



P.O. Box 501  
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HOUSE ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
February 19, 2025

House Bill 892: Natural Resources – Canada Geese – Bag Limits  
**SUPPORT**

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HUNTERS OF MARYLAND, LLC represent the interests of Maryland’s hunting community at both the State and local level. Few realize that hunters underwrite 100% of all wildlife management/research costs through their purchase of hunting license fees/equipment. For the record, hunters do so willingly b/c of American System of Conservation Funding, a user-pay model celebrating its 86<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which also underscores the noble story of hunters as America’s original conservationists.

Bill Miles, Advocate

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THE HONORABLE MARC KORMAN, CHAIR  
HONORABLE MEMBERS OF HOUSE ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**H**unters of Maryland, LLC commend Delegate Jacobs and co-sponsors for their conservation-minded foresight in proposing to mitigate the unintended consequences of harvesting migratory Canada geese (“AP” Atlantic Population) during Maryland’s current resident Canada goose hunting seasons. For the 2024/2025 season, Maryland – with approval from the US Fish & Wildlife Service – authorized a 3-way split season for hunting resident Canada geese: (1) an early resident Canada goose season with a daily bag limit of 8 birds in both the Eastern Zone (September 2-14) and Western Zone (September 2-25); (2) a late resident Canada goose season with a daily bag limit of 5 birds statewide from November 23-29; and (3) a late resident Canada goose season with a daily bag limit of 5 birds statewide from December 16-March 10.



Comparatively speaking, the 2024/2025 season for AP geese – a 30 day, 2 bird daily bag limit – was 2-fold: (1) December 20 through January 4; and (2) January 15 through February 1.

**CONSERVATION ALARM BELLS ARE RINGING:** The AP breeding pair and total population estimate in 2024 on the Ungava Peninsula (northern Quebec, AP hatching area) was 88,890 pairs – accordingly – which was significantly lower than the estimated number of breeding pairs on the Ungava Peninsula in 2023 of 115,328 pairs. The total population estimate in 2024

of 606,672 individuals was less than the 2023 estimate of 611,590 individuals. Still awaiting future overall population estimates...*despite having an AP breeding pair count (see below).*

Recently, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Atlantic Flyway Council and Maryland's DNR issued the *Proposed Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons for 2025-2026*. Accordingly, among other things, the Atlantic Flyway Council has recommended a 2025/2026 "restrictive" season for hunting AP Canada geese, aka, 30 days and 1 goose/day" – compared to the "moderate" 2024/2025 season for hunting AP geese at 30 days and 2 geese/day – even though officials project 133,500 breeding pairs for June 2025.

The Atlantic Flyway Council is a group of representatives from state and provincial wildlife agencies within the Atlantic Flyway, responsible for coordinating and recommending management strategies for migratory birds in that region, primarily by providing advice to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on hunting regulations and conservation efforts for waterfowl like ducks, geese, and swans within the Atlantic Flyway.

Proposed two-way 2025/2026 split AP Canada goose hunting Season: (1) December 19, 2025, thru January 3, 2026; and (2) January 14, 2026, thru January 31, 2026.

The Council has also proposed an 80-day season in 2025/2026 for hunting resident Canada geese with a daily bag limit of 5 geese/day as follows:

Proposed two-way split: (1) November 22, 2025, through November 28, 2025; and (2) December 15, 2025, through March 7, 2026.

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/2025-26MigBird-Regulation-Proposal-Presentation.pdf>

It's perfectly understandable to hunt resident geese in September – migratory geese don't arrive until late November – with an 8-bird daily bag limit. It's not perfectly understandable to hunt resident geese from December 16, 2024, through March 10, 2025, with a daily bag limit of 5 birds. Why risk harvesting 5 resident geese each day during prime waterfowl season when there's a chance some of those resident birds could very well be AP birds? Looking forward per the Council's proposal for 2025/2026 of a two-way split for hunting resident Canada geese, the proposed seasons encompass a period when there's an even greater risk of harvesting AP migratory Canada geese because of the proposed late November 2025 plus mid-December 2025 through early 2026 March when AP migratory Canada geese are prevalent in Maryland.

The last thing we want in Maryland is to see what happened in 1995 when AP Canada geese breeding pairs and overall population number plummeted, resulting in a 6-year moratorium on AP Canada goose hunting. Breeding pair surveys then of key AP nesting areas in northern Quebec documented a more precipitous decline in AP Canada goose numbers from 118,000 nesting pairs recorded in 1988 to 90,000 in 1993, 40,000 in 1994, and 29,000 pairs in 1995. This drastic change in numbers of AP Canada geese prompted State, Federal and Provincial wildlife agencies in 1995 to suspend the recreational hunting season of AP Canada geese in the US and in the Canadian Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The resultant 6-year closure, caused by a precipitous 75% drop in the AP Canada goose population, figured to have cost the region – primarily Maryland's Eastern Shore – anywhere from \$20 to \$40 million each year.

[https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/AP\\_Survey\\_report\\_2024\\_finalv2.pdf](https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/AP_Survey_report_2024_finalv2.pdf)