



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

March 8, 2023

Bill: HB 1119 – Dorchester County - Hunting - Fur-Bearing Mammals
Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee
Position: OPPOSE

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

We submit this testimony in opposition to HB 1119, which would require the Maryland DNR to establish a year-round hunting season for fur-bearing mammals in Dorchester County. There is no justification for allowing one County in Maryland to hunt fur-bearing mammals without limit or restriction. Doing so could put Maryland's fisher, fox, long tailed weasel, mink, opossum, otter, raccoon, and skunks in danger.

Allowing a year-round open season on fur-bearing mammals in Dorchester County violates scientific principles of wildlife management.

All wildlife species play integral roles in healthy ecosystems, and indiscriminately killing them harms our environment and our communities. The indiscriminate killing promoted by this bill is counterproductive to effective wildlife management. Scientific studies have shown that many wildlife populations depleted by unnatural means simply reproduce more quickly due to the sudden drop in competition for resources and changes to social structure from the loss of individuals.

According to DNR's own website, "hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits are established based on furbearer biology, distribution and abundance of each species, public interests and needs and the incidence of furbearer damage complaints."¹ Those factors should be the considerations determining hunting and trapping seasons for fur-bearing mammals. This exemption defies those principles and undermines a statewide approach to wildlife management.

Maryland's wildlife is worth far more alive than dead, there is no justification for expanding to year-round hunting in Dorchester County.

Recent landmark research led by Colorado State University titled the "America's Wildlife Values Project" found that animal welfare has become an increasingly important concern for the general public, and the number of those who value wildlife as "part of their extended social network" has grown.² In that study, more Marylanders identified with a "mutualist" view that favors coexistence with wildlife, than a "traditionalist" view that wildlife should be used and management for human benefit. And more than 67% of Maryland residents surveyed agreed that their state should strive for environmental protection over economic growth.

Nationwide and in Maryland, wildlife watchers and those who participate in non-consumptive outdoor recreation outnumber and outspend hunters and trappers by a wide margin.³ (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

¹ https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/hunt_trap/furbearers.aspx

² 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/>

³ The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation (2016) at



Fig. 2

USFWS: Wildlife Recreation Participation & Expenditures: 2011 vs. 2016 data From: 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation			
	2011	2016	Percent change
Wildlife watchers	71.8M	86.0M	20
Wildlife watcher expenditures	\$59.1B	\$75.9B	28
Hunter numbers	13.7M	11.5M	-16
Hunter expenditures	\$36.3B	\$25.6B	-29

Fig. 3

Outdoor recreation spending in the U.S. (2021) From: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis		
Activity	Spending [in millions of dollars]	% of total
Hunting and trapping	4,831	1.27
Other outdoor recreation	62,796	16.5
Trips and travel	123,860	32.6
Total outdoor recreation	380,471	100.00

Maryland’s non-consumptive public land users outnumber and outspend hunters and trappers by a wide margin. The National Park Service reports, “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.”⁴

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis-Dept. of Commerce, outdoor recreation in Maryland generated more than \$6.5 billion for the state’s economy in 2021. Of that figure, hunting and trapping generated 1.3%, while spending for RVing was more than twice that. And people spent almost 24 times more on travel and tourism in Maryland than on hunting and trapping (Fig. 4).⁵

Fig. 4. Outdoor recreation spending in Maryland (2021 data from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis)

Outdoor recreation spending in Maryland (2021) From: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis		
Sample activities	Spending (in thousands of dollars)	% of total
Hunting and trapping	86,230	1.3
RVing	181,823	2.8

<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/fhw16-nat.pdf>; and Dept. of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, “Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021,” <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>

⁴ National Park Service. (2022). National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>.

⁵ Bureau of Economic Analysis: Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021. <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Other outdoor recreation	1,137,125	17.3
Travel and tourism	2,042,090	31.1
Total Outdoor Recreation	6,567,148	100.00

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported that in 2021, only 1.9% of Maryland residents were paid hunting license holders.⁶ There is no reason to allow the hunting of fur-bearing mammals year round in Dorchester County simply to provide additional recreational activities for a tiny percentage of the state's population.

We therefore ask that you issue an unfavorable report for HB 1119. Thank you again for the opportunity to share these comments.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel
Maryland State Director
The Humane Society of the United States
jbevandangel@humanesociety.org

⁶ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (2021). Hunting Licenses, Holders, and Costs by Apportionment Year.