollered and eventually my very sane and experienced horse bolted to try to get away from the noise, which was echoing everywhere.

Luckily I am a strong rider and I did not have a mishap but my horse was badly frightened, as was I, frankly. It was mainly luck that we did not run into a tree or barbed wire or worse.

Once I finally got to the trail head – after picking my way along as close to the edge of the park as I possibly could on the theory they would not fire towards residences – I saw their vehicles and got their license plates. They were both Maryland vehicles, one was 5CC8856 and the other was 5C74853.

I have attached photographs of the vehicles. I also have a photograph of my riding attire yesterday, which included a safety orange saddle pad and a reflective yellow jacket, which I can provide if necessary.

I have been riding in this part of the park for over 15 years and every time I have encountered hunters we have been courteous to one another and respectful of each other's sport and mindful of each other's safety. These people were obviously an exception.

I am happy to discuss further by telephone if necessary.

**testimony - Sunday hunting - yearround Wicomico-Se**

Uploaded by: Jane Seigler

Position: UNF



MARYLAND  
**HORSE**  
COUNCIL

P.O. Box 606 | Lisbon, Maryland 21797  
[www.mdhorsecouncil.org](http://www.mdhorsecouncil.org)

*One Common Bond: The Horse*  
*One Common Voice: The Horse Council*

In the Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee, March 8, 2023

Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council on SB 796

Wicomico County – Natural Resources – Hunting - UNFAVORABLE

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The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based trade association that represents the state-wide horse industry in Maryland. Our members include horse farms; horse related businesses; equestrian competitors; trainers; individual enthusiasts; equine-assisted therapy programs; and breed, interest, and discipline associations. We represent over 30,000 Marylanders who make their living with horses, or who just own and love them.

- ❖ **A majority of Marylanders oppose Sunday hunting.** An independent statewide poll conducted by Gonzales Research and Media Services in 2018 found that 68.9% of respondents oppose Sunday hunting. Even DNR's own 2018 commissioned survey found that a majority of the general population does not favor Sunday hunting and does not want to see it expanded.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ **This bill would allow hunting in Wicomico County on every Sunday for many months of the year on both public and private land.**
- ❖ **This bill would infringe on the rights of the general public to enjoy outdoor recreation, the importance of which has received increased attention, including the new Office of Outdoor Recreation in DNR, and the passage of the Great Maryland Outdoors Act. 78% of the Gonzales poll respondents said they would decide to alter their recreational plans to avoid hunters. In a Maryland Horse Council 2016 poll, 85% of respondents said they changed their schedules or riding locations to avoid encountering hunters.**
- ❖ **Since the advent of the pandemic, widespread use of outdoor recreation and natural resources by the general public has only increased.** For example, attendance at

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<sup>1</sup> [https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/2018\\_DeerPublicOpinionSurvey.pdf](https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/2018_DeerPublicOpinionSurvey.pdf)

Maryland State Parks in 2020 increased 45% over 2019, which was also a record year.<sup>2</sup> Demand has remained strong. **Many of these new users are unfamiliar with the rules of hunting and hunting seasons, including the distinctions between public and private lands. Now is not the time to increase general public exposure to possible hunting risks or to further deter the public from outdoor recreation. We have separately submitted with this testimony a report of hunting incidents from 2007 - 2021, compiled from DNR's own data.**

- ❖ **The Maryland horse industry represents \$2.1 billion in economic impact; 28,000 jobs; \$1 billion in annual spending by participants; \$78 million in tax revenue. There are over 100,000 horses in Maryland (more per square mile than any state in the Union), and 51.8% of Maryland households contain horse enthusiasts.<sup>3</sup> There are horses in every county in the state.<sup>4</sup> The majority of Maryland riders are trail riders.<sup>5</sup>**

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based, umbrella trade association of the entire horse industry in Maryland. Our membership includes 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. Every Maryland county, without exception, is home to hundreds to thousands of horses. (See footnote 4) There are more horse per square mile in Maryland than in any state in the Union. (See attached fact sheets.)

