



Maryland Grain Producers Association
210 Fallen Horse Circle, Suite 100
Queenstown, MD 21658
Lindsay.mdag@gmail.com (p) 443-262-8491
www.marylandgrain.com

Date: March 3, 2023

HB 983 - Hunting, Wildlife Conservation, and Outdoor Recreation - Funding, Promotion, Management, Licenses, Permits, and Stamps

Committee: Environment and Transportation

MGPA Position: **SUPPORT with Amendments**

The Maryland Grain Producers Association serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. On an annual basis, nearly a million acres of these crops are grown in Maryland.

House Bill 983 does a variety of things including increasing fees for several hunting licenses, stamps, and permits; establishing a resident and nonresident sika deer stamp and related fees; and requires DNR to work with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to develop a plan to address deer overpopulation in the State. MGPA is supportive of these provisions. The revenue generated from hunting licenses and fees goes toward management of wildlife in Maryland and with the increased acquisition of property by DNR, these funds are greatly needed in order to maintain the lands to a standard that can support wildlife without impeding on the profitability of surrounding farms.

MGPA supports two amendments:

1) Remove the authorization for Sunday waterfowl hunting on page 11, line 28 of the bill.

Many grain farmers in Maryland rent land to farm which is also rented separately for waterfowl hunting. Waterfowl hunting is inherently different than other forms of hunting because of the location often in the middle or edges of fields and the number and frequency of shots. Farmers need time during the winter to scout their small grains crops without being in conflict with waterfowl hunters.

Many grain farmers also rent their own land out for waterfowl hunting and receive revenue from doing so. They are concerned that given their observations of the populations and reports from those hunting their properties, that the waterfowl cannot sustain another weekend day, or another day in general, of hunting. We saw what happened in 1995 and the years leading up to the goose hunting moratorium and do not want to repeat history. Another moratorium would mean the loss of significant rental income for these farmers.

2) On page 12, Line 25, ADD a new (3) A PORTION OF THE INCREASE SHALL BE USED FOR THE CREATION AND FUNDING OF A FARMER COST-SHARE PROGRAM TO PLANT PRIVATE LAND FORAGE CROPS (AKA SACRIFICIAL CROPS) TO HELP CURB THE CROP LOSS ON FARMS DUE TO WILDLIFE DAMAGE WHILE INCREASING FORAGE HABITAT.

Crop damage from wildlife is over \$10 million a year in Maryland with more than 70% resulting from deer. We need all the tools in our toolbox to combat this problem.

MGPA is very supportive of House Bill 983 with these two amendments and respectfully asks for a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report on House Bill 983.