

**MD\_SB\_0643\_SCI Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Beebe Frederick

Position: FAV



March 6, 2026

**RE: Support for Senate Bill 0643**

Chair Feldman and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On behalf of Safari Club International (SCI), I write in support of Senate Bill 0643 and expanding Sunday hunting opportunities in Maryland. SCI is dedicated to protecting the freedom to hunt and promoting wildlife conservation worldwide. Our organization, along with active members throughout the state, strongly support removing hunting prohibitions on Sunday that would result in increased access and opportunities for sportsmen and women.

We respectfully urge passage of this important bill that will not only allow the Old-Line State to join recent advancements in Sunday hunting within Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Connecticut but also ensure that legislature retains oversight authority while the trained technical experts at Maryland's Department of Natural Resources/Wildlife and Heritage Service uses sound, science-based management to regulate Sunday hunting.

Unfortunately, as you fully understand, many hunters today are still prevented from going afield on their own and/or from introducing new or novice hunters to the great outdoors because they are competing against work, organized sports, and other activities on Saturdays, which is currently their only opportunity to hunt outside of the typical work and school week. This stance ignores the fact that hunting is a deep part of Maryland's heritage, and the state's sportsmen and women directly contribute Over \$255 million to the economy while directly supporting roughly 3000 jobs and providing over \$32 million to state and local taxes.

Hunters often cite "lack of time" as one of the number one reasons they stop hunting. Expanding Sunday hunting is key to providing more people, especially youth and beginners, with more opportunities to engage in hunting, which ultimately leads to generating more hunters, and associated revenue for the state, in the years to come. Further, studies have shown that the additional access does not negatively impact user experience, non-consumptive users, or game populations.

Maintaining America's large number of hunters is crucial to maintaining the revenues necessary to sustain abundant wildlife and wildlife habitat – for both game and non-game – conservation programs as well as access related programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important measure.

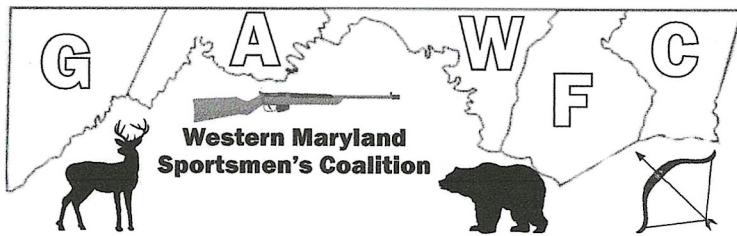
Sincerely,

W. Laird Hamberlin, CEO – Safari Club International/Foundation

**SB-0643\_WMSC\_kelkye\_FAV\_2026.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ben Kelkye

Position: FAV



**Ben Kelkye, President**  
**wmsc\_benk@hotmail.com**  
**ben@kelkye.com**  
**301 401-6263**

March 03, 2026

Honorable Members of the Maryland Senate  
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Md. 21401

**Subject: SB-0643 Natural Resources – Hunting Management  
SUPPORT**

Dear Honorable Senators:

I represent the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. comprised of the many hunting clubs and sportsmen's associations and thousands of their individual members living in Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties. As President of the Coalition, I work together with the leadership of these Western Maryland Sportsmen's organizations for the recognition and benefit of the sportsmen and sportswomen of the five most western counties of Maryland.

On March 10, 2026, the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee will be hearing the advantages and disadvantages of **SB-0643 (Natural Resources – Hunting Management)**. This bill simply recognizes the desirability and efficiency of the Department of Natural Resources to study, research and implement effective game management regulations. Clearly, the Department's expertise in wildlife management and consistent stakeholder engagement make it best suited to regulate and address concerns regarding our wildlife resources.

**The sportsmen and sportswomen of Western Maryland strongly urge you to support and vote favorably on SB-0643.**

Respectfully,

*Ben Kelkye*

President  
Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc.

Ben Kelkye	President, WMSC, President Frederick County Sportsmen's Council
Jerry Zembower	President, Garrett & Allegany Sportsmen's Association
Joe Winter	President, Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
Matt Guilfoyle	President, Carroll County Sportsmen's Association

Garrett

Allegany

Washington

Frederick

Carroll

**BigIMD2026sb643FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brett Lininger

Position: FAV

# INDEPENDENT INSURANCE AGENTS OF MARYLAND, INC.

DBA BIG I MARYLAND



## **Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

### **Senate Bill 643**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chairman Feldman and the Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The BIG I MARYLAND (“Big I”) is the State’s oldest trade association of independent insurance agents. It represents 200 independent agencies, which employ over 2000 people in the state. We represent independent insurance agents and brokers who present consumers with a choice of policy options from a variety of different insurance companies. These small, medium, and large businesses offer a variety of insurance products – including property, casualty, life, health, employee benefit plans, and retirement products.

SB 643 is a comprehensive management bill that addresses the root causes of deer-related problems instead of focusing solely on what happens after a collision or crop loss. In previous sessions, legislation to address the problems associated with the oversized deer population focused on restricting how insurers can surcharge or re-rate drivers after collisions with free-roaming wild animals like deer. Those proposals address an important fairness issue in the insurance code, but they do not reduce the underlying risk: the sheer number of deer on our roads and landscapes.

Even when laws limit surcharges in specific circumstances, the claims still occur, and the aggregate loss costs are ultimately borne by all policyholders through base rates. Insurance rules can change who pays and how, but they do not lessen the total number of crashes, property damage, or injuries.

SB 643 offers a better long-term solution because it goes upstream. By targeting deer overpopulation in areas with documented damage, it will reduce the number of collisions, the amount of agricultural loss, and the extent of environmental degradation before they ever show up as insurance claims or economic losses. Rather than treating symptoms in the insurance market, SB 643 reduces the underlying frequency of loss. From a policy standpoint, the most meaningful way to protect motorists and keep insurance costs sustainable is to lower the number of deer-vehicle collisions. Proactive management through DNR and expanded hunting opportunities, especially on days when more hunters are available, is the most practical way to do that.

High deer density is strongly associated with higher deer–vehicle collision risk. Each deer removed from areas near roadways is one less opportunity for a crash. By allowing more effective

population reduction on affected properties and expanding Sunday hunting, SB 643 can help lower collision exposure over time and improve safety for Maryland motorists.

For these reasons, SB 643 is a more effective, fiscally responsible, and ecologically sound way to address Maryland's deer population and its impacts on motorists, farmers, landowners, and forests than relying on insurance mechanisms alone. It focuses on prevention, uses DNR's expertise, and provides the tools needed to protect safety, property, and the environment.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 643.

**SB 643\_HB 1063\_ADDENDUM.pdf**

Uploaded by: Bryson Popham

Position: FAV

**Keep up to date on the latest winter weather information.**  
**[Baltimore City Snow Center](#)** [\[/transportation/snow-center\]](#)

[Department of Recreation and Parks](#) [\[/bcrp\]](#) > [Deer Management Program](#)

# Deer Management Program



## Deer Management Program

### Protecting Baltimore's Forests and Parks

Baltimore City Recreation & Parks (Rec & Parks) is launching Baltimore's first Deer Management Program. This is a data-driven effort to protect park forests and reduce problems caused by too many deer.

Rec & Parks cares for more than 2,300 acres of natural areas in city parks. These areas include forests, streams, and wetlands. They help clean our air and water, reduce flooding, support wildlife, and give residents places to relax and explore.

Right now, these natural areas are under stress from climate change, invasive plants, and heavy deer browsing. Protecting young trees is especially important as Baltimore works to grow its tree canopy to 40% by 2037. By taking action now, Baltimore is helping ensure its parks stay healthy and welcoming for future generations.

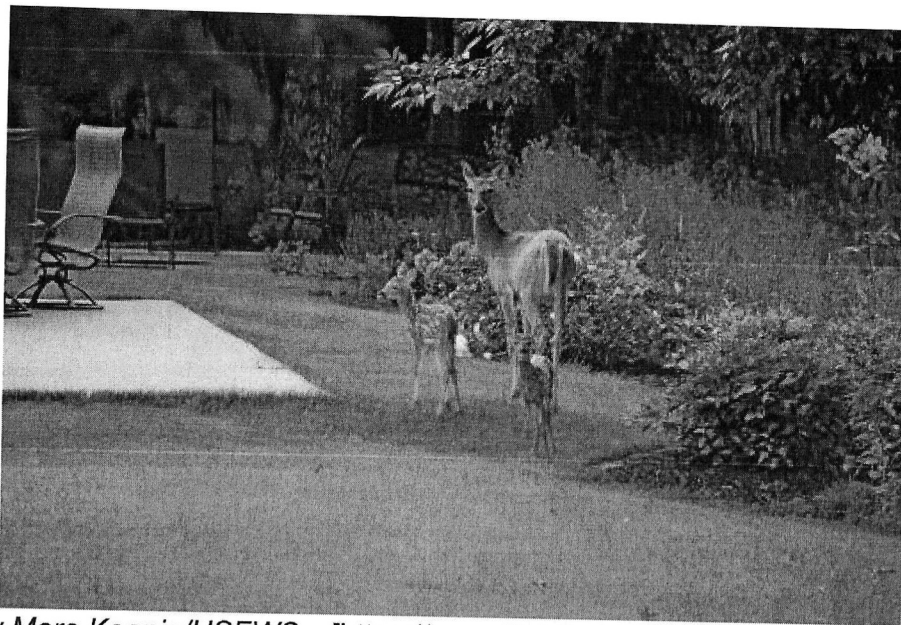
### Why Deer Management Is Needed

Data collected in city parks show that deer numbers in some areas are three to 21 times higher than what a healthy forest can support. Experts recommend no more than 20 deer per square mile in similar habitats.

When deer populations grow too large, they can:

- Eat young trees before they can grow
- Damage native plants
- Help invasive plants spread
- Reduce habitat for birds and other wildlife
- Increase deer-human conflicts
- Raise the risk of tick-borne diseases

Over time, too many deer can prevent forests from growing back. This program is designed to help restore balance so forests can recover.



*Original photo by Mara Koenig/USFWS* [<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmidwest/42099836314/>]



*Original photo by Courtney Celley/USFWS*  
[<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmidwest/53599953580/>]

## **Shaped by Community Input**

The Deer Management Plan was created through a strong community engagement process that began in January 2025 and continued throughout the year.

Outreach efforts included:

- A citywide resident survey (Early Summer 2025)
- Meetings with park “Friends-of” groups and community associations (June 2025)
- Public information sessions near affected parks (July 2025)
- Community focus groups discussing all management options (August 2025)

- Ongoing outreach and education

More than 3,700 residents took part in the survey. Results showed:

- 94% believe forests in city parks add value to Baltimore
- 58% see deer as a threat to forest health
- 62% believe the City should manage deer-related issues
- 59% understand deer management is an ongoing effort

This feedback helped guide the City's decision to move forward with the program.

## **How the Program Will Be Carried Out**

The program will be conducted in partnership with trained wildlife biologists from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), who have firearms expertise and follow national best practices. When management activities are happening, parks will be temporarily closed to keep residents and staff safe.

## **Online Resources**

### **Informational Videos**

#### **Healthy Forests**

0:00 / 1:49

### **Public Information Sessions**

### **Additional Online Resources**

- White-tailed Deer Biology  
[[https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/hunt\\_trap/wtdeerbiology.aspx](https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/hunt_trap/wtdeerbiology.aspx)]
- Ornamental Plants Fact Sheet  
[<https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/publications/FS655-ResistanceDeer.pdf>]
- Repellents Fact Sheet  
[[https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/publications/FS810-A\\_UsingCommDeerReps.pdf](https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/publications/FS810-A_UsingCommDeerReps.pdf)]
- Deer Populations and Forests [<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/surging-deer-populations-are-crisis-eastern-forests#:~:text=Summer%202024%20Conservation-,Surging%20Deer%20Populations%20Are%20a%20Crisis%20for%20Eastern%20Forests,may%20need%20to%20step%20in.&text=Pledge%20to%20stand%20with%20Audubon,and%20work%20towards%20climate%20solutions>]
- Maryland Technical Guide  
[[https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/publications/EB354\\_ManagingDeerDamage.pdf](https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/publications/EB354_ManagingDeerDamage.pdf)]

## Contact Us

For more information about the Deer Management Program and to share your input, please email [deer.program@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:deer.program@baltimorecity.gov) [<mailto:deer.program@baltimorecity.gov>].

**SB 643\_MAMIC\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Bryson Popham

Position: FAV

## Bryson F. Popham, P.A.

Bryson F. Popham, Esq.

191 Main Street  
Suite 310  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
[www.papalaw.com](http://www.papalaw.com)

410-268-6871 (Telephone)  
443-458-0444 (Facsimile)

March 6, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 643 - *Natural Resources - Hunting - Management* **FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of my client, the Maryland Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (MAMIC), we support Senate Bill 643.

MAMIC is comprised of 12 mutual insurance companies that are headquartered in Maryland and neighboring states. Approximately one-half of our members are domiciled in Maryland, and are key contributors and employers in our local communities. Together, MAMIC members offer a wide variety of insurance products and services and provide coverage for thousands of Maryland citizens.

You may find it unusual that a trade association comprised of insurance interests is appearing on a bill that has been introduced to manage one of our State's natural resources. The simple reason is that the natural resource that is the subject of Senate Bill 643 – our population of wild deer in the State – has become a serious problem for our citizens. It affects insurance because of the number of deer-vehicle collisions that occur in the State each year. There are more than 30,000. The insurance consequences are obvious, and we have seen legislation in past years to prohibit insurers from including the loss costs of such collisions in making their insurance rates. We have opposed these proposals, although we recognize the problem.

We believe that Senate Bill 643 is an appropriate step for the State to better manage its deer population. The costs associated with too many deer are not limited to collisions with motor vehicles. The problem also occurs with the effect of deer populations on our natural environment. As one example of a local government response to the problem, please see the attached Deer Management Program that is about to be launched by the City of Baltimore. It details the significant deer damage to the natural environment in the City, and proposes an appropriate reduction in the number of deer.

Senate Bill 643 would also permit a reduction of the deer population through greater access to hunting. MAMIC believes that such a program can provide real benefits to both Maryland citizens when driving their cars, and to the environment in which we all live. For these reasons, MAMIC respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 643.

Thank you for your consideration,



Bryson Popham

cc: Melissa Shelley  
President, MAMIC

# **SB0643 - Natural Resources - Hunting.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cherie Aker

Position: FAV



Maryland Division  
The Izaak Walton League of America  
707 Conservation Lane  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878-2983

**DATE:** March 10, 2026

**TO:** Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair, Education Energy, and the Environment

**RE:** Support MD SB 643- Natural Resources - Hunting - Management

Honorable Senators Feldman and Kagan:

On behalf of the Maryland Division-Izaak Walton League (MD-IWLA), I am asking you to support SB0643- Natural Resources-Hunting-Management which will expand Sunday hunting opportunities in Maryland. Maryland is one of only five states which still has some types of restriction or prohibition on Sunday hunting.

Hunters with full time employment already experience limited hunting opportunities which are often further limited by weather events. And, youth hunters are often limited to only weekend hunting because of school obligations. Hunting is a lifelong pursuit for many and expanding Sunday hunting throughout the State removes an unnecessary barrier to that pursuit. For hunters that feed their families from their harvests, the proposed expansions provide further opportunity to fill their freezers with natural and healthy alternatives to meat raised in industrial farms.

With more hunting opportunities it is likely for new people getting hunting licenses and previous hunters that have not hunted in a while because of time constraints to reactivate their licenses. This will create additional revenue for the state of Maryland and provide more dollars for protecting and enhancing natural areas and wildlife. Many of our members became conservationists because of their hunting experiences.

Chartered in 1945, the MD-IWLA ([www.marylandiwla.org](http://www.marylandiwla.org)) includes over 4,300 avid anglers, hunters, and outdoor sports enthusiasts across Maryland who are committed to the wise stewardship of our soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife.

The arguments in support of the continued restrictions on Sunday hunting are relics of another time and no longer serve the State. Please vote YES on SB 643.

Sincerely,

Curt Howard, President  
Maryland Division-Izaak Walton League of America

# **Delta Waterfowl Support Letter\_Maryland Senate Bil**

Uploaded by: Cyrus Baird

Position: FAV



March 10, 2026

To: The Honorable Brian Feldman and Honorable Cheryl Kagan

Re: Maryland Senate Bill 643 (*An Act Concerning Natural Resources – Hunting – Management*)

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Feldman and Vice-Chair Kagan,

On behalf of the members of Delta Waterfowl, both in the great state of Maryland and across North America, I want to thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 643 – legislation that will finally repeal the antiquated prohibition preventing the sportsmen and women from hunting on Sundays in the state.

As background, Delta Waterfowl is a leading conservation organization founded at the famed Delta Marsh in Manitoba, Canada, with its United States Headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota. We have members and supporters across North America, including thousands in Maryland, who represent waterfowl hunters in all arenas.

Delta Waterfowl works to produce ducks through intensive management programs and conservation of breeding duck habitat, while also providing vital waterfowl research and promoting and protecting the continuing tradition of waterfowl hunting in North America.

### **Review of Sunday Hunting Stakeholder Process**

Senate Bill 643 comes as a direct result of months' worth of work in 2025 between members of the legislature – including several on this Committee - the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the hunting and conservation communities to find a common-sense proposal that addresses the various stakeholders' views. Importantly, it provides the DNR with the authority to effectively manage wildlife and hunting on Sundays just as it does on Monday through Saturday.

Delta Waterfowl has been fortunate enough to be part of similar efforts across the country discussing tough topics in the conservation and outdoor recreation space, but can enthusiastically say we have never seen such energy and commitment to solving a problem from members of a state legislature and state fish and wildlife agency as we saw during this process – and we were thankful to be part of the process.

Delta Waterfowl's position from the beginning of this process has, and continues to be, one of supporting the repeal of the entire section of codified language regarding Sunday hunting in Maryland law and providing DNR with the full regulatory authority to manage hunting on Sundays, mirroring their existing authority on Monday through Saturdays.

We feel these conversations, as illustrated throughout the stakeholder process, warrant a venue and process that allows for more input, discussion and dialogue among the various interested stakeholders. The regulatory process through DNR is perfectly equipped to do just that while still providing the legislature with oversight authority they currently hold.

### **Bifurcated Atlantic Population Canada Goose Hunting**

The bill itself as it relates to hunting of migratory birds on Sundays is fairly straightforward. Of the proposals discussed during the stakeholder process that ended up in this legislation, the section dealing with a bifurcated hunting season in the Atlantic Population (AP) Zone for Canada geese is, in our opinion, the only section that requires additional nuance and context. This proposal would eliminate Maryland's compensatory waterfowl days and create a special season for Sunday hunting for the AP Canada Goose zone for junior hunters, senior hunters, apprentice hunters and full-time students.