The horse industry in Maryland is a large, engaged and thriving constituency, and a strong economic engine: 28,000 direct equine related jobs; 16,000 properties occupying over 705,000 acres (almost 10% of Maryland's total land area, and over 25% of Maryland's agricultural land) The industry represents \$2.1 billion in annual economic impact, generating \$78 million in annual tax revenue. Horse industry participants spend \$1 billion dollars annually (compare that to the \$260 million annual figure for hunters cited in the Fiscal and Policy Notes of other bills). Thus, legislative actions that affect the equine industry have a broad economic effect.

## POSITION

The Horse Council opposes SB 796.

## BACKGROUND

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<sup>2</sup> <https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2021/02/04/lt-governor-boyd-k-rutherford-maryland-department-of-natural-resources-announce-45-percent-increase-in-maryland-state-parks-attendance-in-2020/>

<sup>3</sup> See attached fact sheet.

<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> <http://equiery.com/trail-riding-tops-reader-survey/>

For over 20 years, the Maryland Horse Council has worked to ensure fair use of shared natural resources during hunting season, by seeking to preserve Sundays as the one day of the week when children and adults who are hikers, birdwatchers, dog walkers, trail riders and other outdoor enthusiasts could enjoy the outdoors without concern for adverse interactions with hunters. Almost 20 years ago, we helped defeat a number of statewide Sunday hunting bills. Proponents of Sunday hunting then changed tactics, seeking to introduce Sunday hunting on a county-by-county basis, which we also opposed vigorously. Sometimes they were successful; sometimes not. When they were successful, they succeeded in making an already complicated situation more complicated, making it more difficult for others to plan their outings, and for Natural Resources Police to effectively crack down on poachers and irresponsible hunters, which has caused even more negative encounters between irresponsible hunters and other users.<sup>6</sup>

The Maryland Horse Council has proposed reasonable compromises that would still allow fair use of shared natural resources, by cutting off Sunday hunting, where allowed, at 10:30 am. This compromise still gives hunters, trail riders and others plenty of Sunday access to opportunities. This compromise has been embraced by some legislators, who have praised the Horse Council for this reasonable approach. It was adopted by Montgomery, Kent and Wicomico Counties, and was amended into numerous bills last year. Now we are facing a bill that would roll back that compromise and allow all day Sunday hunting in Wicomico County on every Sunday for months out of the year, because it covers all species of game birds and game mammals. The extensive range of the hunting seasons can be seen on the Maryland hunting season calendar, [https://dnr.maryland.gov/huntersguide/Documents/Hunting\\_Seasons\\_Calendar.pdf](https://dnr.maryland.gov/huntersguide/Documents/Hunting_Seasons_Calendar.pdf). This bill does nothing to improve the situation for Natural Resources Police and continues to infringe on the fair rights of other users of our shared natural resources in Maryland.

The issue of recreational Sunday hunting is certainly a fraught one. In a November 2018 independent Gonzales statewide poll, the vast majority of respondents opposed Sunday hunting:

SUNDAY HUNTING Oppose 68.9%; Favor 21.9%  
Breakdown:  
Strongly Favor 13.5%  
Somewhat Favor 8.4%  
Somewhat Oppose 15.4%  
Strongly Oppose 53.5%

These majorities opposed to Sunday hunting are true in Baltimore Metro, Washington Metro AND Rural areas. Rural Maryland opposed Sunday hunting 60.5% vs 34.1% in favor. Even DNR's own commissioned survey found that a majority of the general population does not favor Sunday hunting and does not want to see it expanded. (See footnote 1.) This bill directly contravenes that clear public opinion.

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<sup>6</sup> In a 2016 Maryland Horse Council survey, 35% of respondents reported "adverse incidents" with hunters while trail riding, ranging from rudeness to deliberate attempts to spook horses, threatening with firearms, and firing of "warning" shots. Significant percentages of DNR's survey respondents also reported problems when encountering hunters.

