



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 14, 2024

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 547 - First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Wildlife - Traveling Animal Acts - Prohibition

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The Department supports the intent of this legislation to further protect our native wildlife populations by limiting the movement of non-native exotic species through Maryland. However, the Department would like to provide some information on the Department's authority to oversee exotic animals, as suggested by the legislation.

The Department's current statutory responsibilities are primarily focused on native species populations and the habitats that support these populations. The Department's Wildlife and Heritage Service (WHS) staff are trained and have the experience to deal with native wildlife species. Under the proposed legislation those responsibilities would be expanded to include the regulation of other species such as jaguars, elephants, and lions. The Department has no capacity to handle the requisite seizure, capture, handling, or management of the individual animals envisioned in the proposed legislation. In addition, the Department would likely be restricted by federal rule in using existing fund sources to handle these exotic species for the purposes described in the legislation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Department's Wildlife and Heritage Service (WHS) is primarily responsible for a variety of different aspects of DNR's role in wildlife management. This includes monitoring wildlife populations, establishing hunting seasons, and protecting endangered species to name a few.

Additionally, the WHS also works with the Natural Resource Police on a variety of enforcement matters as it relates to the oversight of our laws relating to wildlife management in the State.

BILL EXPLANATION

The proposed legislation would prohibit the performance of a covered animal in a traveling animal act and also establish civil penalties for violating the provisions of the Act.

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