Importantly, this proposal would include Sunday hunting opportunities for other waterfowl and migratory bird species including ducks, Mourning doves, woodcock, rails, gallinules, snipe, Resident Population (RP) Canada geese, and the Light Goose Conservation Order (LGCO) Season by virtue of DNR's authority and regulatory process.

This special provision would sunset after three years and DNR would continue to have full regulatory authority in the future. We fully support a shift towards full Sunday hunting for migratory waterfowl species, and this proposal does a great job of addressing concerns of a few of the stakeholders throughout the process while also creating a unique recruitment, retention and reactivation program within DNR designed to help get more Marylanders into the fields and on the waters.

### **Access and Opportunity Equity**

At the core of this Sunday hunting conversation is access and opportunity equity for the residents and outdoor recreationists of Maryland. Sportsmen and women across the country often cite "lack of time" as one of the number one reasons they stop hunting. Many hunters are prevented from introducing new or novice hunters to the great outdoors because they are competing against work, organized sports and other activities on Saturdays, which is currently their only opportunity to hunt outside of the typical work and school week. Allowing an extra day to access the outdoors will provide equity and also help recruit and retain a robust hunter population that is needed to provide critical funding for the overall conservation efforts in Maryland.

### **Sunday Hunting has Overwhelming Support**

The concept of Sunday hunting has broad support across the country, including right here in Maryland. Currently more than 40 states offer Sunday hunting for their sportsmen and women across the country. The remaining states where it is still prohibited are primarily concentrated on the east coast – or the Atlantic Flyway – and are deeply rooted in centuries old blue laws and



apathy on the part of legislators to change them despite its popularity. More than 75% of waterfowl hunters across the state surveyed by the DNR indicated they support Sunday hunting, and expanding hunting opportunities to Sundays is the single most requested policy change by hunters during the DNR's regulation setting process and scoping period.

In recent years, several neighboring states around Maryland have begun the process of deliberating and repealing these prohibitions, and to date, there has been zero negative consequences on the resource and no user-conflict for the states that have enacted this change.

In 2024, Delaware's General Assembly passed House Bill 271 (Rep Carson, et. al.) to allow Sunday hunting for game birds through their House and Senate without a single recorded no vote, and without any public opposition. This legislation was signed into law by Governor Carney in May of 2024 and Delaware sportsmen and women now have the ability to hunt migratory waterfowl on Sundays.

Additionally, in 2025, lawmakers in Pennsylvania sent House Bill 1431 (Rep. Mandy Steel, et. al.) to Governor Shapiro desk where he signed it into law with full support. This legislation gave the Pennsylvania Game Commission and their Commissioners the sole and full authority to approve general Sunday hunting dates. Additionally, Sunday hunting will be allowed on private property with the owner's written permission. In Representative Steele's All House Colleague memo on January 31<sup>st</sup> of this year, she noted "[*moreover*], some states that have recently lifted their Sunday hunting bans have reported no adverse impact on their game populations."

Sunday hunting is also supported by some of the countries' most respected conservation and hunting organizations – including many who were part of this stakeholder process. In addition to Delta Waterfowl, general support for Sunday hunting can be found from the Maryland Wildlife Advisory Commission, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Safari Club International, National Shooting Sports Foundation, Pheasants and Quail Forever and more. These groups represent millions of sportsmen and women across the United States and help lead the way on conservation and hunting issues both in Maryland and abroad.

### **Sunday Hunting Has Little Impact on Waterfowl Populations or Hunter Satisfaction**

The small cohort of Sunday hunting opponents will routinely cite fears of negatively impacting waterfowl populations with the legalization of Sunday hunting. It's important to stress that there is zero scientific or biological data to support that allowing Sunday hunting will negatively impact waterfowl populations. Hunting is widely considered to play a very small role in the overall impact on waterfowl populations. According to several peer-reviewed studies, nesting success and survival of adult female mallards during the breeding season account for the largest variation in

population levels. Survival OUTSIDE of the breeding season – which would include hunting seasons - only accounted for 9% variation in population levels.

In Virginia following the legalization of Sunday hunting for waterfowl, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources estimated that there was “no measurable impact” on waterfowl populations with the additional day of hunting – adding that “[duck] harvest on Sundays was comparable to duck harvest occurring on Mondays-Thursdays and about 1/3 that of Saturdays.”

**In Closing**

In closing, and as we proceed forward, Delta Waterfowl respectfully urges the Maryland General Assembly to eliminate the outdated statutory restrictions on Sunday hunting and provide the DNR with full management and regulatory authority for all Sundays of the migratory waterfowl season. The stakeholder process along with this legislation has demonstrated clear public support, broad bipartisan momentum, and overwhelming evidence that Sunday hunting poses no biological or resource risk. Empowering DNR to regulate Sundays—as they successfully do every other day of the season—ensures science-based decision making, maintains legislative oversight, and delivers greater access, equity, and opportunity to Maryland’s sportsmen and women. We appreciate your continued leadership on this issue and look forward to future conversations.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions, comments or concerns at [cbaird@deltawaterfowl.org](mailto:cbaird@deltawaterfowl.org).

Respectfully,



Cyrus Hunter Baird  
Vice President of Government Affairs  
Delta Waterfowl Foundation

Cc: The Honorable Jack Bailey

**SB 643\_AFSCME3\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Denise Gilmore

Position: FAV



1410 Bush Street (Suite A)  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Phone: 410-547-1515  
Email: [info@afscmemd.org](mailto:info@afscmemd.org)

Patrick Moran – President

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**Senate Bill 643 – Natural Resources – Hunting – Management  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
March 10, 2026**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

AFSCME Council 3 represents 55,000 public sector workers across Maryland. These dedicated men and women keep our state running, from our state highways and hospitals to our correctional facilities and state and local agencies. Many of these members are not only state and local government employees but are also lifelong hunters and conservationists who rely on Maryland's natural resources for recreation, food security, and family traditions.

For the modern public sector employee, the "standard" work week is often a myth. Many of our members work non-traditional shifts, overtime, and weekend rotations. When they do have time off, it is frequently consumed by the essential demands of family life: youth sports, religious services, and household maintenance.

Under current law, the narrow window for Sunday hunting (30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30am) effectively excludes a significant portion of the working class. A parent who spends their Sunday morning at a child's soccer game or a community event is currently barred from the woods for the remainder of the day. SB 643 addresses this by reopening the window from 3:00pm until sunset. This added option is a common-sense modification that acknowledges the reality of a working person's schedule, ensuring that hunting isn't a luxury reserved only for those with flexible weekday calendars.

Maryland does not exist in a vacuum. Our neighboring states, including Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania have moved toward expanding Sunday hunting access to reflect modern lifestyle needs. Currently, Maryland's restrictive midday "gap" makes us an outlier in the region.

By passing SB 643, it encourages local participation and pushes recreational spending back within our state lines. Maryland can modernize its conservation management while ensuring our own workers can enjoy the sport in their home counties on the lower shore.

Hunting is more than a hobby for our members; it is a source of stress relief and a way to provide organic, sustainable food for their families. In an era where work-life balance is a priority recruitment and retention, providing expanded access to outdoor recreation is a low-cost, high-impact way to support the well-being of our state and local workforce.

For these reasons, AFSCME Council 3 urges a favorable report on SB 643.

# **2026 MD SB 643 - Natural Resources - Hunting - Man**

Uploaded by: Fred Bird

Position: FAV



Maryland Sportsmen's Foundation



**To:**            **The Honorable Brian J. Feldman**  
 Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
 2 Miller West Senate Office Building  
 Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re:**            **Senate Bill 643 – Natural Resources – Hunting – Management**

**Position:**    **Support**

**Date:**         **March 10, 2026**

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, collectively representing the interests of Maryland’s 390,627 sportsmen and women, we respectfully urge you to support Senate Bill 643 (SB 643). This legislation will remove the longstanding and antiquated legislative prohibition on Sunday hunting in Maryland and authorize the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to fully manage wildlife species 7 days a week. Additionally, the passage of SB 643 will greatly benefit the Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) of sportsmen and women in Maryland.

This legislation will provide equity for access and opportunity for the residents of Maryland seeking to participate in their highly regulated outdoor pursuit (hunting). Allowing an additional day on the weekend will greatly assist in the R3 movement, which is critical to conservation and wildlife management. It is important to note that the passage of this legislation will not authorize hunting in State Parks, Natural Resource Management Areas or other areas already closed to hunting.

Maryland already has had a successful track record of limited, but ever-expanding Sunday hunting opportunities for some game species since 2003 when it was first authorized. SB 643 expands upon that, providing the wildlife experts within the DNR the ability to fully regulate hunting season dates and bag limits. Additionally, SB 643 provides the DNR with the ability to allow for Sunday hunting

where biologically and sociologically supported, to provide increased opportunity for Maryland's sportsmen and women.

***Access is a major limiting factor hindering participation in hunting, and restrictions on Sunday hunting provide a temporal-access barrier to youth and others that work or attend school throughout the week and are often involved in extra-curricular activities on Saturdays.*** The hunting conservation community strongly supports measures that increase access and opportunity for sportsmen and women, and we encourage you to support SB 643 to afford all families seven-day hunting opportunities for game species. Under the discretion of the DNR, this legislation would significantly improve access for Maryland hunters and would help arrest the decline in hunting participation. The number of paid hunting license holders in the state decreased by 33.9% from 1985 to 2025 and expanding access and opportunity would help stem the decline and provide increased certainty in conservation funding for the Maryland DNR.

***Sportsmen and women are the primary funders of state-level conservation efforts in the state and are thus an important constituency that provides benefits for all Marylanders.*** In 2025 alone, Maryland's sportsmen and women generated more than \$27.1 million dollars for conservation funding in Maryland through revenue derived from license sales and excise taxes on sporting-related goods in the unique "user pays – public benefits" structure known as the American System of Conservation Funding. This funding provides the lion's share of funding for the Maryland DNR and supports the agency's land acquisitions, wildlife and habitat management programs, and many other programs that benefit all citizens of the "Old Line State".

***Allowing Sunday hunting would also significantly benefit Maryland's economy,*** particularly in rural areas, by increasing economic output and job creation. An additional day to hunt would mean more dollars spent by hunters in restaurants, hotels, gas stations and stores throughout the state. Maryland's sportsmen and women are a significant economic force. In 2020, a study was conducted that revealed Marylanders contributed \$328,000,000 in retail sales, supported 4,100 jobs (\$157,000,000 in salaries and wages), paid \$29,000,000 in state and local taxes, and paid \$41,000,000 in federal taxes. In 2022, a study conducted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service showed that at a national level, 14.4 million people ages 16 years old and older enjoyed hunting within the United States. Collectively, these hunters hunted 241 million days and took 165 million trips and spent \$45.2B. Additionally, increasing opportunities on Sundays will allow private landowners, farmers, and others to diversify their income sources by allowing an additional day of hunting on their land, thereby helping to provide a capital influx into rural economies that were hardest hit by the previous recession. Creating additional opportunities will also encourage out-of-state hunting-related tourism and further bolster rural economies throughout the state.

***The neighboring states of Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia have recently authorized state-wide Sunday hunting and have reported great success, with no increase in conflicts among user groups, safety incidents, or detrimental impacts to their wildlife populations.*** Please find a supportive letter attached from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, which details their experiences following the authorization of statewide Sunday hunting a decade ago, and a letter from the Pennsylvania Game Commission regarding the recent implementation of Sunday hunting in 2025.

In closing, we ask that you consider the successful track record of ever-expanding seven-day hunting in Maryland, the economic and conservation funding benefits to the state, and the importance of increasing opportunities for youth and families to spend time together hunting and thereby protect family traditions and Maryland's hunting heritage.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Delta Waterfowl  
Hunters of Maryland, LLC.  
Maryland Bowhunters Society  
Maryland Sportsmen's Foundation  
National Deer Association  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
Pheasants Forever  
Quail Forever  
Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society  
Safari Club International  
Sportsmen's Alliance

Attached:

Sunday Hunting Letter – DNREC Division of Fish & Wildlife  
Sunday Hunting Letter – Pennsylvania Game Commission  
Sunday Hunting Letter - Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries



STATE OF DELAWARE  
**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL**

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE  
RICHARDSON & ROBBINS BUILDING  
89 KINGS HIGHWAY  
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

PHONE  
(302) 739-9910

**DIRECTOR'S  
OFFICE**

March 4, 2026

Kaleigh Leager  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
110 North Carolina Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Ms. Leager,

The State of Delaware implemented Sunday hunting through a gradual approach beginning in 2016 with House Bill 289 allowing deer hunting during archery and firearm seasons and later in 2024 with House Bill 271 to include gamebirds.

The Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife has not experienced an increase in user conflicts, safety incidents or detrimental impacts to wildlife or the resource associated with Sunday hunting. I originally anticipated greater turnout by the hunting community for Sundays, but our hunting numbers have remained consistent with Saturday still being the dominate hunting day in Delaware.

Our experience with Sunday Hunting in Delaware has been all positive and we are looking to include all game animals and game birds that Delaware has established hunting seasons for this year with proposed House Bill 278 currently in the Delaware House of Representatives.

If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick J. Emory".

Patrick J. Emory  
Director, Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control



# PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE

2001 ELMERTON AVENUE HARRISBURG, PA 17110-9797 | (717) 705-6540

February 26, 2026

Kaleigh Leager  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
110 North Carolina Ave. SE,  
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Ms. Leager,

I am in receipt of your request regarding whether Pennsylvania experienced an increase in user conflicts, hunting-related accidents, or biological impacts following increased Sunday hunting opportunities in Pennsylvania.

As you know, in July of 2025, Pennsylvania Act 36 of 2025 was signed into law, removing the prohibition on Sunday hunting. Following Act 36 taking effect, the Pennsylvania Game Commission authorized Sunday hunting for thirteen consecutive Sundays in the fall of 2025, beginning on Sunday, September 14, through Sunday, December 7.

I can report that the Game Commission did not experience an increase in user conflicts, safety incidents, or adverse impacts to wildlife or wildlife populations because of the expanded Sunday hunting opportunities.

Additionally, based on discussions with agency personnel and my own time spent in the field across the Commonwealth with Game Commission field staff, overall participation and activity levels on Sundays did not appear to reach those typically observed on Saturdays.

These observations, together with the absence of negative reports or documented concerns, were the basis for our decision to recommend to the Game Commission Board of Commissioners the full implementation of Sunday hunting for the 2026–2027 license year. The only modification along with the expanded Sunday hunting opportunities will be to reduce the bag limit of turkeys in spring gobbler season from two to one. This precautionary measure will remain in place until sufficient harvest data are available to determine whether Sunday hunting has materially affected harvest totals for that species. Otherwise, we are not recommending any changes to season structures or bag limits in connection with full Sunday hunting implementation.

Sincerely,

Stephen P. Smith  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Game Commission



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Game and Inland Fisheries**

**Molly J. Ward**  
*Secretary of Natural Resources*

**Bob Duncan**  
*Executive Director*

June 2, 2015

Bee Frederick  
Southeastern States Manager  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
624 S. Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

Dear Mr. Frederick:

As you are aware, in 2014 the Virginia General Assembly passed Senate Bill 154 and House Bill 1237, which permitted Sunday hunting under certain circumstances. With a few exceptions, Sunday hunting is now permitted for waterfowl and is also allowed for other species by private landowners, their families, or anyone with written permission from the landowner. Hunting of deer or bear with dogs while using a weapon is not permitted on Sundays, and certain limitations pertaining to areas near places of worship and other restrictions were also included in the legislation.

You have inquired as to the results of the implementation of the new Sunday hunting allowances in Virginia, as we have now completed our first full hunting season with these allowances in place. I can report to you that thus far, hunting on Sundays has gone well statewide. To begin, the Department elected to largely leave hunting seasons in place as they existed previously, and simply allow Sunday hunting as directed by the legislation. Bag limits were likewise left in place as they existed before.

At least through our first deer season (like most states, our most popular hunting season), Sunday hunting has not had a detrimental impact upon our deer herd. Average deer harvests for Sundays more closely approximated the averages for weekdays, and were far less than Saturdays (approximately 50% of the average Saturday during both archery and muzzleloader seasons, and 20% of the average Saturday during general firearms season). While some had feared that the addition of another day of hunting to the week could lead to an unacceptably high deer harvest, that certainly was not our experience during this first season.

Our spring turkey season did show a record harvest this year, though this harvest can be more directly attributed to population increases that have taken place over the past 4 years and good hunting conditions this year as opposed to increased Sunday harvests. Like deer, turkey

Bee Frederick  
Southeastern States Manager  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
June 2, 2015  
Page 2

harvests on Sunday more closely approximated weekday averages, contributing 11% to the total harvest.

Another concern of some related to Sunday hunting had been whether it might pose an undue burden upon our law enforcement officers. Again, to date, those fears have not been realized. Similar to harvest statistics, the number of hunting-related calls to our law enforcement dispatch on Sundays numbered similarly to the average weekday (and were in fact slightly below all other weekdays, specifically), increasing only a modest amount over the number of calls that were received on Sundays before hunting was allowed. Hunting-related arrests trended similarly.

In sum, I can say that Virginia's first season of Sunday hunting presented additional opportunities to sportsmen and women in the field without unacceptable impacts upon our wildlife resources, notable increases in citizen complaints, or other serious law enforcement concerns. We look forward to the coming seasons and to our hunters continuing to have this additional day available to them.

Sincerely,



Robert W. Duncan  
Executive Director

RWD/ag

**SB 643 MDA LOS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Harrison Palmer

Position: FAV



# Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

**Wes Moore**, Governor  
**Aruna Miller**, Lt. Governor  
**Kevin Atticks**, Secretary  
**Steven A. Connelly**, Deputy Secretary

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading  
Industry

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building  
50 Harry S Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
mda.maryland.gov  
410.841.5885 Baltimore/Washington  
410.841.5846 Fax

## Maryland Department of Agriculture Legislative Comment Date: February 17th, 2026

**BILL NUMBER:** SB 643  
**BILL TITLE:** Natural Resources - Hunting - Management  
**MDA POSITION:** SUPPORT

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The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) respectfully submits this letter in support of *Senate Bill 643 - Natural Resources - Hunting - Management*.

From an agricultural perspective, deer overpopulation continues to present real and ongoing challenges for Maryland farmers and landowners, particularly through crop damage. Deer damage remains one of the most frequently cited wildlife-related impacts to agricultural production. Farmers and landowners across the state consistently emphasize the need for practical, effective tools to manage deer pressure on and near agricultural lands.

MDA has been actively engaged in discussions regarding deer management and Sunday hunting policies. At the request of the House Environment and Transportation Committee during the interim, MDA participated in collaborative efforts to review hunting definitions, calendars, and implementation considerations alongside the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Through this process, agricultural stakeholders underscored that no single tool is sufficient on its own, and that a combination of approaches is often necessary to meaningfully reduce crop losses.