It is important to make clear that the Horse Council is not opposed to hunting. Many of our members are hunters of deer, other game mammals and game birds. We just want to ensure that everyone has a safe option for enjoyment of the outdoors. The COVID pandemic dramatically increased the level of outdoor activity and use of natural resources. According to DNR, 2020 State Park attendance increased by 45% to 21.5 million visitors. Demand has remained strong. In 2021, **Lt. Governor Rutherford stated: “With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic changing the way we live, work, and play, more and more Marylanders are finding affordable, socially-distant, and family-friendly recreation opportunities at our parks and public lands,”** (See footnote 2.) Many of these new users are unfamiliar with the rules of hunting and hunting seasons, and are unaware that they may encounter hunters in the woods. Now is not the time to roll the dice and increase the chances of potential adverse interactions between hunters and members of the public who are relatively new to the outdoors, especially since this bill would authorize Sunday hunting on public land.

It is also sometimes argued that recreational hunters need Sundays because they have other things to do on Saturdays - a situation that plainly applies to most of Maryland's families who use outdoor resources, be they hunters, birdwatchers, dog walkers, mountain bikers, off-road vehicle enthusiasts and trail riders. So why should one group get special consideration? Where is the balancing of the public good, the equitable access? The number of licensed hunters in Maryland, about 100,000, is less than 2% of the state's population of about 6 million. The number of licensed resident hunters is reportedly ninth lowest among all the states.<sup>7</sup> Compare that with the 24% who reported (pre-pandemic) making frequent or occasional trips specifically to view and experience wildlife in their native habitat for photography or other non-hunting purposes. (See footnote 1.)

In the Horse Council's statewide survey on Sunday hunting, 68% of respondents ride on trails on public or private land one or more days a week. And, perhaps most significantly, 85% said they changed their schedules or riding locations to avoid encountering hunters.

This bill would also allow Sunday hunting on private land. We of course recognize that private land owners have some right to decide what uses they want to allow on their land. But such rights have never been absolute, as any review of zoning and land use rules can plainly establish. And, as a practical matter the public/private land distinction affords little relief since public and private tracts are often relatively small, non-contiguous, intertwined and rarely well-marked. In our survey, referenced above, 56% of respondents said they ride on trails that cross both public and private land.

## CONCLUSION

We urge the Committee to give SB 796 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maryland Horse Council  
(844) MDHORSE (844-634-6773)  
info@mdhorsecouncil.org

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/maryland-is-the-9-state-with-the-fewest-registered-hunters/ar-AAPKtT8>

# THE LOWER SHORE HORSE INDUSTRY



Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester



**2,870**  
Number of Horses



**900**  
Stables



**13,843**  
Number of equine acres



**\$129 million**  
Total Assets



**\$2.8 million**  
Capital Expenditures



**\$147 million**  
Economic Impact  
Ocean Downs and Assateague



*Data Source: Maryland Horse Census; USDA Ag. Census  
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# The Maryland Horse Industry

## Why Does It Matter?

51% of Maryland households contain at least one horse enthusiast  
Maryland has 10.5 horses per square mile, more than any other state



### 1. Economic Impact

**\$2.1 billion** annual economic impact

\$80 million spent on hay, feed, and straw

\$78 million in tax revenue

### 2. Open Space

Over 25% of agricultural land in horse use

88,000 acres in permanent preservation

Land conserved with private dollars



### 3. Tourism

Four international competition venues

\$\_\_\_ generated in Prince George's County

Three internationally televised events

### 4. Health and Wellness

40 therapeutic riding programs

10,000 children served by educational programs

\$8.4 million economic impact



### 5. Jobs

>28,000 industry jobs

200 equine organizations

16,000 horse farms and stables

Data source: Maryland Horse Industry Board  
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