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Senate Bill 824 - Worcester 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 Worcester 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 Worcester 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 Worcester 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 824.