SB 643 strengthens and clarifies management tools available where deer damage has been documented. Providing DNR with additional authority to address deer populations on qualifying properties, including the ability to authorize Sunday hunting under defined circumstances, aligns with feedback MDA has received directly from producers experiencing persistent losses. SB 643 complements the joint Deer Management Initiative between MDA and DNR by reinforcing the statutory framework supporting targeted, responsive deer management.

MDA supports SB 643 as a practical and collaborative step toward strengthening deer management options for Maryland farmers and landowners while maintaining appropriate safeguards and coordination with DNR, and respectfully requests a favorable report.

**Contact:** Harrison Palmer, Chief of Staff  
[harrisonb.palmer@maryland.gov](mailto:harrisonb.palmer@maryland.gov) | (410) 980-9887

**SB 0643\_Helen Bailey.pdf**

Uploaded by: Helen Bailey

Position: FAV

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Helen Bailey and I am a resident of St. Mary's County, Maryland. I am here to voice my support for Senate Bill 0643 in regards to Sunday hunting and natural resources management.

The last time I testified on this issue, I was a freshman in high school. Now, I am happy to share that I will be graduating with a Bachelors of Science degree in Environmental and Natural Resources from Clemson University and pursuing my Masters degree in Environmental Policy at the University of Cambridge in England starting in October.

My message remains the same as it was in 2019, that the citizens of Maryland should be afforded the same access and opportunities that they have during the other 6 days of the week when it comes to hunting.

Simply put, Sunday hunting restrictions are a result of Blue laws. The intention of Blue laws dates back to the 1700s in order to push Christian church attendance and protect the outlined rest day of society. Operating a business, shopping, playing sports, fishing, and many other activities were prohibited on Sunday. All of these are now allowed on Sunday in Maryland, except hunting.

The North American Model for Wildlife Conservation is known as the most successful system of policies and laws for wildlife. There are 7 pillars to this model and the State of Maryland is currently not following 2 very important pillars by prohibiting Sunday hunting. Number 1 is hunting opportunities for all. Restricting hunting to 6 days a week creates a barrier to children, working class citizens, and students. Hunters were the first conservationists and generate millions of dollars every year through PR to fund conservation initiatives. Expanding access to all Marylanders through Sunday hunting would assist in generating funds for the state of Maryland.

The second pillar is wildlife management being based in science. DNR has teams of biologists that monitor populations, migration patterns, number of hunters, etc. and they set seasons and bag limits annually. They should hold the responsibility of managing Sunday hunting as they manage the other 6 days of the week. Maryland is one of the last remaining states to have migratory bird Sunday hunting restrictions. All of our border states that are also in the Atlantic flyway for migratory birds have Sunday hunting. These birds are following the same migration patterns and the fear of overharvesting has not been evident in surrounding states. Hunting and managing wildlife ethically does not lead to overharvests.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 0643.

Thank you,  
Helen Bailey

**SenatorBailey\_FAV\_SB643.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jack Bailey

Position: FAV

**JACK BAILEY**  
*Legislative District 29*  
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

*Annapolis Office*  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 401  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3673  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3673  
Jack.Bailey@senate.maryland.gov

*District Office*  
23680 Three Notch Road, Unit 101  
Hollywood, Maryland 20636  
240-309-4238

March 10, 2026

**Senate Bill 643 – Natural Resources – Hunting – Management**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 643. This bill gives the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) greater discretion over further expansion of Sunday hunting in Maryland. This bill also creates a new permit to authorize the reduction of the deer population on any single, contiguous property of at least 10 acres where it has documented deer damage.

Senate Bill 643 was drafted as a result of comprehensive stakeholder discussions that occurred over the interim. This expanded regulatory authority for DNR only applies in counties that already have authorized Sunday hunting. The bill does not allow hunting on public land in the State park system on Sunday and requires any regulations adopted by DNR to allow, at a minimum, Sunday hunting during those hours and days when it is permitted as of June 30, 2027. These provisions would sunset in 2030 to allow the General Assembly to evaluate the effects of this change and make the most informed decisions into the future.

I believe very strongly that all Marylanders should be given the opportunity to hunt on Sundays. Hunting is significantly regulated by the State. There is a requirement that hunters must attend a Hunter Safety Education class, pass a written test, demonstrate firearm safety, and purchase a hunting license. Before hunting on private property, the hunter is required by law to get written permission of the landowner. The landowner can determine when, for what species, what methods, and how hunting is allowed on their own property.

It is particularly important for younger hunters, who often have school sporting events on weekdays and Saturdays, to permit Sunday hunting so that the next generation of hunters are afforded the opportunity to participate in this great tradition. Sunday has become a very popular day for hunting in our State. Despite the current restrictions, according to the Department of Natural Resources, hunters harvested nearly 7,000 deer on Sundays in the 2025-26 season, representing about 10% of the total harvest. Hunting is also a significant contributor to our State's economy; an economic analysis prepared for the Sportsmen's Alliance found that, in 2022, 113,460 Maryland hunters spent \$371 million on hunting-related purchases, supporting nearly 3,000 jobs.

Maryland's restrictions on Sunday hunting are a relic of an era that has long since passed. It is legal to target shoot on Sundays and to trap and kill groundhogs, coyotes, fisher, gray and red fox, nutria, opossum, raccoon and skunks on Sunday. It is also legal to shoot on a regulated shooting area or with a crop damage permit, or to chase foxes with horses on Sunday. The current Sunday hunting laws are a significant restriction on the rights of private property owners to hunt or permit hunting on their own property.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 643. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack Bailey', written over a white background.

Senator Jack Bailey

**SB-0643\_WCFSC\_winter\_FAV\_2026.pdf**

Uploaded by: Joseph Winter

Position: FAV



# Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Inc.

Joe Winter, President  
19226 Dogstreet Road  
Keedysville, Maryland 21756

Jwinter-wcfsc@live.com  
(301) 712-8213

Honorable and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Joe Winter, and I am President of the Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Inc., The Federation is a longstanding organization that includes multiple hunting clubs and sportsmen's associations. As President I collaborate with their leaders to support and represent the sportsmen and sportswomen across Washington County.

On March 10, 2026, the Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee will be hearing the advantages and disadvantages of **SB-0643 (Natural Resources – Hunting Management)**.

This bill recognizes the importance and effectiveness of the Department of Natural Resources to study, research, and implement sound game management regulations. Given the Department's specialized expertise in wildlife management and its ongoing engagement with public and private stakeholders, the DNR is best positioned to regulate and address issues related to wildlife resources and the most effective management thereof.

**Together with the sportsmen and sportswomen of Washington County, I strongly urge you to support and vote favorably on SB-0643.**

Respectfully,

*Joe Winter*

President  
Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Inc.

# **2026 MD SB 643 - Sunday Hunting Prohibition Repeal**

Uploaded by: Kaleigh Leager

Position: FAV

CONGRESSIONAL  
**SPORTSMEN'S**  
FOUNDATION

**To:** **The Honorable Brian J. Feldman**  
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re:** **Senate Bill 643 – Natural Resources – Sunday Hunting**

**Position:** **Support**

**Date:** **3/10/2026**

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Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

As the Manager, Mid-Atlantic States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), and as a lifelong Maryland resident and avid licensed hunter, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 643 (SB 643) – legislation that will allow the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to fully implement Sunday hunting for all game species in Maryland.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitals advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Maryland has experienced success with the addition of Sunday hunting for most game species since 2003 when it was first authorized. The passage of SB 643 will remove the legislative barrier that prohibits the DNR (the subject matter experts) from fully managing all game species throughout the state, through scientifically regulated hunting seasons, and will allow sportsmen and women the opportunity to recreate 7-days a week (versus 6-days a week), like many other outdoor enthusiasts already have the opportunity to do. For example, people may hike, bike, bird, canoe, horse ride, paddleboard, target shoot, and more, 365 days a year without regulatory seasons and restrictions. Hunters are the only group of outdoor users that continue to be discriminated against through the remaining and archaic, legislative Sunday hunting prohibitions. It is important to note that this legislation will not undo the current restrictions on hunting in State Parks, Natural Resource Management Areas, or other areas already closed to hunting.

Access and opportunity are major limiting factors hindering participation in hunting, and restrictions on Sunday hunting provide a temporal access barrier to youth and others that work or attend school throughout the week and are often involved in extracurricular activities on Saturdays. Individuals and families continue to seek the ability to participate in safe and healthy recreation. Hunting not only provides residents with that chance, but it also offers a chance to harvest fresh and healthy meat for consumption and nourishment. Additionally, hunting is the most cost-effective means of wildlife population management. CSF strongly supports measures that increase access and opportunity for

sportsmen and women that are in line with science-based wildlife management.<sup>1</sup>

Sportsmen and women are also the primary funders of state-level conservation efforts and are thus an important constituency that provides benefits for all Marylanders. In 2025 alone, Maryland’s sportsmen and women generated more than \$27.1 million dollars for conservation funding in Maryland through revenue derived from license sales and manufacturer level excise taxes on sporting-related goods in the unique “user pays – public benefits” structure known as the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). These funds are critical for the DNR to carry out their mission of conserving and protecting our great state’s natural resources.

In closing, repealing laws that prohibit hunting on Sundays will likely increase participation, and license sales by extension will have a positive impact on the state’s economy, and will strengthen the Old-Line State’s deep outdoor heritage. In addition, this bill will provide additional opportunities for friends and families to spend time afield, resulting in the strengthening of relationships, creating bonds and memories, as well as passing traditions down to the next generation. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 643.

Sincerely,



Kaleigh E. Leager  
Manager, Mid-Atlantic States | Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation  
110 North Carolina Ave, SE | Washington, DC 20003  
[kleager@congressionalsportsmen.org](mailto:kleager@congressionalsportsmen.org) | 202-543-6850 X 20

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<sup>1</sup> [Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation 2025 Issue Brief – Sunday Hunting Restrictions](#)

# **SB 0643 Natural Resources – Hunting – Management.p**

Uploaded by: Larry Porter

Position: FAV



**Senate Bill 0643**

*Natural Resources – Hunting – Management*

Position: FAV

Date: March 10, 2026

To: Education, Energy, and the  
Environment

On behalf of the Caroline County Commissioners, we write to express our full support for Senate Bill 0643—Natural Resources—Hunting –Management.

As you are aware, Caroline County has a deep hunting heritage. The passage of this legislation will increase hunting opportunities across the state, in addition to Caroline County. Additionally, this legislation will increase the opportunity for hunters to manage the deer population which is vital for Caroline County’s farmers. Deer depredation is a major concern to our constituency, and the passage of this legislation provides another tool in the toolbox for landowners, farmers, and hunters to responsibly manage the deer herds in our county.

The passage of this legislation will also greatly benefit our families that rely on hunting to provide food and safe recreation, as well as the ecotourism that it brings to our county, in addition to our fellow counties on the Eastern Shore.

In closing, the passage of Senate Bill 0643 also allows counties the opportunity to opt-out of Sunday hunting if they choose, by going through the regulatory process of the Department of Natural Resources, rather than through the legislature.

For the reasons mentioned above, the Caroline County Commissioners are in full support of Senate Bill 0643.

Sincerely,

J. Travis Breeding, President

**SB0643\_DNR\_SUP\_EEE\_3-10-26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lydia McPherson

Position: FAV



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

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March 10, 2026

**BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 643 - FIRST READER**

**SHORT TITLE: NATURAL RESOURCES – HUNTING – MANAGEMENT**

**DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT**

**EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION**

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The Department of Natural Resources is supportive of SB 643 and its balanced approach to addressing Sunday hunting. The bill is the result of months-long stakeholder engagement.

It is well documented that deer overpopulation is a concern in certain areas of Maryland. These problems are most evident in and around urban and suburban areas. Current law limits DNR authority for management alternatives to the issuance of agricultural Deer Management Permits (“crop damage permits”) and Deer Cooperator Permits (“sharpshooting permits”). SB 643 would allow DNR to offer a new deer damage abatement alternative. The new program authorizes permits for properties of 10 acres or more, without requiring a commercial agricultural component. This will be an important addition to the existing deer management options, especially in the suburban open space interface where deer densities are highest.

Additionally, the bill creates more recreational Sunday hunting opportunities, which offer dual benefits. First, it aids in managing the state's deer population by increasing the available time for hunters to harvest deer during the hunting seasons. Second, it serves as a critical hunter recruitment tool, by effectively doubling the weekend hunting time and helping to keep hunters engaged and active in the field.

A strong hunter population is needed to manage conflicts with species like white-tailed deer, sika deer, and resident geese. Hunting license sales and matching federal Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration grants provide funding to manage all wildlife, including plants and animals. In the 1980s, DNR was selling approximately 180,000 to 190,000 hunting licenses per year. Today, the agency sells about 110,000 hunting licenses. In response to surveys, hunters have said lack of access to land, the lack of time to go hunting, and the lack of mentors for new hunters have caused this decline in licensed hunters. Adding more time to hunt on Sundays is seen as a way to provide more time for hunting and additional time for mentors to train new hunters.

While this bill expands hunting opportunities, it also considers local discretion and enhances safety protocols, such as establishing setbacks for hunting near certain trails. The department will continue to respect the requests of local leaders and work with counties, as is standard practice with all hunting regulations, as we consider the issue of hunting on Sundays.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services  
[lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov](mailto:lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov) ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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**History:** Sunday hunting prohibitions date to Colonial era “blue laws” of the 1700s. Over time, most states have removed these restrictions and allow hunting on Sunday. Approximately 40 states currently allow unrestricted Sunday hunting. Neighboring states, including Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia, and most recently Pennsylvania, have all adopted Sunday hunting opportunities in recent years. Presently, 20 of 23 counties in Maryland allow some Sunday hunting for certain game species.

**Safety:** Hunting accidents and conflicts with non-hunters in the state are extremely rare. During the 2023-2024 hunting season, Maryland hunters spent an estimated 750,000 days afield, and DNR recorded 20 hunting accidents, with 15 being self-inflicted, and no fatalities. Most were falls from tree stands. One of the accidents occurred on a Sunday that season. This low accident rate has been stable for years, thanks to our hunter safety education program and responsible hunters.

**Atlantic Population Canada Geese Seasons:** 43 states currently allow Sunday hunting for migratory game birds. Offering migratory game bird hunting on Sundays in Maryland would not shorten the season, but would instead change the days these species are open to hunting. The included calendar chart shows an example of possible Atlantic Population Canada Geese seasons structured with Sunday hunting. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the governing authority over all migratory game bird hunting in the United States, has expressed no concerns about hunting these species on Sunday.

## **BILL EXPLANATION**

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SB 643 would create four new provisions for hunting and wildlife management in Maryland. First, it would authorize the Department (DNR) to create a new deer damage abatement program where deer damage remains a problem for landowners and farmers who own or manage ten (10) acres of more of land; it would also authorize safe sharing of Sunday hunting hours during deer firearm season in certain counties; it would create a hunting program to recruit, retain and re-engage hunters during a particular migratory game bird hunting season; and on a future date-certain would give DNR the authority to set Sunday hunting days as currently occurs for all other days of the weeks in the DNR authority.

**Atlantic Population Canada Geese**  
**Draft 45 Day Season Structure**

November 2026							November 2026 (Sunday Hunting)						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sat	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30						29	30					

December 2026							December 2026 (Sunday Hunting)						
Su n	M on	Tu e	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31			27	28	29	30	31		

January 2027							January 2027 (Sunday Hunting)						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sat	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sat
					1	2						1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31							31						

**SB0643-EEE-FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT  
MAYOR

*Office of Government  
Relations 88 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

**SB0643**

March 10, 2026

**TO:** Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations  
**RE:** Senate Bill 643- Natural Resources –Hunting - Management

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 643.

SB 643 updates Maryland law relating to wildlife management by expanding the authority of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to address deer population impacts and by modernizing Sunday hunting regulations across the State. The legislation authorizes DNR to reduce deer populations on single, contiguous properties of at least 10 acres where documented deer damage exists. Deer damage is defined to include widespread ecological impacts such as the elimination of forest understory, tree regeneration, and native plants, as well as destruction of agricultural crops and ornamental landscaping. The bill permits DNR, at its discretion, to determine appropriate methods of population reduction and to issue permits to property owners or their employees, lessees, or agents, to shoot deer on Sundays as part of an authorized management effort. During deer firearms season, permits must prohibit Sunday deer hunting within 25 yards of a DNR designated equestrian trail. The bill also repeals certain county-by-county Sunday hunting restrictions, authorizes DNR to adopt regulations allowing Sunday hunting during game bird and game mammal seasons, and repeals the prohibition on Sunday hunting of migratory game birds, subject to applicable federal and state requirements. Additionally, DNR is required to map eligible areas for deer damage permits and make those maps publicly available.

Within Baltimore City, hunting is not permitted on public lands under any circumstances This includes all parks and properties managed by Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP). However, hunting is legal within Baltimore City if individuals maintain the 450-foot safety zone as regulated by the State, hunt only on property they own or have permission to hunt on,

and possess a valid Maryland state deer hunting license.

Many state wildlife agencies have been removing Sunday hunting bans that were initially established to enforce Sabbath observance and incentivize church attendance. Allowing Sunday hunting will provide hunters with additional opportunities to harvest their desired game animal, particularly for individuals whose work or family schedules prevent them from hunting during the week.

For these reasons, the Baltimore City Administration **supports** Senate Bill 643 while reaffirming that hunting remains strictly prohibited on public lands within Baltimore City and subject to all applicable state and local safety and licensing requirements.

*Annapolis – phone: 410.269.0207 • fax: 410.269.6785  
Baltimore – phone: 410.396.3497 • fax: 410.396.5136  
<https://mogr.baltimorecity.gov>*



**M&A\_Smalls\_MAPTA Itr support\_SB643 HB1063.pdf**

Uploaded by: Roger Manno

Position: FAV



**7050 Oakland Mills Road  
Suite 180  
Columbia, MD 21046**

**Phone: 410-290-3890  
[www.midatlanticpipetrades.org](http://www.midatlanticpipetrades.org)**

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March 3, 2026

The Honorable Jack Bailey  
Maryland State Senator  
401 James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Reginal T. Boyce  
Maryland State Delegate  
304 Lowe House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Bailey and Delegate Boyce,

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association, the regional affiliate of the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States, Canada, I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 643 / House Bill 1063, legislation that would expand and modernize Maryland's Sunday hunting laws.

Many members of our many locals in Maryland have expressed strong support for this legislation. Our members work demanding schedules on construction and industrial projects throughout the region, and for many working tradespeople, Sundays are often the only realistic opportunity to participate in outdoor traditions such as hunting.

