

March 1, 2023

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**HOUSE BILL 983
SUPPORT**

Re: House Bill 983 - Hunting, Wildlife Conservation, and Outdoor Recreation - Funding, Promotion, Management, Licenses, Permits, and Stamps

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the National Shooting Sports Foundation (“NSSF”), I write today to express our strong support for House Bill 983 (“HB 983”). HB 983 will alter the purpose of the Heritage Conservation Fund to include acquiring interests in land that can be used by the general public for hunting; establishing the Wildlife Conservation, Education, and Outreach Program to provide outreach and foster an interest in outdoor recreation and stewardship, hunting, and wildlife conservation; establishing a stamp for hunting sika deer; authorizing a nonresident attending a college or university in the State to purchase a resident hunting license; etc.

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 more than 10,000 manufacturers, distributors, firearms retailers, shooting ranges, and sportsmen’s organizations. 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 would significantly increase conservation funding for the state of Maryland – adding almost \$9 million per year in additional funding to the Department of Natural Resources (“DNR”). Additionally, HB 983 would create new, or expand, outdoor recreational opportunities for all Marylanders, as well as establish new programs for the Maryland DNR to recruit people into the outdoors.

House Bill 983 would do the following:

- Increase the price of resident and non-resident hunting licenses by a few dollars (to keep up with inflation);
- Increase the price of the state duck stamp by a few dollars, allowing more funds to go into waterfowl conservation efforts;
- Create a new sika deer stamp for hunters wishing to hunt sika deer;
- Remove the statewide prohibition against hunting waterfowl on Sunday;

- Establish the “Wildlife Conservation, Education, and Outreach Program” within the Maryland DNR to help provide outdoor and hunting education to underserved communities;
- Allow non-resident students at a college or university in Maryland to obtain a license under a resident rate; and more.

Hunting and associated industries represent the largest financial supporters of wildlife conservation throughout the United States, having contributed over \$15 billion to habitat conservation and wildlife management through Pittman Robertson excise tax payments since 1991. In addition to excise tax payments, hunting and fishing licenses constitute the second largest source of revenue for state fish and wildlife agencies. Excise tax contributions and license receipts will inevitably increase with the removal of Sunday hunting restrictions.

The passage of House Bill 983 will help ensure Maryland’s strong hunting heritage and wildlife can be enjoyed and passed onto future generations of conservationists, and it is for these reasons that the National Shooting Sports Foundation supports the passage of House Bill 983.

Sincerely,



Trevor W. Santos