



P.O. Box 501
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SUPPORT

House Bill 983 (Hunting, Wildlife Conservation and Outdoor Recreation – Funding, Promotion, Management, Licenses, Permits, and Stamps)

The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND represent the interests of Maryland’s hunting community at both the State and local level. Few realize that hunters underwrite almost 100% of all wildlife management and research costs through their purchase of hunting licenses, stamps, and equipment. For the record: (1) hunters do so willingly b/c of **American System of Conservation Funding**, a user-pay model celebrating its 85th Anniversary which also underscores the noble story of hunters as America’s original conservationists (link below); and (2) hunting in Maryland is a powerful economic engine as reported by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (link below).

https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-06/introduction_to_american_conservation_funding_.pdf
<https://congressionalsportsmen.org/uploads/page/Maryland-Factsheet.pdf>

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HONORABLE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE

The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND support House Bill 983 as expressed herein. We have developed this written testimony with an eye towards questions likely to be asked with attendant responses...*responses provided by Maryland’s Department of Natural Resources for each question asked.*

QUESTION 1: What is the nexus between federal Pittman/Robertson (“PR”) matching dollars and State hunting license fee revenues, aka ratio of \$3 to \$1?

Every license sold with a minimum of \$5 in revenue is equal to \$15 in reimbursable funds from the feds via PR.

QUESTION 2: Quantify the impact on wildlife management, research, and habitat improvement from not having an influx of new State and federal dollars since the last hunting license fee increase in 1989?

The value of a dollar from 1989 to 2013 has risen to \$2.40. So a \$24.50 resident license in 1989 should be approximately \$60 today if the license fee tracked with inflation over time. If the license fee had been increased ten years ago to even a modest \$35, then we would have generated an additional \$38M in additional State revenues AND over \$115M in additional PR funds. In other words, we’ve left over \$115M in potential free federal dollars on the table in just the last decade. By State and federal ‘rule’ all of those funds must be used to improve

wildlife habitat and support wildlife-dependent recreation in Maryland. We've lost more than \$100M in opportunity to do so – just in the last ten years.

QUESTION 3: Projected State special fund revenue attainment from increasing hunting license fees under the bill coupled with a projected attainment of federal PR matching dollars by doing so?

\$2.2M in State special funds. \$6.6M in federal funds. Just shy of \$9M total.

QUESTION 4: With additional federal and State dollars in hand, how does WHS (DNR's Wildlife & Heritage Service) envision spending those dollars – both short term and long term – to mitigate the detrimental impact on wildlife management/research/habitat improvement?

USFWS (United States Fish & Wildlife Service) just projected another record bump to the PR funding opportunities available to the states. Every year, for the past five or so, has recorded the highest potential revenues into the PR funding pool – every year that we do not have the stateside dollars risks leaving federal funds on the table...where other states may take advantage of what would have been ours.

The new dollars would be used to help us manage the expanded portfolio of land we manage – up from 40K acres in 2000 to nearly 130K acres today – making WHS one of the largest land managers in Maryland. We would improve boundary marking, parking facilities and other infrastructure to ensure our wildlife enthusiast visitors, hunters, and others, have a wonderful experience at our wildlife management areas. We will continue to pursue a first-ever study on sika deer populations, wild turkey populations and renew our scientific analysis of our black bear population, including the suspected growth of the population into more suburban counties east of Frederick. Expansion of our efforts to mitigate overabundant deer populations would also be possible as we have no other source of funding to assist farmers and other landowners and their conflicts with deer.

QUESTION 5: What has been Virginia's experience with Sunday waterfowl hunting in the broadest of terms?

There was no measurable impact on waterfowl harvest with the addition of Sundays and no negative impact to the overall waterfowl or other user experience since most waterfowl hunting occurs on private land early in the morning and often over water in the winter – a place and time when few others are out and about in this region.

Below is a relevant quote from Virginia wildlife officials:

“The addition of Sundays for migratory bird hunting did not change the overall duck and goose harvest appreciably. Duck harvest on Sundays was comparable to duck harvest occurring on Mondays-Thursdays and about 1/3 that of Saturdays.”

QUESTION 6: When was the last survey undertaken – assuming Virginia-based Responsive Management (“RM”) – that quantified Maryland hunters' responses in favor of Sunday waterfowl hunting?

2020 study by RM – key takeaways for purposes here: The large majority of hunters want more days of Sunday hunting (72% want more), far exceeding either those who want the same level of Sunday hunting (18%). Additionally, the large majority say that their hunting participation in Maryland would increase (69%) if there were more Sunday hunting days. (THIS LAST POINT IS CRITICAL TO R3 [“Recruitment, Retention & Reactivation] – especially retention of existing hunters).