Hunting is an activity enjoyed by many of our members and their families, and it is rooted in values of responsible firearm ownership, conservation, and ethical wildlife management. Expanding reasonable Sunday hunting opportunities recognizes the realities of modern work schedules while supporting responsible hunters who follow Maryland's wildlife regulations and safety standards.

We also note that building trades organizations in neighboring states have supported similar legislation. The Delaware Building and Construction Trades Council, for example, supported comparable legislation in that state recognizing that union members with demanding work schedules often rely on Sundays as their only opportunity to hunt. Senate Bill 643 / House Bill 1063 represents a balanced approach that maintains oversight by the Department of Natural Resources while expanding opportunities for responsible hunting and wildlife management in Maryland.

For these reasons, we respectfully support this legislation and appreciate your leadership in advancing it.

Sincerely,

Terriea "T" Smalls  
President  
Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association

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**Plumbers and Gasfitters Local 5** – Lanham, MD  
**Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 10** – Richmond, VA/Roanoke, VA  
**Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 110** – Norfolk, VA  
**Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 74** – Newark, DE

**Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 486** – Baltimore, MD  
**Steamfitters Local 602** – Capitol Heights, MD  
**Road Sprinkler Fitters Local 669** – Columbia, MD

# **SB0643 Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sean Beck

Position: FAV

SB0643 Favorable  
Sean Beck

## Expansion of Access

Many Maryland hunters work during the week and are unable to hunt until the weekend. Similarly, youth hunters have school throughout the week and are only able to hunt on the weekend. Under current Sunday hunting restrictions that gives them one day per week to potentially hunt. **Restrictions on Sunday hunting reduce hunting access by 50% for hunters in Maryland.**

## Expansion of Population Control

Similar to my first point, by allowing Sunday hunting we increase opportunities for the harvest of deer by 50% for working class and youth hunters. The state simply has too many deer and we should be empowering our dwindling number of hunters to harvest the ever increasing population of white tail deer. **Removing restrictions on Sunday hunting will greatly benefit the environment of the state.**

## Safety Concerns

Whenever Sunday hunting bills are brought forth, the equestrians show up in force to complain about safety concerns. Each year MD NRP publishes a safety report at the end of the hunting season, and for the last several decades there are **ZERO** recorded instances of injury to the equestrians from hunters. Equestrians are thousands of times more likely to be injured by a fall from their horse than they are by a hunter.

Furthermore, if they were so concerned about safety from hunters then I would not see them so often at Patuxent State Forest during all of the various hunting seasons, including rifle and muzzleloader. For the last six years I have deployed as many as 15 trail cameras throughout the Patuxent State Forest. On numerous occasions I have documented the equestrians or their hounds in the woods during an active hunting season. This is in addition to observations made with my own eyes. **Hunters do not pose a documented risk to those who so frequently oppose these bills.**

**For these reasons I ask for a favorable report on this bill.**

## Additional Information

As proof of the presence of equestrians in the woods during active deer seasons, I provide a small selection of images each stamped with date and time of occurrence.



12/1/2024 was a Wednesday during the deer rifle season.



10/23/2024 was a Wednesday during the deer archery season.



12/6/2023 was a Wednesday during the deer firearm season.

**SB 643\_SWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dawn Luedtke

Position: FWA



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

DAWN LUEDTKE  
COUNCILMEMBER  
DISTRICT 7

March 6, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 643, *Natural Resources - Hunting - Management*

Dear Chair Feldman,

I write in support of SB 643, *Natural Resources – Hunting – Management* and an amendment to remove the sections governing waterfowl management.

Our office has recently heard from multiple residents in rural and suburban parts of Montgomery County who are experiencing a noticeable increase in deer populations in their neighborhoods. A growing number of families are reporting quality-of-life and public health concerns, including significant yard damage, sanitation issues from concentrated deer droppings, and increased worries about tick exposure and Lyme disease. These residents are not asking for the elimination of deer from their communities, but for tools that help maintain a sustainable balance between wildlife populations and the people who live alongside them.

SB 643 represents a practical step toward that balance. Expanding Sunday hunting opportunities can help address declining hunter participation and increase the amount of time available to responsibly harvest deer during the hunting season. As the Department of Natural Resources notes in its analysis, Maryland has seen a significant decline in licensed hunters –from roughly 180,000 to 190,000 annually in the 1980s to about 110,000 today –while hunters remain a critical part of managing wildlife populations and reducing conflicts with species such as white-tailed deer. Increasing available hunting time, particularly on weekends when more residents can participate, is a sensible way to strengthen that management capacity.

I respectfully request an amendment to clarify that the expanded Sunday hunting authority applies only to deer and not to migratory waterfowl. Our communities are not experiencing comparable issues with



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

migratory waterfowl, which are governed by a different regulatory structure and population dynamics. Limiting the bill's scope in this way would ensure that the policy response remains closely aligned with the underlying management problem the legislation seeks to address.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 643 and for your continued work to support responsible wildlife management across Maryland.

Very truly yours,

Dawn Luedtke  
Montgomery County Councilmember, District 7

**SB643\_FWA\_Kimble.pdf**

Uploaded by: James Kimble

Position: FWA

James A. Kimble  
30302 Rabbit Hill Road  
Easton Maryland 21601  
[albiekimble@gmail.com](mailto:albiekimble@gmail.com)  
410-490-2124

March 4, 2026

Chairman Brian Feldman  
& The Education, Energy and Environment

I write to you regarding proposed legislation that would remove Maryland's longstanding prohibition on Sunday migratory bird hunting and require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow certain groups to hunt Canada geese on Sundays. I respectfully urge you to consider the broader conservation, biological, and economic implications of this proposal before advancing the bill.

Maryland is unique within the Atlantic Flyway. Our state hosts a disproportionately large share of wintering Atlantic Population (AP) Canada geese and other migratory waterfowl, while also serving as the most heavily hunted wintering area in the Flyway. Maryland ranks fourth nationally in Canada goose harvest, with a ten-year average of 24,440 goose hunters harvesting approximately seven geese per five days afield. Comparisons to surrounding states that allow Sunday waterfowl hunting are not equivalent. Virginia (ranked 20th), Pennsylvania (10th), and Delaware (32nd) experience significantly lower harvest totals and hunting pressure. Maryland's biological and management circumstances are fundamentally different.

The Atlantic Population Canada goose breeding pair numbers have fluctuated significantly in recent years, declining from 167,629 breeding pairs in 2016 to 88,890 in 2024. The long-term maintenance objective is 60,000 breeding pairs. During the period between 2016 and the 2025–2026 hunting season, seasons that expanded to 45 days with a two-bird daily bag were followed by population declines and a return to a more restrictive framework of 30 days and one bird per day. These geese already face pressures from habitat change, weather variability on northern breeding grounds, and other environmental stressors. Additional hunting pressure should not be layered onto a population that has demonstrated volatility.

Maryland's history underscores the risks of overharvest. In the 1990s, sustained high hunting pressure, combined with poor nesting and hatch conditions, led to a complete moratorium on Canada goose hunting from 1995 through 2001. Given recent fluctuations in breeding pair numbers, another restrictive cycle—or even a moratorium—is not beyond possibility. A moratorium would require a minimum three-year closure and would significantly harm Maryland's hunting economy, as well as risk losing a generation of waterfowl hunters.

Proponents suggest that adding Sundays would increase participation and opportunity. However, available data does not support this conclusion. Virginia permitted Sunday hunting beginning in 2014 and experienced a 13 percent decline in hunting license sales from 2014 to 2024 (Virginia DCR). During that same period, Maryland—without Sunday waterfowl hunting—experienced

only an 8 percent decline. Hunter participation appears more closely tied to hunt quality and reliability than to the number of available days. Increased disturbance, particularly the removal of a consistent weekly rest day, may degrade hunt quality by altering feeding and flight behavior of migratory waterfowl. Sundays currently provide a predictable day of reduced disturbance, benefiting both birds and overall hunting conditions.

It is also important to note that the bill, as drafted, removes the general prohibition on Sunday migratory bird hunting altogether. While it directs DNR to allow youth, seniors, and students to hunt Canada geese on Sundays, removing the prohibition would authorize DNR to permit Sunday migratory bird hunting for any hunter and across all species. Paradoxically, if Sunday access is limited only to certain groups for Canada geese, other hunters could lose between four and eight hunting days depending on the season length. Furthermore, the bill applies only to private lands. Hunters who rely exclusively on public lands would automatically lose between four and eight hunting days per goose or duck season. Rather than increasing opportunity, this framework risks redistributing and in some cases reducing opportunity.

It is understandable to expand opportunity for species that are demonstrably overpopulated and causing measurable agricultural damage, such as deer. However, there is no comparable waterfowl overpopulation issue requiring correction. Conservation of the migratory resource—shared across state and international boundaries—must take precedence over incremental increases in hunting access.

Maryland cannot afford to “try it and see.” One year of increased harvest coinciding with poor breeding-ground weather conditions could quickly push the entire Flyway into a restrictive regulatory package. The biological consequences would extend far beyond one season and could take years to correct.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask that you maintain Maryland’s longstanding prohibition on Sunday migratory bird hunting and prioritize conservation stability for Atlantic Population Canada geese and other migratory waterfowl.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to responsible wildlife management.

Sincerely,  
Albie Kimble  
Concerned Citizen

**SB643\_FWA\_MWHA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jared Thompson

Position: FWA

# Maryland Wildlife & Heritage Association

March 10, 2026

Education, Energy and Environment

## **Senate Bill 643 – Natural Resources – Sunday Hunting – Migratory Game Birds**

Position: Support with Amendment to Remove Authorization for Sunday Hunting of Migratory Game Birds

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 643. I respectfully offer support with an amendment to remove the provision authorizing Sunday hunting of migratory game birds, including Canada geese and ducks. This amendment prioritizes migratory game bird conservation, putting the resource first, rather than favoring hunter preference for additional opportunity with potentially detrimental impacts on the regulated species.

As drafted, SB 643 **removes the prohibition on Sunday migratory bird hunting entirely**. It requires the Department of Natural Resources to allow youth, seniors, and students to hunt Canada geese on Sundays. However, once the statutory prohibition is removed, the Department has the **authority to allow Sunday hunting for any hunter and for all migratory game bird species**. This would be allowed through a regulatory process which takes the authority partially away from the representative legislature.

Maryland is unique within the Atlantic Flyway and the country. The Eastern Shore of Maryland is known as the “Canada Goose Capital of the World” and hosts a disproportionately large share of wintering Atlantic Population (AP) Canada geese and other migratory waterfowl. Maryland is also one of the most heavily hunted states for Canada geese in the country. **Maryland ranks 4th in the nation for Canada goose harvest**, with a ten-year average of approximately 24,440 goose hunters per year harvesting about seven geese per five days afield. This further demonstrates the high harvest levels as many of these years had a one bird per day limit. Comparisons to surrounding states that allow Sunday waterfowl hunting are not appropriate. Virginia ranks 20th, Pennsylvania 10th, and Delaware 32nd in harvest, all with substantially lower hunting pressure. The ecological and harvest realities in Maryland are fundamentally different and warrant a more precautionary approach.

The AP Canada goose population has experienced significant volatility in recent years. Breeding pair estimates have declined from 167,629 in 2016 to 88,890 in 2024, while the Flyway maintenance goal is 60,000 breeding pairs. Over this same period, seasons with more liberal frameworks (45 days and a two-bird daily limit) have often been followed by reduced breeding pair counts and subsequent returns to more restrictive packages (one bird for 30 days). These fluctuations demonstrate that the population remains sensitive to harvest pressure and

# Maryland Wildlife & Heritage Association

environmental conditions. The population already faces numerous pressures, habitat variability, weather conditions on the breeding grounds, and changing migration patterns, without the addition of increased hunting pressure on Sundays.

Maryland's history underscores this risk. Sustained high hunting pressure in the 1990s, combined with poor hatching conditions, resulted in a moratorium on Canada goose hunting from 1995 through 2001. Given the recent volatility in breeding pair numbers, another moratorium is not outside the realm of possibility. The consequences of such a closure would be severe for hunters, local economies, and conservation funding tied to license revenue and equipment purchases.

Evidence from other states suggests that adding Sunday hunting does not meaningfully increase hunter participation. Hunting quality and reliability are more important drivers of participation than simply adding more days. After Virginia authorized Sunday hunting in 2014, the state experienced approximately a 13% decline in hunting license sales from 2014 to 2024, according to state licensing data from the Virginia Department of Resource Conservation. Over the same period, Maryland, without Sunday waterfowl hunting, experienced a smaller decline of roughly 8%. This indicates that adding Sunday opportunities does not necessarily translate into sustained recruitment or retention of hunters.

Sundays currently provide a predictable day of rest for migratory waterfowl, allowing birds to feed and move with less disturbance. Removing that respite would likely alter flight patterns and feeding behavior, increase disturbance, and ultimately reduce overall hunt quality. Lower quality hunting experiences can diminish long-term participation more than the inability to hunt seven days a week.

Importantly, the bill does not actually increase opportunity for many hunters. If Sundays are reserved for youth, seniors, and students, all other hunters would lose between four and ten potential hunting days, depending on season length, because the federal migratory framework limits total days afield. In addition, if the bill applies only to private land and certain public lands, meaning hunters who rely on public land access would automatically lose between four and ten hunting days per goose or duck season with no offsetting opportunity.

Expanding hunting opportunities can be appropriate for overabundant species such as deer that cause significant agricultural and property damage. Waterfowl management presents a very different context. There is no overpopulation problem for migratory geese and ducks in Maryland that warrants additional harvest pressure. The argument that adding a weekend day for hunting would not increase harvest is disingenuous. Saturdays are currently the most hunted day of the week so logic tells us the harvest would increase by approximately the same number as harvested on Saturday. Those that cannot hunt on a Saturday would then hunt Sunday. Increased harvest is the only logical conclusion. How can one argue for Sunday deer hunting in order to harvest more deer and then argue adding Sunday hunting for migratory birds will not also increase harvest?

# Maryland Wildlife & Heritage Association

Conservation of the resource and long-term population stability should take precedence meaningfully over short-term preferences for additional hunting days.

Finally, this is not an issue Maryland can afford to “try and see.” One year of elevated harvest combined with poor weather conditions on the northern breeding grounds could push the entire Atlantic Flyway into a restrictive regulatory package. A renewed moratorium, required to last multiple years if implemented, would severely damage the State’s hunting economy and risk losing an entire generation of waterfowl hunters.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that Senate Bill 643 be amended to remove the authorization for Sunday hunting of migratory game birds while allowing the remainder of the bill to proceed if the Committee deems appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to science-based wildlife management and the long-term sustainability of Maryland’s migratory waterfowl resources.

Jared W. Thompson

President, Maryland Wildlife and Heritage Association

## **26 MGPA\_SB643\_SundayHunting.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lindsay Thompson

Position: FWA



Date: March 10, 2026

## **Senate Bill 643– Natural Resources – Sunday Hunting**

Committee: Education, Energy and Environment

MGPA Position: Support with Amendments

On behalf of the Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA), representing Maryland farmers who grow corn, soybeans, wheat, barley, and other grains across the State, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 643 with amendments. Specifically, MGPA requests removal of the provisions authorizing Sunday hunting of migratory game birds.

Maryland’s grain farmers work to balance agricultural productivity with responsible wildlife conservation. Our members experience firsthand the impacts of wildlife populations on crop production, and we strongly support policies grounded in sound science that both protect natural resources and address real on-farm challenges.

MGPA supports the bill’s provisions that increase opportunities to harvest deer. Deer overpopulation continues to cause significant and measurable damage to grain crops across Maryland, including corn, soybeans, and small grains. Crop depredation from deer results in yield losses, replanting costs, and increased management burdens for farmers, particularly in rural and suburban interface areas. Expanding hunting opportunities for deer is a targeted and appropriate wildlife management strategy that addresses an overabundant species while providing meaningful relief to agricultural producers.

### **Requested Amendment: Remove Authorization for Sunday Migratory Bird Hunting**

While MGPA supports increased deer harvest opportunities, we respectfully request an amendment to remove the authorization for Sunday hunting of migratory game birds, including waterfowl.

Many Maryland grain farmers lease their land for hunting and derive significant income from leases for waterfowl hunting, specifically, Canada Geese. The State hosts a disproportionately large share of wintering Atlantic Population Canada geese and other migratory waterfowl and is one of the most heavily hunted wintering areas in the Flyway. High existing hunting pressure, combined with Maryland’s geographic importance to wintering birds, requires a cautious, science-based management approach that prioritizes long-term population stability.

MGPA has serious concerns with authorizing additional, high pressure, hunting days given the breeding pair population was as low as 88,000 in 2024. For context, the target before more restrictions and possibly no hunting sets in is 60,000 pairs. History demonstrates the risks of excessive harvest pressure during periods of population volatility. In the 1990s, sustained 3 bird limits for 90 days coupled with poor weather conditions contributed to a moratorium on Canada goose hunting in Maryland from 1995 to 2001. The loss of lease income for farmers during these already difficult would be extremely detrimental.

From an agricultural perspective, there is no comparable overpopulation problem with migratory waterfowl that justifies additional hunting pressure. Unlike deer, migratory geese and ducks do not cause

widespread, sustained crop depredation that would necessitate expanded harvest opportunities. As such, conservation of the resource should take precedence over hunter preference.

MGPA respectfully supports Senate Bill 643 with amendments. We strongly support expanded opportunities to harvest deer to address ongoing crop damage and agricultural losses. However, we urge the Committee to amend the bill to remove the authorization for Sunday hunting of migratory game birds in order to protect vulnerable migratory waterfowl populations.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of Maryland agriculture and natural resources.

Amendment:

(13) ~~(i) [A person may not]~~ ~~SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (ii) OF THIS 27 PARAGRAPH, THE DEPARTMENT MAY ALLOW A PERSON TO~~ hunt migratory game birds on Sunday.

~~(ii) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ALLOW THE FOLLOWING PERSONS TO HUNT MIGRATORY CANADA GEESE (ATLANTIC POPULATION) ON SUNDAYS DURING THE OPEN SEASON:-~~

~~—1. JUNIOR HUNTERS;—~~

~~—2. SENIOR HUNTERS;—~~

~~—3. APPRENTICE HUNTERS; AND~~

~~—4. FULL TIME STUDENTS WHO HOLD A HUNTING LICENSE.~~

## **02.25.26 SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS Senate Bill 0643**

Uploaded by: Shelley Heller

Position: FWA



## The County Commissioners of Kent County

Ronald H. Fithian, President | Albert H. Nickerson, Member | John F. Price, Member  
Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator | G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney

February 25, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS Senate Bill 0643 Natural Resources – Hunting –  
Management (Cross-filed with House Bill 1063)

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the County Commissioners of Kent County, Maryland, this letter serves as support for Senate Bill 0643, Natural Resources – Hunting – Management, with amendments. The Commissioners believe that Sundays provide a reliable day of rest for migratory fowl, and additional disturbance on that day would likely affect the flight and feeding behavior of geese and ducks, contributing to lower hunt quality. The bill, as drafted, removes the current Sunday prohibition and allows for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to determine regulations for Sunday migratory hunting. The bill also directs the DNR to permit Sunday Canada Goose hunting for youth, seniors, and students, potentially opening Sunday hunting for all migratory species. If Sunday access is limited to the named groups, other hunters lose 4–8 days of opportunity, and those who rely solely on public land lose the same number of days.

