



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.

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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,

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