



Hills Bridge Beagles



Testimony HB 449 – Calvert County Sunday Hunting

House Committee on the Environment and Transportation

Position: OPPOSE

Good afternoon Chairman Barve, Vice-Chair Stein 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 hunts in Calvert County and Charles County. The Hills Bridge Beagles (HBB) are recognized foot pack by the National Beagle Club, the AKC parent club of Beagle breed. 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. I allow hunters to hunt my farm. The issue I have with HB 449 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 HB 449 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.

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, because my experience has been that deer hunters are not interested in sharing the resource and that’s why they’ve come back one short year later to undo the compromise they agreed to last year. I’d just ask that you consider a *sharing the resource approach* and oppose HB 449.

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 committee.

Margaret Crane