While increased access may be appropriate for overpopulated species, such as deer that cause significant crop damage, there is no comparable overpopulation issue with waterfowl. Conservation of the resource should take precedence over hunter preference. For these reasons, Kent County respectfully urges amendments to Senate Bill 0643.

Very truly yours,

Shelley L. Heller  
County Administrator

SLH: smb

cc: The County Commissioners of Kent County  
The Honorable Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.  
The Honorable Jay A. Jacobs  
The Honorable Steven J. Arentz  
The Honorable Jefferson L. Ghrist

# Maryland Farm Bureau

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FWA



## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035

410-922-3426 | [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)

March 10, 2026

**To:** Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**From:** Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

**RE:** Support with Amendments of SB643 Natural Resources - Hunting – Management

On behalf of the more than 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I respectfully submit written testimony in support, with amendments, of SB643 – Natural Resources – Hunting – Management.

This legislation authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to permit Sunday deer population reduction on properties experiencing significant deer damage, adjusts Sunday hunting time restrictions for deer firearms season in several counties, and repeals the prohibition on Sunday hunting for migratory game birds—allowing DNR to authorize it when appropriate.

Deer damage remains one of the most urgent concerns for our members. It is estimated that deer cause at least \$8 million in losses annually to Maryland farms, and the true number is likely higher. Increasing opportunities for hunters to access the woods is one of the most effective tools available to help mitigate this damage. Expanding Sunday hunting will allow more hunters to participate, especially those whose work schedules limit them to weekends, and will provide an additional day of pressure on deer populations in the areas that need it most.

Maryland's mix of rural, suburban, and urban landscapes makes it challenging to apply a single statewide standard for Sunday hunting. A blanket regulation cannot account for local conditions or the unique circumstances farmers face.

The bill's authorization for DNR to issue Sunday hunting permits to farms with documented deer damage is a meaningful, targeted solution. It ensures that the farms most significantly impacted by deer have another tool to address escalating losses, without imposing a uniform statewide mandate.

We recognize and appreciate the concerns of the equine and trail-riding community, particularly their desire to use trails safely without unexpected interactions with hunters. The bill's modifications—requiring a 10:30 a.m. hard stop, adding a 3 p.m. to sunset restriction, and creating a 25-yard setback from designated equestrian trails—demonstrate a thoughtful balance between safety and expanded hunting access. These provisions help protect trail users while still allowing farmers and hunters meaningful opportunities to manage deer populations.



## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035

410-922-3426 | [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)

Maryland Farm Bureau requests one amendment: removal of the language on page 7, lines 1–8 authorizing Sunday hunting for migratory waterfowl.

Many Eastern Shore farms rely on guided goose and duck hunts as a critical source of supplemental income. Expanding migratory bird hunting to Sundays raises concerns about increased pressure on already limited populations. Bag limits for these species are set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, and harvest opportunities are already highly constrained. Allowing additional hunt days risks negatively affecting both waterfowl populations and the rural economies that depend on sustainable guided hunting.

For these reasons, the Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully requests a favorable report with the proposed amendment removing the Sunday migratory waterfowl hunting authorization.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough", with a horizontal line above it.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

*Please contact Tyler Hough, [though@marylandfb.org](mailto:though@marylandfb.org), with any questions*

# **HOM Testimony on SB 643 (Natural Resources -- Hunt**

Uploaded by: william miles

Position: FWA



P.O. Box 501

Huntingtown, Maryland 20639

[billmilesmd@comcast.net](mailto:billmilesmd@comcast.net)

March 10, 2026

THE HONORABLE BRIAN J. FELDMAN

Chair, Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

HONORABLE MEMBERS

**RE: WITH AMENDMENT, SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 643 (Natural Resources – Hunting -- Management)**

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**T**he 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 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which also underscores the noble story of hunters as America’s original conservationists.

Steve Keithley, Founder (301/785-4774 [[sssbkeith@comcast.net](mailto:sssbkeith@comcast.net)])

Bill Miles, Advocate (443/404-7449 [[billmilesmd@comcast.net](mailto:billmilesmd@comcast.net)])

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**PROPOSED AMENDMENT/RATIONALE:** Repeal the current statutory exclusion of “fox chasing” from the definition of “hunting” under §10–101 NR. Fox chasing involves the pursuit of wild animals on horseback with trained hounds; thus, meeting the definition of hunting regardless of whether a fox is killed. Wildlife law regulates disturbance and harassment, not just harvest, and Maryland already regulates similar dog-pursuit activities as hunting (§10–413, NR). Including “fox chasing” in the hunting definition makes common sense and it is time to recognize same by State law.



*“**Hunt**” means to pursue, capture, catch, kill, gig, trap, shoot, or attempt to pursue, capture, catch, kill, gig, trap, or shoot, or in any manner reduce any bird or mammal to personal possession.*

**SENIORS:** Today SEEE will hear a wide array of arguments in support of SB 643. The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND LLC are mindful of these arguments and support them all. Our particular focus will be on the impact of passage from a senior perspective when it comes to Canada goose Sunday hunting...*those aging hunters whose days afield are numbered.*

Roughly one out of every three Maryland hunters is a senior (65+); meaning, Sunday restrictions disproportionately affect older residents more than any other group. For many older hunters, Sunday hunting is not an added opportunity – it is the only practical opportunity. As we age, physical stamina declines, medical appointments sadly increase, and many seniors become dependent upon children or grandchildren for transportation and assistance in the field. Those family members typically work during the week. Sunday is often the only day when a senior can hunt safely with help.

This issue is also about health and well-being. Being afield keeps aging hunters mobile, socially connected and mentally engaged. Goose hunting is not a solitary activity – it is morning exercise, conversation in a blind, and family tradition. When access disappears, isolation increases.

Safety afield improves when seniors are accompanied. Prohibiting Sunday Canada goose hunting can push older hunters to go it alone on weekdays instead of with family support only available on weekends.

Current restrictions unintentionally disadvantage those least able to adapt; that is, seniors and families with rigid work schedules. Those with flexible weekday access are mostly unaffected. In practice, prohibition becomes an access barrier rather than a conservation measure.

From a senior perspective, SB 643 is not about increasing harvest. It is about maintaining safe participation, preserving family traditions, and allowing seniors to remain connected to Maryland's outdoors as long as they are able to do so.

**SEASONS ARE SCIENCE-BASED:** Wildlife agencies set seasons using federal population modeling and harvest limits. Adding Sunday does not: (1) extend season length; (2) change bag limits; or (3) change federal frameworks. Simply, Sunday hunting only distributes effort and biology controls harvest...calendars do not.



## CLOSING STATEMENT

“My days of goose hunting are almost over. No one can join me anymore b/c most of my ‘ole hunting buddies are long gone. It saddens me just thinking about it. The thrill of being out there is not so much about pulling the trigger as it is watching the geese dance. Once you’ve seen it, you’re hooked for life. On behalf of those of us old guys who still yearn to be out there watching the dance, I hope the Hunters of Maryland will be able to overcome any opposition and convince State lawmakers to look out for us.”

Kenneth Lyons

**2026 SB 643 hunting to DNR.pdf**

Uploaded by: Barbara Sollner-Webb

Position: UNF

Good afternoon! I am Barbara Sollner-Webb, past President of the West Laurel Civic Assn, with 1800 houses in Montgomery and Prince George's counties and very many residents who enjoy recreating safely outdoors. We wish to register **very strong opposition to SB643**.

Maryland has a large amount of delightful public recreations areas, land largely paid for by all MD residents' taxes, so they SHOULD be for the safe enjoyment of all MD residents. However, because many of the trails and other facilities of these public areas are near enough to neighboring private land that errant bullets and arrows fired there cross over and endanger the hikers, equestrians, birders, joggers, bikers, dog walkers, etc on those public lands. Almost all riders have stories of **being so fired on** in this manner – me, personally, three time; not fun! -- and Delegate Ben Barnes had a similar experience. Testimony from the MD Horse Council in this and many past years documents vast numbers of such accidents and near-accidents – quite contrary to the disingenuous claims of the bill's sponsor. The one safe day when this was not a problem had been Sundays, a safety the gun lobby has for years been working feverishly to take away.

SB643 would give control of Sunday hunting to DNR, whose operating budget is in part based on the number of hunting licenses the state issues. With money speaking loudly, **DNR caters to the 2% of the population who are hunter, at the expense of the others 98%** n who might like to enjoy these public lands without the fear of being shot. Testimony from others focuses on DNR's very disturbing pro-hunting bias, including their **disingenuous claims that the two supposedly stakeholder forums last summer were generally open to non-hunters** (when for instance only two non-hunters were permitted at the first one)

This bill also would permit firing lethal projectiles only 25.1 yards away from a designated equestrian trail – quite disingenuous since bows can shoot over 400 yards and guns over 3 miles! Unconscionably, it offers no safety distance for trails used only by walkers and bikers!

Additionally, this bill would **renege on a prior agreement** with citizens and allow hunting on Sundays after 3 PM in Montgomery County, were many of our West Laurel Civic Assn residents recreate, yet another safety problem with this bill.

West Laurel Civic Assn strongly urges you to please oppose SB643.

from Barbara Sollner-Webb, 17200 Melbourne Dr, Laurel, [bsw@jhmi.edu](mailto:bsw@jhmi.edu), 301-655-3552

# **UNF\_MD Assoc for Wildlife Conservation**

Uploaded by: Crystal Pickett

Position: UNF



**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**Hearing March 10, 2025**

**Testimony on Senate Bill 643**

Natural Resources - Hunting - Management: **UNFAVORABLE**

Maryland Association for Wildlife Conservation is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) for the preservation and promotion of countryside sports. Our members own and breed pack hounds, such as foxhounds, bassets and beagles for the pursuit by the hounds of certain quarry, with participants following on foot or horseback.

MAWC opposes Senate Bill 643 as it requires elected officials to cede their power, authority and their responsibility to their constituents to the regulatory agency for a period of three years. As tempting as it may be for elected officials to delegate their rule making responsibilities to a government agency (employees of which are not directly responsible to the voters), we strongly encourage you to not abdicate your power.

**MAWC urges an UNFAVORABLE report from the committee on SB 643.**

Sincerely,

Crystal Pickett, vice president  
[CrystalSecretary@comcast.net](mailto:CrystalSecretary@comcast.net)  
410-707-3678

**hunting accident report 2007-2025 copy.pages.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jane Seigler

Position: UNF

# Excerpts from 19 years of DNR's Annual Hunting Accident Reports

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/nrp/pages/hunting-incident-reports.aspx>

## 2025

— — A 16-year-old Howard County deer hunter was shot in the arm during a deer drive with a group of hunters. The victim was walking in the woods with a large group of hunters. The hunters were separated and attempted to shoot at a deer while it was running. The deer ran in-between two groups while multiple hunters were shooting at it.

— — A 75-year-old Harford County deer hunter attempted to shoot a deer but missed and the bullet traveled through the window of a house and onto the kitchen floor. The deer was estimated to be 80 yards away.

## 2024

— — A 14-year-old Caroline County dove hunter shot a dove from his original location in a sunflower field. The hunter went to retrieve the dove but it flushed up from its location. The hunter fired one shot at the flying dove and the pellets traveled approximately 50 yards beyond the intended target and struck another hunter in the back.

— — A 64-year-old Dorchester County dove hunter was hunting on a guided trip with approximately 12 other hunters. The guides placed them in a circle around the sunflower field. An unidentified hunter across the field from the victim, shot at a low flying dove. The pellets from the shot struck the victim in his face, neck, arms and legs.

— — A 65-year-old Anne Arundel County hunter fired his 10 gauge shotgun at a flying goose and hit a house. The hunter mistakenly loaded his shotgun with a slug when he fired at the goose. The slug traveled through the exterior house wall and into furniture.

— — A 59-year-old Talbot County waterfowl hunter hit a vehicle passing by on an adjacent road while shooting at a flying goose. The hunter's location was approximately 160 yards away from the road but the trajectory of the pellets from the shot reached the passing car.

— — A 24-year-old Frederick County deer hunter attempted to shoot a deer but missed and the bullet traveled through the roof of a house and onto the living room floor. The deer was estimated to be 80 yards away but the angle and direction of the shot put the house in the backdrop. The hunter believed the muzzleloader he was using may not have been sighted in.

## 2023

— — A 59-year-old Talbot County Deer hunter was shot by another hunter from approximately 105 yards away. The victim was standing in the woods wearing an orange jacket when he heard a gunshot and felt pain in his side. The subject who fired the shot was aiming at a deer and missed causing the bullet to travel beyond his intended target striking the victim. The hunters were both hunting from the ground and could not see each other at the time the shot was fired.

— — A 25-year-old Somerset County Deer hunter was shot in the leg by another hunter while walking out of the woods. The victim was walking to his truck at approximately 1745 hours when another hunter thought he was a deer and shot the subject with his bow.

## 2022

— — A 48-year-old Worcester County Squirrel Hunter was hunting with his 15- year-old son. They were walking approximately 100 yards apart when the subjects' son shot at a squirrel on the ground. The Rimfire .22 long rifle caliber bullet ricocheted off the ground and struck the victim in his left shoulder. The trees and brush between the father and son made each of them unaware of the others location.

— A 46-year-old Howard County Turkey Hunter was shot in the face and chest by a 75-year-old Howard County Turkey Hunter. The 75-year-old subject saw the other hunter approximately 40 yards away and thought it was a turkey.

## 2021

— A 58-year old Washington County Deer Hunter (Firearms Season) was actively hunting in a wooded area when they were struck in the thigh with a round from another firearm. NRP investigation revealed that the victim was shot in the thigh by a 10-year old relative in their hunting party who had mistaken the victim for game. Victim was transported to the hospital for non-life threatening injuries..

## 2020

--- A Frederick County resident observed damage to the exterior of their residence, which was consistent with that of pellet strikes from a shotgun. While investigating officers located no hunting activity in the area, the incident did occur during the end of spring turkey season. No further suspect / hunter information was developed throughout the investigation.

— A Kent County resident observed damage to their vehicle's windshield, which was consistent with that of pellet strikes from a shotgun. Nearby waterfowl hunters were interviewed and denied any involvement, which was confirmed through an on-scene investigation. The area in question is known for waterfowl hunting and there were reports of numerous shots leading up to the incident. No further suspect / hunter information was developed throughout the investigation.

— A Kent County waterfowl hunter, returning from a hunt, observed damage to their parked vehicle's tailgate, which consisted of a rifle round lodged into the plastic molding of said tailgate. Nearby waterfowl hunters were interviewed and denied any involvement, which was confirmed through an on-scene investigation. The area in question is known for waterfowl hunting. No further suspect / hunter information was developed throughout the investigation.

— A 17 year-old Wicomico County Waterfowl Hunter was underway in a vessel with other hunters when they were struck with shotgun pellets. Investigation revealed that other members of the victim's hunting party were on shore and approximately 50-60 yards away when a 20 year-old fired a shot towards the victim's vessel in an alleged attempt to scare him and his hunting party. The victim sustained non-life threatening injuries. Natural resources / criminal charges were filed against the shooter in this incident.

— A 14 year-old Somerset County Turkey Hunter (Firearms - Junior Hunt Days) was on foot and stalking turkeys with other juvenile hunters and under adult supervision. As the juveniles were walking 50-70 yards apart, under thick tree cover and out of sight from one another, a 14-year old shooter observed a turkey and fired their shotgun twice at said game. As a result, shotgun pellets ultimately struck the victim. The shooter was not aware that the victim was in the background. The victim sustained non-life threatening injuries.

## 2019

---- A 61-year-old Washington County Woodchuck Hunter was shooting from the front of their residence off a picnic table for support when one shot went errant and struck a person fishing at an adjacent pond, grazing their shoulder. The victim was approximately two tenths of a mile away obscured by heavy brush and tree cover. Rimfire .22 long rifle ammunition from a rifle was the implement used.

--- An unknown Washington County Deer Hunter (Archery season) shot a crossbow bolt through a Honda SUV while it was parked in the victims driveway. Apparently the shot took place after sunset the evening before the damage was observed. Deer frequent the lawn of this residence and other residences within the neighborhood most evenings. No suspect(s) were observed at the time of the damage.

---- A Montgomery County residence received a broken window caused by a stray bullet fired from a rifle. The projectile was recovered on scene lodged in between two plates of glass. No suspects at the time of the shooting but several shots were reported just before the window received damage.

## 2018

No relevant reports

## 2017

--- A 26 year old Talbot County deer hunter (firearms season) shot at two deer with 12 gauge shotgun slugs. The first deer was struck and ran 40 yards before collapsing, the second deer was shot at but the first slug went over its back, the second shot dropped the deer in the location where it was standing. Apparently the slug that missed struck an occupied residence just to one side of the front door. Upon a 911 call a sheriff's department deputy had searched and located the lone hunter. After an investigation by NRP the hunter was charged with negligent hunting and discharging a firearm within the safety zone. Property damage only

--- An unknown Carroll County deer hunter (firearms season) sent a 7mm projectile through the side of a residence, through the bedroom wall, through a wooden dresser, then through a closet wall before coming to rest in a pile of towels in the closet. Two people were in the bedroom at the time but neither was injured. A search of nearby farms was unsuccessful in locating any hunter(s). Property damage only

--- A 52 year old Cecil County deer hunter (late firearms season) took two shots at a deer with a 30/30 rifle toward the direction of a neighboring farm. One of the shots (both of which missed the deer) struck a dining room window of the adjacent residence and stopped, being found on the windowsill. During the investigation it was determined that the round that struck the window had ricocheted off of the ground. The distance from the shooter to the house was 398 yards.

(DNR's on-line annual report for 2017 is identical to DNR'S 2016's report – the 2016 appears to be missing)

## 2015

--- A 16 year old Allegany County turkey hunter fired two (2) shots from a 12 gauge shotgun at what they believed to be the white head of a spring gobbler. The shot traveled approximately 53 yards and struck a 70 year old camouflaged turkey hunter in the face. This hunter had walked into the woods, sat down and was

listening for turkey's completely camouflaged except for the side of his face which is what the shooter was observing and mistook for a turkey. Non-Fatal

## 2014

--- A 50 year old Carroll County Fox Hunter sent a 6mm rifle round through a patio glass door. The round went through a vinyl garden hose and a plastic lawn chair before going through the door and striking a kitchen chair. The homeowner was the only occupant in the residence at the time and they were in bed sleeping.

