



February 8, 2023

**HB188 - Natural Resources - Wildlife Advisory Commission – Membership
FAVORABLE**

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the House Committee of Environment and Transportation:

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States and our Maryland members and volunteers, we thank Delegate Palakovich Carr for bringing forward House Bill 188 that recognizes the importance of a diversity of voices and viewpoints in managing our state’s wildlife.

The nine members of the Maryland Wildlife Advisory Commission are appointed by the governor to advise the Secretary of the DNR on wildlife issues. Currently, state law requires only that there be representation from the farming community in that body but is silent on other important wildlife stakeholders in our state.

Researchers have recently underscored the importance of following the hallmarks of science—including measurable objectives, evidence, transparency and independent review—when advising on and formulating wildlife management policy.¹ Currently, though, Maryland law does not include any requirements for the presence of a wildlife scientist on the Wildlife Advisory Commission. HB 188 would address this by requiring that the governor appoint an academic researcher, with expertise in wildlife biology, wildlife conservation, wildlife management, or ecology, to the Commission to help ensure those hallmarks of science are considered.

According to the most recent data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, only 1.9% of Maryland residents are paid hunting license holders.² Yet historically the Wildlife Advisory Commission has been dominated by hunters and their organizations, with little to no representation by the vast majority of Marylanders who do not hunt or trap.

Recent landmark research from Colorado State University, called the “America’s Wildlife Values Project,” found that animal welfare has become an increasingly important concern for the general public nationwide. The research found that more Marylanders believe that we should humanely coexist with wildlife, than those who believe that wildlife should be used and managed for human benefit. And more than 67% of Maryland residents surveyed in that study agreed that our state should strive for environmental protection over economic growth.³ Another study called the *Nature of Americans Report* found that Americans express broad interest in nature, believe connecting with nature is important, and want to conserve wildlife species and their habitats.⁴

Nationwide, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service notes that wildlife watchers now outnumber and outspend hunters by a wide margin.⁵ The National Park Service reports that:

¹ Artelle, K. A., Reynolds, J. D., Treves, A., Walsh, J. C., Paquet, P. C., & Darimont, C. T. (2018). Hallmarks of science missing from North American wildlife management. *Science Advances*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aao0167>

² U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (2022). Historical hunting license data (2021).

³ Manfredo, M.J., Sullivan, L., Don Carlos, A.W., Dietsch, A.M., Teel, T.L., Bright, A.D., & Bruskotter, J. (2018). *America’s Wildlife Values: The Social Context of Wildlife Management in the U.S.* National report from the research project entitled “America’s Wildlife Values.” Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/>

⁴ Kellert, S.R., Case, D.J., Escher, D., Witter, D.J., Mikels-Carrasco, J., Seng, P.T. April 2017. The Nature of Americans: National Report. https://natureofamericans.org/sites/default/files/reports/Nature-of-Americans_National_Report_1.3_4-26-17.pdf

⁵ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/news-attached-files/nat_survey2016.pdf

In 2021, 6.7 million park visitors spent an estimated \$247 million in local gateway regions while visiting National Park Service lands in Maryland. These expenditures supported a total of 2,940 jobs, \$130 million in labor income, \$215 million in value added, and \$344 million in economic output in the Maryland economy.⁶

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis in the Dept. of Commerce, outdoor recreation in Maryland generated more than \$6.6 billion for the state’s economy in 2021. Of that figure, hunting and trapping generated a mere 1.31%, while revenue from RVing was more than twice that. Other outdoor recreation and conventional air and land activities, including wildlife watching, outdoor events and field sports, generated almost 15 times more than hunting and trapping. And people spent almost 24 times more on travel and tourism in Maryland than on hunting and trapping (Fig. 1).⁷

Fig. 1. Outdoor recreation spending in Iowa (2021 data from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis)

Sample activities	Spending (in thousands of dollars)	% of total
Hunting and trapping	86,230	1.31
RVing	181,823	2.77
Sale of multi-use apparel and accessories ⁸	888,874	13.6
Other outdoor recreation and conventional air and land activities	1,253,482	19.1
Travel and tourism	2,042,090	31.1
Total outdoor recreation	6,567,148	100.00

In other words, those who use the outdoors in ways other than hunting and trapping wildlife provide a far more significant economic contribution to Maryland’s economy. But so far, that constituency has been shut out of the life and death decisions about the wildlife that is held in trust for them. HB 188 would remedy this by requiring representation on the Wildlife Advisory Commission from the wildlife preservation community and the passive wildlife recreation community, in addition to representation from the hunting or fishing and farming communities.

We urge a favorable report on HB 188 to provide much-needed diversity in Maryland wildlife governance, and to better align management decisions with changing public attitudes and values toward their wildlife.

⁶ National Park Service. (2022). National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>.

⁷ Bureau of Economic Analysis, D. o. C. (2021). Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021 <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>

⁸ Includes sale of backpacks, bug spray, coolers, general outdoor clothing, GPS equipment, hydration equipment, lighting, sports racks, sunscreen, watches, and other miscellaneous gear and equipment.