



Hills Bridge Beagles



Testimony SB 323 – Calvert County Sunday Hunting

Senate Committee on the Education, Energy, and the Environment

Position: OPPOSE

Good afternoon Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Honorable Committee Members

My name is Margaret Addis Crane. I am a farm owner in Calvert County and the Joint Master of the Hills Bridge Beagles, a beagling foot pack that has meets in all the Southern Maryland counties including Calvert, Charles County, Prince George's and Saint Mary's Counties. The Hills Bridge Beagles (HBB) are a nationally recognized foot pack. Beagling is a chasing sport not a killing sport. The HBB season is September through March because rabbits begin having their young and because of the risks to hounds and followers that copperhead snakes and ticks present.

The pack was formed more than 40 years ago. The pack has between 60-80 followers that come out one or more times in any given season. Our followers range from the very young to the young at heart. Beagling gives people who might not otherwise have the opportunity, a chance to get out in the countryside to enjoy all the beauty Southern Maryland has to offer.

As a threshold matter, I completely support gun hunting in Maryland, and specifically in Calvert County. In fact, I have a group of hunter's deer hunting my farm. The issue I have with SB 323 is this bill will remove the time restrictions which were a negotiated compromise to allow non-shooters to enjoy Maryland's natural resources on Sundays. If SB 323 is passed, the effect will be Calvert County's natural resources will be completely dedicated to the deer hunters. What does this mean for the HBB and its many followers? What it means is the HBB can either stay out of the woods all together, effectively denying our members an opportunity to get in the woods, or the HBB can run the risk of running into deer hunters who are empowered to believe they control the woods. Please imagine, my followers bring children that often range in age from 1 and ½ on up, those children run and play in the areas we meet. If those children inadvertently stray towards a property line they run the risk of being confronted by angry hunter or worse being injured by a stray bullet.

As you are well aware, last year Sunday deer hunting was expanded from seven (7) Sundays to twenty-one(21) Sundays each season. The HBB do everything they can to respect and not

interfere with the deer hunters and what this generally means is we go out on Sundays. If the time restriction on Sundays is removed, then there will be no way the HBB can avoid the deer hunters because the HBB are limited to private lands in Calvert County. Unfortunately, my experience with deer hunters in Southern Maryland is they do not want to share the resource. As a result, the HBB and its followers have been subjected to threats and harassment by deer hunters because the deer hunters do not want anybody to “disturb” the deer.

The HBB is not anti-gun or anti-hunting by any means. What the HBB are advocating for is a “*share the resource*” approach. Unfortunately, my experience has been that deer hunters are **not** interested in sharing the resource. Private land of all sizes is leased to deer hunters and they believe because they pay to lease the land that they should control not just the land they lease but all of the land abutting it as well. Because it is important to encourage all types outdoor recreation to give people choices and opportunities to get outside to enjoy all the natural beauty that Maryland has to offer, I’d just ask that you consider adopting a share the resource approach and oppose SB 323.

If you’re interested in learning more about Beagling you can see the HBB on Outdoors Maryland by using the following link <https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-394-23hx3m9f>. This video won an Emmy and was voted Maryland’s Favorite dog video. I would note that the HBB can no longer hunt on the farm shown in the Outdoors Maryland video. The farm, which is Anne Arundel County, was purchased by DNR, and the farm is now limited solely to deer hunting. The Beagles cannot use that farm even one time a year, which is a sad commentary on resource management.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before this honorable Committee.

Margaret Crane