--- A 52 year old Kent County Turkey Hunter (Spring Season) took two shots at a gobbler out in an open field. The second shot was at the bird while in flight. One pellet struck the storm door of an adjacent house causing the glass to shatter. The homeowner was present in the home at the time.

## 2013

--- A 47 year old Calvert County rabbit hunter received a gunshot (shotgun) wound to his body/thigh/head when he was shot by a 15 year old hunting partner. A party of 4 was hunting with the aid of a dog when a rabbit ran between the men who were approximately 40 yards apart. The shooter stated that he could not see the other hunter when he shot at the rabbit

--- A 52 year old Charles County deer hunter shot his 22 year old son with a rifle across an open field. The shooter and the victim had been hunting together and at dusk the shooter fired out at movement in the field which he mistook for a deer. was walking through the field prior to ending the hunt and returning to the vehicles.

--- A 28 year old Charles County deer hunter while hunting within the safety zone ---discharged his shotgun resulting in the rifled slug passing through a window of the residence striking a chandelier in the dining room and becoming embedded in a wall. Thankfully the residence was vacant at the time of the incident.

--- A rifle round was recovered from a Frederick County home during the second day of the extended fire arms deer season. The round went through the wall of the home and struck a sliding glass door causing it to shatter. The round was recovered at the scene by the sheriff's department. The nearest wooded area was over 400 yards away. Property Damage Only

--- A rifle round was recovered from a "second" Frederick County home during the extended firearms deer season. The round entered through the front wall of the residence blew out the drywall in the living room at which time the bullet came to rest on the floor and was recovered by the homeowner. The bullet was a full metal jacket round (illegal to use on big game)

## 2012

--- A 62 year old Harford County landowner was struck by a random shot on their property. Upon investigation it was determined the landowner had been hearing a volley of shots repeatedly behind her home. As she and her husband went outside to investigate, a piece of shot struck her in the left forearm. Law enforcement responded and never found hunters in the area. The landowners advised no one had permission to be there, therefore trespassers were suspected to be the shooters. No suspects were located nor arrests made. The victim suffered a very minor wound to her forearm. Non Fatal.

--- A home in Dorchester County was struck by a projectile: Upon investigation it was determined the homeowner heard shots and found a French door in the back of their home was shattered due a projectile striking

the lower left hand pane. The area behind the home is a public hunting area. No suspects were ever located. It was also never determined hunters caused this situation.

## 2011

--- A 41 year old Carroll County woman was struck in the right leg by a stray projectile while she was in her back yard. Upon investigation it was determined two individuals were plinking and shooting at squirrels & birds with a .22 cal. rifle in a wooded area behind her residence. Due to an unsafe backstop, it was determined their projectile traveled approximately .26 miles to the victim's property causing the leg injury. Squirrel season was closed at the time of this incident. Charges pending. Non fatal.

--- A 57 year old Dorchester County deer hunter shot his 57 year old hunting companion who he had mistaken for a deer: Upon investigation it was determined the shooter and victim had split up to hunt deer. Both hunters were wearing fluorescent orange when they departed each others company. The shooter had gone approximately 95 yards to his stand, climbed into it and began to hunt deer. The shooter observed a dark movement coming towards his location. The shooter was using a .30-06 scoped rifle. The shooter advised he determined he was shooting at a deer by looking through his scope, and shot at center mass.

--- A 48 year old Caroline County deer hunter shot his 46 year old hunting companion that he had mistaken for a deer: Upon investigation it was determined the shooter heard a disturbance of brush and saw movement, thinking it was a deer. The shooter fired a crossbow bolt at the movement at a distance of 62 yards, striking the victim in his left tibia. The time of the incident was four minutes after legal shooting hours. The shooter was charged with Negligent Hunting. Non Fatal.

--- A 16 year old Dorchester County deer hunter shot his 19 year old hunting companion while shooting at a running deer: Upon investigation 8 hunters had organized a deer drive in a marshy dense wooded area. 5 hunters were pushing deer while 3 were standers. As a deer passed between two standers, the shooter shot at a running deer, striking his hunting companion in both femurs with a .12 ga. shotgun using #4 buckshot at a distance of 60 yards. The shooter advised he never saw the victim. Both hunters were wearing daylight fluorescent orange. Non Fatal.

--- A 56 year old Dorchester County turkey hunter shot his 36 year old hunting companion, mistaking him for game: Upon investigation it was determined the two hunters entered their hunting area and posted three turkey decoys in an open field. They then split up to hunt the area and the shooter advised he did not see which direction the victim went. After a period of time the shooter saw three turkeys to the right of the decoys 40 yards away. The shooter advised he could not see the birds at all times. After an hour he called his companion on a cell phone to ask him if he saw the birds. Immediately after their conversation, the shooter saw a movement then shot. He had shot his hunting companion. The movement he saw was the victim putting his cell phone away. The victim was shot at a distance of 38 yards. The victim received 24 #4 shotgun pellets which were fired from the shooters 12 .ga shotgun. The victim was struck in the right side of his body receiving wounds in his head, neck, shoulder, torso, calf, knee, and ankle. The shooter was charged with Negligent Hunting. Non Fatal.

--- A 13 year old Dorchester County deer hunter, while shooting at a deer, struck a home in the background: Upon investigation the shooter discharged a .45 cal. muzzleloader at a deer 6 minutes after legal shooting hours. The projectile, missing the deer, traveled 242 yards striking a house 48 inches from the ground. As the projectile entered the house, it penetrated exterior and interior walls and lodged in a recliner. A resident in the home was sitting in the chair at the time and received a redmark on their shoulder where the projectile stopped on impact. Non Fatal

## 2010

--- During the 2010 Firearm Deer Season, residents of a home located in the area of Walkersville (Frederick County), reported their house had been struck by a projectile: Upon investigation it was determined the home had been struck by a projectile doing damage to the exterior & interior walls. Interviews were conducted with seven hunters who were in the vicinity of the area the day before hunting deer as regarding their actions that day. It was never determined who may have been the shooter, but one scenario did reveal a hunter had fired a .30.30 rifle at a deer pointed in the direction that the home approximately 3,940 feet away. No evidence was found to support charges. Non Fatal.

--- A 45 year old Frederick County deer hunter, while shooting at a deer, struck a home in the background: Upon investigation the shooter had discharged a .12 gauge shotgun using slugs at a herd of deer. The gun jammed, the shooter cleared the gun, turned and shot at another deer in the direction of the home. The shooter advised he had become disoriented as to the direction he was shooting. The slug entered the home at a distance of 114 yards, traveled through the exterior and two interior walls, through two rooms, and into appliances and home furnishings. No one was in the home at the time of the incident. The shooter was charged with Negligent Hunting and Hunting within 150 yards of a dwelling (Safety Zone). Non Fatal.

--- A 53 year old Howard County deer hunter was shot by his 36 year old hunting companion. The shooter shot at a standing deer with a .12 gauge slug in an open field at approximately 243 yards. The bullet missed the deer, striking the victim sitting in a wooden ground blind at the opposite end of the field. The victim received injuries to his right arm and hand. Non Fatal. Charges pending an investigation

--- A 46 year old Queen Anne's County deer hunting was shot by his 25 year old hunting companion. With both subjects participating in a deer drive, the shooter shot at a running deer twice with a .20 gauge shotgun slug. A slug traveled 70 yards, striking the victim positioned at the opposite end of the field in the left leg. Non Fatal. Negligent Hunting charges pending.

--- A 55 year old Dorchester County rabbit hunter was shot by his 55 year old hunting companion. The shooter shot at a running rabbit with a .20 gauge shotgun in a thicket. The shot pellets traveled approximately 30 to 40 feet through the thicket striking the victim. The victim received injuries to the right side of his head, neck, eye, arm and left

--- A Frederick County garage window was struck by a bullet from an unknown source. An investigation could not recover the projectile nor related evidence. This incident occurred during the firearm's deer season.

## 2009

--- A 57 year-old goose hunter in Kent County was shot by another hunter while attempting to retrieve a wounded goose. The victim received a minor wound to the face from a shotgun pellet which deflected off the water striking the victim.

--- A window was broken at an occupied daycare facility from a slug fired by a shotgun in Howard County. Several hunters were found in the area and interviewed by several police agencies. Negligent hunting charges were filed, but the States Attorney elected not to prosecute due to insufficient evidence.

--- A window in a house was struck and broken by a sabot round fired by a deer hunter in Talbot County. The investigation found that in this case , the hunter was not negligent and charges were not filed.

--- While checking vacant buildings, several Frederick County Sheriff Deputy vehicles were struck by shot gun pellets causing minor damage. Several individuals who were hunting quail in the area were located and charges were filed by the States Attorney's office for Reckless Endangerment.

--- A 69 year-old deer hunter in Dorchester County found himself in the middle of a deer drive on a wildlife refuge. After hearing several shots the hunter realized that his shotgun had been struck on the barrel and magazine by lead shot. The shooter was never found or located.

## 2008

--- A 47 year-old Allegany County deer hunter, walking into the woods without hunter orange, was shot by a 32 year-old hunter. The shooter heard noise, saw movement through the trees and shot the victim without identifying the target. Fatal.

--- A 40 year-old Talbot County goose hunter was shot by his hunting partner when the shooter, from outside the blind, shot at a wounded goose. The victim in the blind was in the line of fire. One pellet entered his eye and lodged in his brain. Non-fatal.

--- A 64 year-old Garrett County deer hunter was shot in the abdomen by another hunter who mistook the victim for a deer. Shooter was charged with negligent hunting. Non-fatal.

## 2007

--- A 51 year-old Caroline County quail hunter shot his hunting partner when a quail flew between them. The victim received 4 pellets to his upper body.

---A 54 year-old Talbot County deer hunter was shot by his hunting partner when a deer ran between them and the shooter shot at the deer. The shooter hit the deer and shrapnel from the slug hit the victim in the hand causing minor injuries.

--- A 59 year-old Queen Anne's County deer hunter was shot by his hunting partner when a deer ran between them. The victim was below field level, climbing a hill out of site of the shooter. He received neck injuries.

--- A 38 year-old Garrett County deer hunter was shot in the shoulder by his 16 year-old hunting partner when the victim was moving through bushes and mistaken for game. Victim was not wearing fluorescent orange.

--- A 64 year-old Charles County Turkey hunter was shot by his hunting partner when the victim started to retrieve a turkey and was mistaken for another turkey by the shooter. Victim received 4 pellet wounds to various parts of the body.

## INCIDENTS -- NOT REPORTED IN DNR ACCIDENT REPORTS (2016 to present)– that were recorded in other news sources:

--- **MD: Woman attempting to shoot groundhog accidentally hits man fishing at park**

May 28, 2019

The Maryland Natural Resource Police are investigating an incident of a bullet that grazed a man in the shoulder on Sunday afternoon.

According to police, a 61-year-old woman was shooting a groundhog in her backyard, which borders the Smithsburg Lions Community Park.

The woman missed and the bullet ricocheted across the water and struck a 28-year-old man who was fishing.

Officials said there doesn't seem to be any issues with limitation, however the shooter is responsible for anything in background, like in this case, the park....

--- **Fatality** : Maryland Natural Resources police were investigating a fatal hunting accident in Frederick County on Saturday, the opening day of deer season for firearms.

Police said the rifle of a first-time hunter from Altadena, Calif., was accidentally discharged while he was deer hunting on private property on Eylers Valley Flint Road near Thurmont. Police identified the victim as Vincent Cavallo, 32.

Cavallo and his uncle were hunting in separate areas of the property when the uncle heard a gunshot. He went to check on his nephew and found him dead, DNR police spokeswoman Candy Thomson said. Police were called to the scene at 9:24 a.m.

Police said the victim is believed to have slipped or dropped the gun and it discharged, hitting him in the head. His body was taken to the medical examiner's office. Natural Resources police were assisted by the Frederick County Sheriff's Department in the investigation.

[lorraine.mirabella@baltsun.com](mailto:lorraine.mirabella@baltsun.com)

--- Author: Scott Broom

Published: 6:07 PM EDT October 24, 2016

The mystery is still not solved after an 87-year old man was apparently struck (ed. note: in the head) by a shotgun pellet or bullet fragment while walking on his property in rural Montgomery County Saturday. Authorities suspect a hunting accident, but they don't know who fired the shot or from where. Residents and hunters say they are deeply concerned by the incident. The victim's property is on the boundary of the Patuxent River State Park where hunting with firearms is permitted. Hunters may not fire guns within 150 yards of an occupied dwelling without a residents' permission, even if the hunter is on another property or public land nearby. Maryland averages 2-3 hunting accidents involving firearms annually. The victim is almost always a hunter. Doctors removed a metallic object from his skull.

NOTE: see more of this episode at:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/man-87-in-marylands-montgomery-county-struck-by-a-small-metallic-projectile/2016/10/22/bc0e5974-98c8-11e6-bc79-af1cd3d2984b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/man-87-in-marylands-montgomery-county-struck-by-a-small-metallic-projectile/2016/10/22/bc0e5974-98c8-11e6-bc79-af1cd3d2984b_story.html)

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.wusa9.com/amp/article/news/local/mystery-surrounds-shooting-of-elderly-md-man-walking-home/65-340868641>

--- **Fatality**: Oct 11, 2015 - WASHINGTON — A 75-year-old huntsman was fatally *shot during* a hunting trip Saturday *in* Queen Anne's County, ... *Marvin Bowen Coppage*, a resident of *Henderson*, was hired to lead a guided *pheasant and chukar* hunt.

--- 2014 A mountain biker was peppered by bird shot while riding his bike in the Tuckahoe State Park on Maryland's Eastern Shore (related by Tuckahoe park staff) knowledge)

Citizen report:

Date: March 15, 2019 at 9:15:38 AM EDT

To: <mwc.dnr@maryland.gov>, <animalcontrol@howardcountymd.gov>, <hcpdcrimetips@howardcountymd.gov>

Subject: Hunting Violation in Western Howard County

Hello,

I want to report a hunting violation that I encountered yesterday afternoon between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. in the Woodbine parcel of the Patuxent State Park.

I was in the park on horseback and one or two people began shooting firearms near the trail head that is immediately north of the farm at 4505 Jennings Chapel Road.

I hollered several times so that they could hear that I was there and stop shooting long enough for me to get out of the park. They were shooting between me and the closest way out of the park so my way was totally blocked.

They did not stop shooting even as I hollered and eventually my very sane and experienced horse bolted to try to get away from the noise, which was echoing everywhere.

Luckily I am a strong rider and I did not have a mishap but my horse was badly frightened, as was I, frankly. It was mainly luck that we did not run into a tree or barbed wire or worse.

Once I finally got to the trail head – after picking my way along as close to the edge of the park as I possibly could on the theory they would not fire towards residences – I saw their vehicles and got their license plates. They were both Maryland vehicles, one was 5CC8856 and the other was 5C74853.

I have attached photographs of the vehicles. I also have a photograph of my riding attire yesterday, which included a safety orange saddle pad and a reflective yellow jacket, which I can provide if necessary.

I have been riding in this part of the park for over 15 years and every time I have encountered hunters we have been courteous to one another and respectful of each other's sport and mindful of each other's safety. These people were obviously an exception.

I am happy to discuss further by telephone if necessary.

Anecdote from an MHC member:

“Riding the C&O Canal with the Chesapeake Club on a Sunday, we heard shots up ahead coming from a field across River Rd from the towpath -- we yelled ahead to let them know we were coming, the shots stopped until we were adjacent from them when shots were fired over our heads followed by laughter!!! We called 911 to report, were told someone would come check it out, but we never saw or heard anything.”

Veterinarians report treating horses shot with firearms and bows.

Property owners report finding arrows embedded in the ground in their fields, including fields where horses are turned out.



# **MD Econ Impact Graphics.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jane Seigler

Position: UNF

# The Economic Impact of THE MARYLAND HORSE INDUSTRY

Horse Industry Wages  
**\$1.1 billion**



Total Economic Impact  
**\$2.9 billion**

Jobs Supported  
**28,134**



Total Impact on GDP  
**\$1.77 billion**

Direct Impact on GDP  
**\$1.05 billion**



~**95,000** horses  
~**800** licensed stables  
~**38,000** volunteers  
*717,611 horse enthusiasts*  
*(30.4% of all MD households)*



## Thoroughbred Racing

**\$591 million** total impact  
**5,937** jobs  
*3 tracks*  
*1 Triple Crown race*

## Recreational Riding

**\$421 million** total impact  
**4,560** jobs  
*10% of MD households trail ride*  
*6% of MD households take lessons*



## Sport Horse Competition

**\$370 million** total impact  
**4,154** jobs  
*4 international competitions*  
*>11 sanctioned venues*

## Harness Racing

**\$278 million** total impact  
**3,616** jobs  
*2 tracks and 1 casino*  
*24 stallions standing*





## Equine-Assisted Services

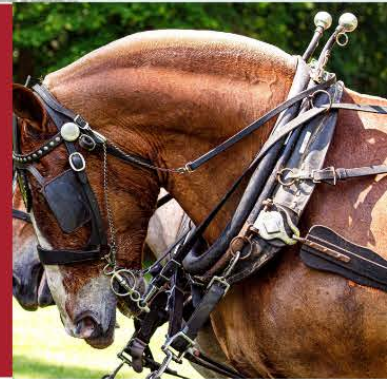
**\$36 million** total impact  
**263 jobs**

*67 licensed EAS operations  
~335 horses in EAS use*

## Traditional Working Horses

**\$19 million** total impact  
**229 jobs**

*Amish & Mennonite communities  
Draft horse pull and harness shows*



## Rescues & Sanctuaries

**\$3.16 million** total impact  
**52 jobs**

*58 licensed rescues  
~\$1.8 total wages*



**19.4%** of all MD households participate in horse activities

**9.8%** of all MD households spectate at horse events

**45%** of US horse owners earn <\$100k/year\*

**Median age of MD horse owners: 38**

**Median age of MD spectators: 26**

*\*MD 2022 median income = \$108,200*



# **Sunday Hunting Gonzales Survey - June 2018.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jane Seigler

Position: UNF

June 2018  
updated  
February 2019

# Gonzales Maryland Survey



Gonzales Research  
& Media Services

Gonzales Poll

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    QUESTION #4 Sunday Hunting – Alter Plans

    QUESTION #5 Safety Zone Reduction

Maryland General Election Poll Sample Demographics .....19

## Background and Methodology

Patrick E. Gonzales graduated magna cum laude from the University of Baltimore with a degree in political science.