Economics of Hunting in Maryland

Spending per day: \$2.2 million

Salaries and Wages: \$387 million

Federal Taxes: \$96 million

State & Local Taxes: \$84 million

Ripple Effect: \$1.25 billion

Source: USFWS

QUESTION 7: What is the most recent hunting-related data available that speaks to the economics of hunting in Maryland?

According to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Maryland Sportsmen & Women support: (1) spending per day @ \$2.2 million; (2) salaries and wages @ \$387 million; (3) federal taxes @ \$96 million; (4) State and local taxes @ \$84 million; and (5) ripple effect @ \$1.25 billion.

QUESTION 8: Does WHS currently administer a Wildlife Conservation, Education and Outreach Program or some facsimile?

Sort of – we have staff in our Game Program (under Associate Director Karina Stonesifer) who also does education and outreach – including Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program (BOW), National Archery in Schools Program (NASP) and Hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3).

QUESTION 9: Identify – if possible – envisioned benefits of creating/funding a Wildlife Conservation, Education and Outreach Program within DNR?

We would startup a first-ever effort to truly advance our work on BOW, R3 and NASP, including a focus in counties and towns where we've traditionally lacked the staffing (and therefore time) to put our team onsite to reach out, teach and stay connected. We also have a vision to connect with the universities and colleges in Maryland, again with a focus on urban and suburban, to build interest in the programs above in those communities. We have very good data suggesting that students in these settings are interested in learning more about wildlife and outdoor recreation but do not have ready-access to teachers or mentors. We intend to build that bridge with this new program.

QUESTION 10: Are there any other states with something comparable to Maryland's envisioned Wildlife Conservation, Education and Outreach Program? If so, what have been the reportable outcomes?

In a June 22 study of R3 efficacy, eight states showed measurable "lift" (meaning hunters retained or recruited after being introduced to the state's R3 programming). Of those eight, two have similar demographics to Maryland (Massachusetts and Connecticut) – they experienced approximately 25% lift rates for their hunter R3 efforts.

QUESTION 11: How much existing State-owned land is currently available for public hunting, aka 50% of the Chesapeake Forest Lands?

But for some highly-developed or ordinance restricted insular locations, nearly all the DNR-managed land is open to some form of hunting – there are very few examples of un-hunted properties across the State.

QUESTION 12: Does DNR/WHS have a targeted acreage/geographical goal with increased dollars for the State purchase of additional lands of public hunting?

The goal is to spend down the available POS (Program Open Space) coffers on valuable ecological and recreational lands. WHS has been a primary participant in that effort and has seen land portfolio growth more than most other units of government over the past two decades. We will continue to push for those opportunities to the extent we have new funding to support responsible management of those lands.

QUESTION 13: Has Responsive Management – and/or any other public or private surveying entity – reported on the interest of Maryland hunters for additional public lands for increased hunting opportunities?

Several inquiries have shown that hunters would welcome more hunting land, particularly as interest in non-resident hunters has grown (70% of non-resident hunters indicated a very good experience with hunting in Maryland...2008 finding by Responsive Management).

QUESTION 14: Will FWS approve of federal PR dollars for (1) WHS hiring 8 new employees; and (2) purchasing privately-owned land for public hunting usage?

Yes – USFWS’ sideboards require that we use their funds (or our stateside license and stamp revenues) for wildlife habitat/management for birds and mammals only (no insects or herps) and wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting). So to the extent that those staff and funds are ONLY used for wildlife habitat, management and hunting-related activities, then we will be reimbursed for those expenditures at a rate of \$3 to \$1.

Respectfully submitted,

William R. Miles, Advocate



**MARYLAND HAS LOST AN ESTIMATED \$100 MILLION
IN MATCHING FEDERAL DOLLARS OVER THE LAST 10
YEARS**

**SURVEYS INDICATE MARYLAND HUNTERS FAVOR
SUNDAY WATERFOWL HUNTING**

**REPORTS PROVE THAT MORE HUNTERS DESIRE
ADDITIONAL PUBLIC HUNTING LANDS**

**FEDERAL USE OF MATCHING DOLLARS FOR NEW
WHS POSITIONS AND PURCHASE OF NEW LANDS
FOR PUBLIC HUNTING PURPOSES IS PERMITTED**

**EXPERIENCE IN VIRGINIA WITH SUNDAY
WATERFOWL HUNTING INDICATES NO DETRIMENTAL
IMPACT ON THE RESOURCE**