His career began in the mid 1980s as an analyst with Mason-Dixon Opinion Research. Mr. Gonzales helped develop, craft and implement election surveys and exit polls for Baltimore's WMAR-TV Channel 2.

Patrick Gonzales has polled and analyzed well over a thousand elections in Maryland and across the country since that time. His polling in the 2014 Maryland gubernatorial election foreshadowed Larry Hogan's victory on Election Day.

During an interview at WBAL 1090 AM radio in Baltimore, Maryland on October 27, 2016, Mr. Gonzales was one of the very few pollsters in the nation to state publicly that Donald Trump would win the 2016 presidential election.

This poll was conducted by ***Gonzales Research & Media Services*** from June 4<sup>th</sup> through June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. A total of 800 registered voters in Maryland, who indicated that they are likely to vote in the November 2018 general election, were queried by live telephone interviews, utilizing both landline and cell phone numbers. A cross-section of interviews was conducted throughout the state, reflecting general election voting patterns.

The margin of error (MOE), per accepted statistical standards, is a range of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. If the entire population was surveyed, there is a 95% probability that the true numbers would fall within this range.

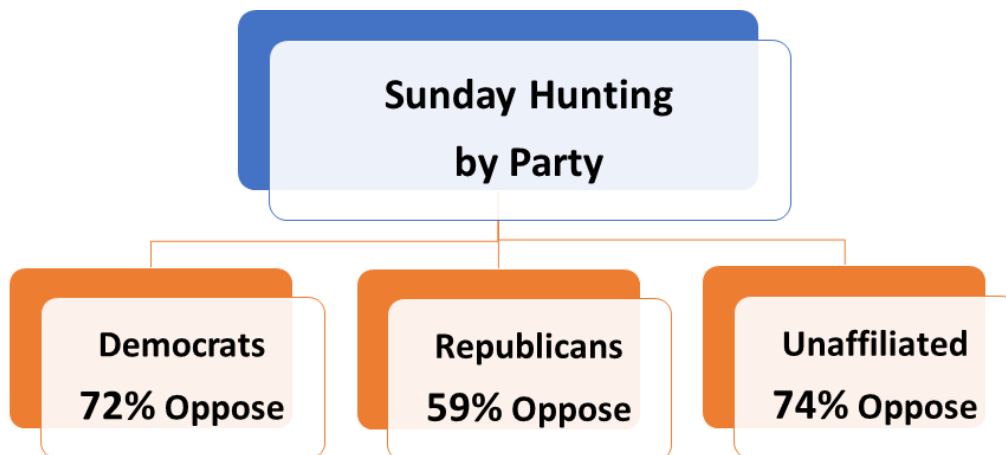
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## Results Overview

Among Maryland voters, 79% favor requiring hunters to pass a basic skill test to prove they can safely shoot a bullet or arrow before being given a hunting license in Maryland (59% “strongly favor” and 20% “somewhat favor”), while 13% oppose a basic skill test (5% “strongly oppose” and 8% “somewhat oppose”), and 8% offer no opinion. Strong support for a basic skill test spans all demographic groups.

All hunters in Maryland can currently hunt six days a week, from September through January. Some want to change the law to add Sunday hunting, while others say six days a week is enough. When we asked voters statewide, 22% favor legislation that would add Sunday hunting (14% “strongly favor” and 8% “somewhat favor”), while 69% oppose adding Sunday hunting (54% “strongly oppose” and 15% “somewhat oppose”), with 9% not responding.

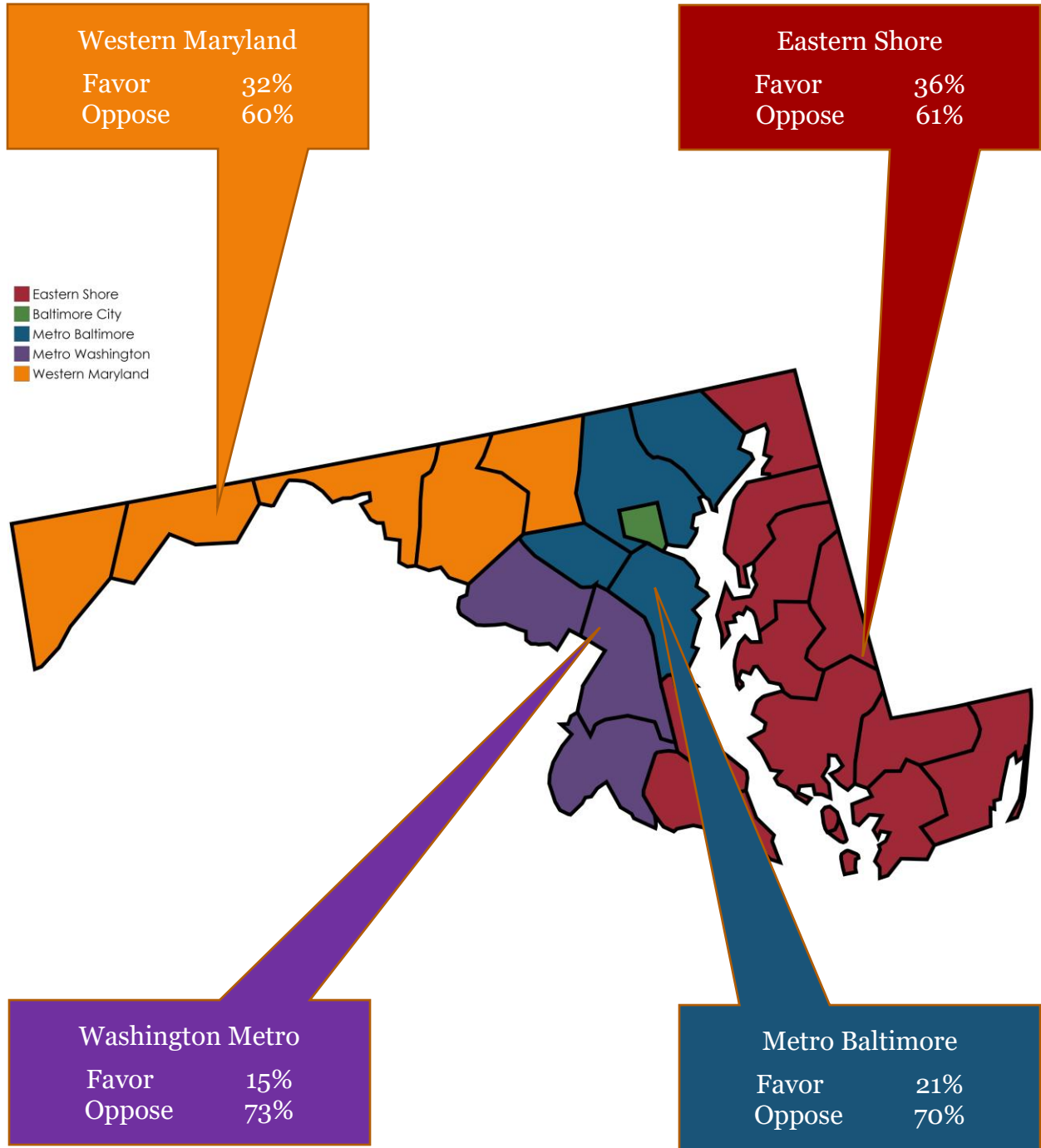
Men and women, young and old, Democrats, Republicans, and independents, all oppose vigorously adding Sunday hunting.



Eleven percent of Marylanders are aware that in counties where Sunday hunting was added, the Department of Natural Resources’ own data failed to prove the addition of Sunday Hunting significantly increased the total amount of deer killed, 72% are not aware of the DNR data, and 17% gave no response.

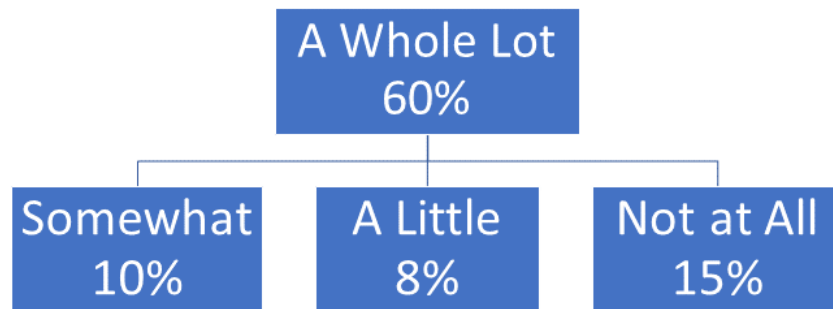
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**Sunday Hunting**



Adding a seventh day of hunting would cause Marylanders across the state to alter their Sunday recreational plans considerably: 60% say Sunday hunting would make them change their plans to participate in recreational activities on that day “a whole lot,” 10% say it would change their plans “somewhat,” 8% “a little,” and 15% “not at all.”

## Sunday Hunting – Impact on Recreational Plans



Currently, most counties in Maryland have a one hundred and fifty yards safety zone, which prohibits hunting within one hundred and fifty yards of an occupied structure, such as your home.

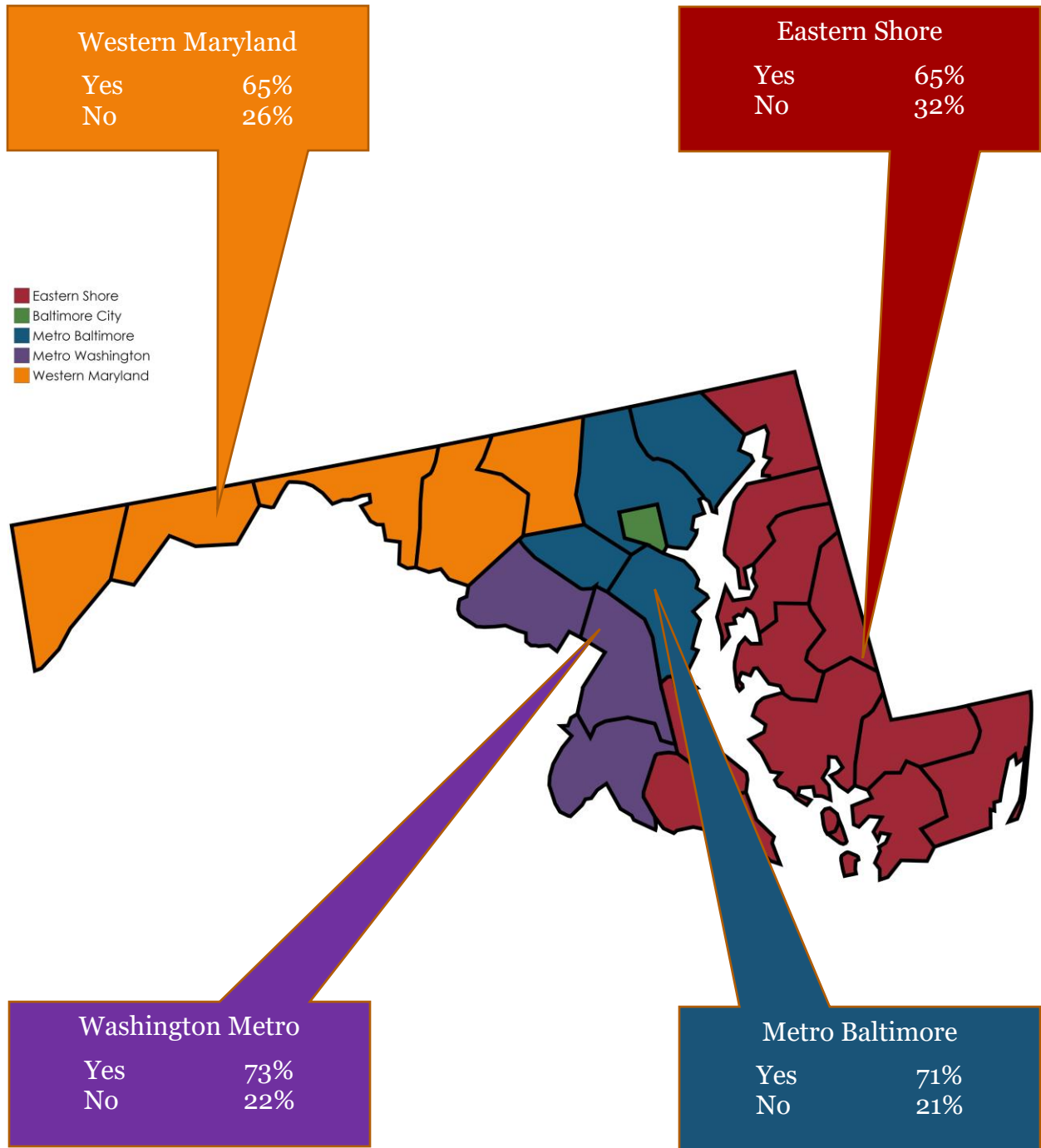
Twelve percent of voters favor legislation that would reduce the safety zone distance to 50 yards of an occupied structure (6% “strongly favor” and 6% “somewhat favor”), while 84% oppose legislation that would reduce the safety zone distance (74% “strongly oppose” and 10% “somewhat oppose”), with only 3% not sure.

Eighty-four percent of men and 85% of women oppose legislation that would reduce the safety zone distance to fifty yards of an occupied structure.

Eighty-five percent of Democrats, 83% of Republicans, and 85% of voters unaffiliated with either party oppose legislation that would reduce the safety zone distance to fifty yards of an occupied structure.

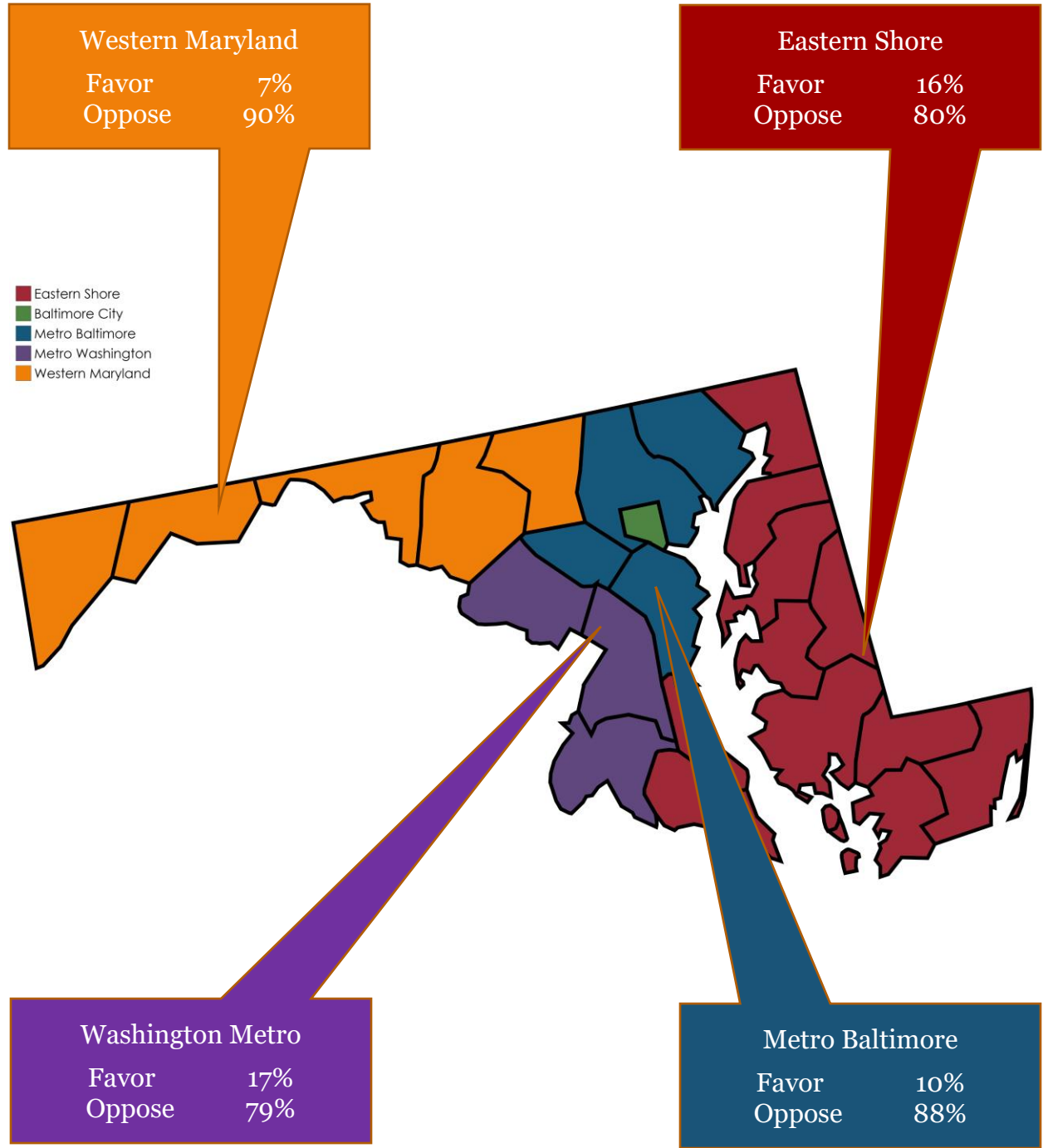
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**Sunday Hunting – Alter Recreational Plans**

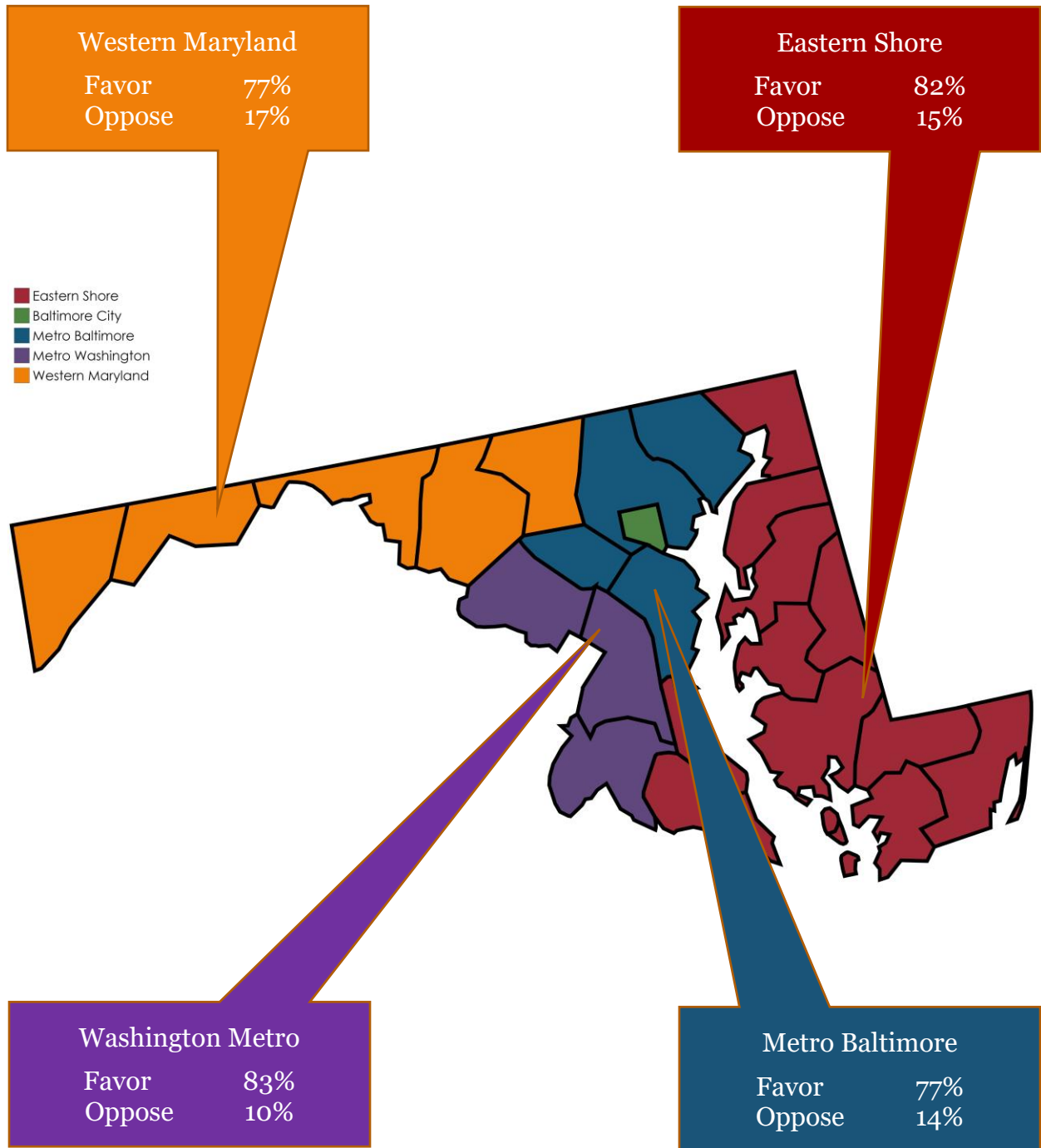


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**Legislation to Reduce Safety Zone Distance**



### Requiring Basic Skill Test



## Appendix A: Data Tables

**QUESTION #1 Test To Get Hunting License** *Do you favor or oppose requiring hunters to pass a basic skill test to prove they can safely shoot a bullet or arrow before being given a hunting license in Maryland?*

<u>BASIC SKILL TEST</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Favor	635	79.4 %
Oppose	104	13.0 %
No answer	61	7.6 %
Total	800	100.0 %

***Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose requiring hunters to pass a basic skill test to prove they can safely shoot a bullet or arrow before being given a hunting license in Maryland?***

<u>BASIC SKILL TEST</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Strongly Favor	471	58.9 %
Somewhat Favor	164	20.5 %
Somewhat Oppose	61	7.6 %
Strongly Oppose	43	5.4 %
No answer	61	7.6 %
Total	800	100.0 %

N=800

	<u>BASIC SKILL TEST</u>				
	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Somewhat Favor</u>	<u>Somewhat Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>No answer</u>

PARTY

Democrat	264 58.8%	95 21.2%	24 5.3%	19 4.2%	47 10.5%
Republican	137 60.6%	48 21.2%	14 6.2%	18 8.0%	9 4.0%
Unaffiliated	70 56.0%	21 16.8%	23 18.4%	6 4.8%	5 4.0%

N=800

	<u>BASIC SKILL TEST</u>				
	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Somewhat Favor</u>	<u>Somewhat Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>No answer</u>

GENDER

Male	213 57.0%	81 21.7%	30 8.0%	27 7.2%	23 6.1%
Female	258 60.6%	83 19.5%	31 7.3%	16 3.8%	38 8.9%

N=800

## BASIC SKILL TEST

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
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RACE

White	316 59.3%	112 21.0%	41 7.7%	31 5.8%	33 6.2%
African-American	128 58.7%	42 19.3%	17 7.8%	10 4.6%	21 9.6%
Other	27 55.1%	10 20.4%	3 6.1%	2 4.1%	7 14.3%

N=800

## BASIC SKILL TEST

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
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AGE GROUP

Millennial	102 62.6%	31 19.0%	14 8.6%	8 4.9%	8 4.9%
Xennial	65 53.3%	27 22.1%	11 9.0%	5 4.1%	14 11.5%
Gen X	88 56.1%	38 24.2%	9 5.7%	12 7.6%	10 6.4%
Gen Jones	104 59.8%	34 19.5%	12 6.9%	9 5.2%	15 8.6%
Boomer	112 60.9%	34 18.5%	15 8.2%	9 4.9%	14 7.6%

N=800

## BASIC SKILL TEST

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
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REGION

Baltimore Metro	197 57.1%	68 19.7%	30 8.7%	19 5.5%	31 9.0%
Washington Metro	169 62.6%	54 20.0%	11 4.1%	15 5.6%	21 7.8%
Rural Maryland	105 56.8%	42 22.7%	20 10.8%	9 4.9%	9 4.9%

**QUESTION #2 Sunday Hunting – Favor/Oppose** *All hunters in Maryland can currently hunt 6 days a week, from September through January. Some want to change the law to add Sunday hunting STATEWIDE, while others say 6 days a week is enough and they just want one day without weapons in their neighborhoods and parks. Do you favor or oppose legislation that would add Sunday hunting, giving hunters 7 days a week?*

SUNDAY HUNTING	Number	Percent
Favor	175	21.9 %
Oppose	551	68.9 %
No answer	74	9.3 %
Total	800	100.0 %

***Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?***

SUNDAY HUNTING	Number	Percent
Strongly Favor	108	13.5 %
Somewhat Favor	67	8.4 %
Somewhat Oppose	123	15.4 %
Strongly Oppose	428	53.5 %
No answer	74	9.3 %
Total	800	100.0 %

N=800

SUNDAY HUNTING				
Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer

PARTY

Democrat	41 9.1%	38 8.5%	68 15.1%	257 57.2%	45 10.0%
Republican	58 25.7%	19 8.4%	27 11.9%	107 47.3%	15 6.6%
Unaffiliated	9 7.2%	10 8.0%	28 22.4%	64 51.2%	14 11.2%

N=800

SUNDAY HUNTING				
Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer

GENDER

Male	78 20.9%	30 8.0%	53 14.2%	184 49.2%	29 7.8%
Female	30 7.0%	37 8.7%	70 16.4%	244 57.3%	45 10.6%

N=800

	SUNDAY HUNTING				
	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
<u>RACE</u>					
White	86 16.1%	47 8.8%	77 14.4%	277 52.0%	46 8.6%
African-American	17 7.8%	17 7.8%	37 17.0%	122 56.0%	25 11.5%
Other	5 10.2%	3 6.1%	9 18.4%	29 59.2%	3 6.1%

N=800

	SUNDAY HUNTING				
	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
<u>AGE GROUP</u>					
Millennial	20 12.3%	7 4.3%	29 17.8%	93 57.1%	14 8.6%
Xennial	11 9.0%	11 9.0%	22 18.0%	68 55.7%	10 8.2%
Gen X	23 14.6%	10 6.4%	24 15.3%	80 51.0%	20 12.7%
Gen Jones	37 21.3%	19 10.9%	25 14.4%	77 44.3%	16 9.2%
Boomer	17 9.2%	20 10.9%	23 12.5%	110 59.8%	14 7.6%

N=800

	SUNDAY HUNTING				
	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
<u>REGION</u>					
Baltimore Metro	39 11.3%	32 9.3%	57 16.5%	186 53.9%	31 9.0%
Washington Metro	25 9.3%	16 5.9%	41 15.2%	155 57.4%	33 12.2%
Rural Maryland	44 23.8%	19 10.3%	25 13.5%	87 47.0%	10 5.4%

**QUESTION #3 Sunday Hunting - Awareness** *Are you aware, or not aware, that in counties where Sunday Hunting was added, the Department of Natural Resources' own data failed to prove the addition of Sunday Hunting significantly increased the total amount of deer killed?*

<u>DNR DATA</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Aware	87	10.9 %
Not Aware	580	72.5 %
No answer	133	16.6 %
Total	800	100.0 %

N=800	<u>DNR DATA</u>		
	<u>Aware</u>	<u>Not Aware</u>	<u>No answer</u>

PARTY

Democrat	41 9.1%	334 74.4%	74 16.5%
Republican	37 16.4%	153 67.7%	36 15.9%
Unaffiliated	9 7.2%	93 74.4%	23 18.4%

N=800	<u>DNR DATA</u>		
	<u>Aware</u>	<u>Not Aware</u>	<u>No answer</u>

GENDER

Male	48 12.8%	262 70.1%	64 17.1%
Female	39 9.2%	318 74.6%	69 16.2%

N=800

	DNR DATA		
	Aware	Not Aware	No answer
<u>RACE</u>			
White	58 10.9%	382 71.7%	93 17.4%
African-American	25 11.5%	162 74.3%	31 14.2%
Other	4 8.2%	36 73.5%	9 18.4%

N=800

	DNR DATA		
	Aware	Not Aware	No answer
<u>AGE GROUP</u>			
Millennial	17 10.4%	116 71.2%	30 18.4%
Xennial	12 9.8%	92 75.4%	18 14.8%
Gen X	18 11.5%	115 73.2%	24 15.3%
Gen Jones	24 13.8%	128 73.6%	22 12.6%
Boomer	16 8.7%	129 70.1%	39 21.2%

N=800

	DNR DATA		
	Aware	Not Aware	No answer
<u>REGION</u>			
Baltimore Metro	32 9.3%	258 74.8%	55 15.9%
Washington Metro	25 9.3%	204 75.6%	41 15.2%
Rural Maryland	30 16.2%	118 63.8%	37 20.0%

**QUESTION #4 Sunday Hunting – Alter Plans** *If you were aware that a hunter with a crossbow or firearm could be in an area where you want to participate in recreational activities on a Sunday, would this cause you to alter your plans: a whole lot, somewhat, a little, or not at all?*

<u>ALTER RECREATIONAL PLANS</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A Whole Lot	482	60.3 %
Somewhat	78	9.8 %
A Little	63	7.9 %
Not At All	122	15.3 %
No answer	55	6.9 %
Total	800	100.0 %

N=800

ALTER RECREATIONAL PLANS

<u>A Whole Lot</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>No answer</u>
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PARTY

Democrat	286 63.7%	38 8.5%	29 6.5%	65 14.5%	31 6.9%
Republican	124 54.9%	26 11.5%	23 10.2%	38 16.8%	15 6.6%
Unaffiliated	72 57.6%	14 11.2%	11 8.8%	19 15.2%	9 7.2%

N=800

ALTER RECREATIONAL PLANS

<u>A Whole Lot</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>No answer</u>
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GENDER

Male	211 56.4%	40 10.7%	37 9.9%	62 16.6%	24 6.4%
Female	271 63.6%	38 8.9%	26 6.1%	60 14.1%	31 7.3%

N=800

ALTER RECREATIONAL PLANS

	A Whole Lot	Somewhat	A Little	Not At All	No answer
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RACE

White	315 59.1%	51 9.6%	53 9.9%	79 14.8%	35 6.6%
African-American	135 61.9%	21 9.6%	9 4.1%	35 16.1%	18 8.3%
Other	32 65.3%	6 12.2%	1 2.0%	8 16.3%	2 4.1%

N=800

ALTER RECREATIONAL PLANS

	A Whole Lot	Somewhat	A Little	Not At All	No answer
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AGE GROUP

Millennial	99 60.7%	14 8.6%	14 8.6%	25 15.3%	11 6.7%
Xennial	72 59.0%	11 9.0%	8 6.6%	26 21.3%	5 4.1%
Gen X	103 65.6%	12 7.6%	12 7.6%	17 10.8%	13 8.3%
Gen Jones	96 55.2%	19 10.9%	17 9.8%	27 15.5%	15 8.6%
Boomer	112 60.9%	22 12.0%	12 6.5%	27 14.7%	11 6.0%

N=800

ALTER RECREATIONAL PLANS

	A Whole Lot	Somewhat	A Little	Not At All	No answer
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REGION

Baltimore Metro	211 61.2%	32 9.3%	30 8.7%	43 12.5%	29 8.4%
Washington Metro	176 65.2%	21 7.8%	13 4.8%	46 17.0%	14 5.2%
Rural Maryland	95 51.4%	25 13.5%	20 10.8%	33 17.8%	12 6.5%

**QUESTION #5 Safety Zone Reduction** *Currently, most counties in Maryland have a 150 yard safety zone, which prohibits hunting within 150 yards of an occupied structure, such as your home. Now that archery crossbows can shoot an arrow almost 150 yards in just one second, do you favor or oppose legislation that would reduce the safety zone distance to 50 yards of an occupied structure?*

<u>REDUCE SAFETY ZONE</u>	Number	Percent
Favor	100	12.5 %
Oppose	673	84.1 %
No answer	27	3.4 %
Total	800	100.0 %

***Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose legislation that would reduce the safety zone distance to 50 yards of an occupied structure?***

<u>REDUCE SAFETY ZONE</u>	Number	Percent
Strongly Favor	49	6.1 %
Somewhat Favor	51	6.4 %
Somewhat Oppose	77	9.6 %
Strongly Oppose	596	74.5 %
No answer	27	3.4 %
Total	800	100.0 %

N=800

<u>REDUCE SAFETY ZONE</u>				
Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer

PARTY

Democrat	28 6.2%	25 5.6%	43 9.6%	337 75.1%	16 3.6%
Republican	14 6.2%	18 8.0%	22 9.7%	165 73.0%	7 3.1%
Unaffiliated	7 5.6%	8 6.4%	12 9.6%	94 75.2%	4 3.2%

N=800

<u>REDUCE SAFETY ZONE</u>				
Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer

GENDER

Male	20 5.3%	27 7.2%	35 9.4%	279 74.6%	13 3.5%
Female	29 6.8%	24 5.6%	42 9.9%	317 74.4%	14 3.3%

N=800

	REDUCE SAFETY ZONE				
	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
<u>RACE</u>					
White	27 5.1%	33 6.2%	47 8.8%	409 76.7%	17 3.2%
African-American	18 8.3%	17 7.8%	23 10.6%	152 69.7%	8 3.7%
Other	4 8.2%	1 2.0%	7 14.3%	35 71.4%	2 4.1%

N=800

	REDUCE SAFETY ZONE				
	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
<u>AGE GROUP</u>					
Millennial	6 3.7%	6 3.7%	15 9.2%	129 79.1%	7 4.3%
Xennial	7 5.7%	9 7.4%	7 5.7%	98 80.3%	1 0.8%
Gen X	11 7.0%	11 7.0%	13 8.3%	114 72.6%	8 5.1%
Gen Jones	14 8.0%	10 5.7%	18 10.3%	129 74.1%	3 1.7%
Boomer	11 6.0%	15 8.2%	24 13.0%	126 68.5%	8 4.3%

N=800

	REDUCE SAFETY ZONE				
	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No answer
<u>REGION</u>					
Baltimore Metro	12 3.5%	21 6.1%	33 9.6%	269 78.0%	10 2.9%
Washington Metro	28 10.4%	18 6.7%	23 8.5%	191 70.7%	10 3.7%
Rural Maryland	9 4.9%	12 6.5%	21 11.4%	136 73.5%	7 3.8%

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 Maryland General Election Poll Sample Demographics

<u>PARTY</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Democrat	449	56.1 %
Republican	226	28.3 %
Unaffiliated	125	15.6 %
Total	800	100.0 %

<u>GENDER</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Male	374	46.8 %
Female	426	53.3 %
Total	800	100.0 %

<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Millennial (18 to 34 years old)	163	20.4 %
Xennial (35 to 44 years old)	122	15.3 %
Gen X (45 to 54 years old)	157	19.6 %
Gen Jones (55 to 64 years old)	174	21.8 %
Boomer (65 and older)	184	23.0 %
Total	800	100.0 %

<u>RACE</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
White	533	66.6 %
African-American	218	27.3 %
Other	49	6.1 %
Total	800	100.0 %

<u>REGION</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Baltimore Metro	345	43.1 %
Washington Metro	270	33.8 %
Rural Maryland	185	23.1 %
Total	800	100.0 %

<u>RURAL MARYLAND</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Eastern Shore	89	48.1 %
Western Maryland	96	51.9 %
Total	185	100.0 %

# **Testimony - DNR Sunday hunting.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jane Seigler

Position: UNF



MARYLAND  
**HORSE**  
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P.O. Box 606 | Lisbon, Maryland 21797  
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*One Common Bond: The Horse*  
*One Common Voice: The Horse Council*

In the Senate Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee, March 10, 2026

Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council on SB 643

Natural Resources - Hunting - Management - UNFAVORABLE

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The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based trade association that represents the state-wide horse industry in Maryland. Our members include horse farms; horse related businesses; equestrian competitors; trainers; individual enthusiasts; equine-assisted therapy programs; and breed, interest, and discipline associations. We represent over 700,000 Marylanders who make their living with horses, or who just own and love them.

First of all, it is important to note that SB 643 is really two bills in one. This two-in-one bill is a proposal to take control of the Sunday hunting issue away from the peoples' representatives and hand it to an agency that largely serves a single special interest group on this issue. Finally, this is a complicated bill that, while it may ultimately result in a shorter statute, may not result in a less complicated or more transparent regulatory scheme.

The "two bills" are:

**Section 1**, which takes effect 7/1/2026

- In Natural Resources Article Section 10-206:

Allows the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to permit year-round, 7-day-a-week, shooting of deer on properties of at least 10 acres with deer damage to landscaping, crops, forest, etc., by creating "deer damage permits;" (in addition to the current, agricultural, Deer Management Permits). No shooting would be

allowed within 25 yards of DNR designated equestrian trails. DNR would issue public maps of these areas. There are at least two very significant problems with this proposal. First, 25 yards - 75 feet - is an incredibly short distance, given the range of modern hunting weapons. In Natural Resources Article Section 10-410 (g), the Legislature has determined various "safety zone" distances for discharge of weapons in certain circumstances - as much as 300 yards, but never less than 50 yards. Also there are many, many trails used by hikers, bikers, birdwatchers, dog walkers, etc., - on public and private land - that are not "a Department trail designated for equestrian use," where hunters could shoot right up to the property line.

- In Natural Resources Article Section 10-410 (Sunday hunting), the Bill doesn't much change the current law, except -

- Wicomico, Kent & Montgomery Counties - adds hunting from 3:00 pm to sunset (in addition to mornings until 10:30) on all but one Sunday in the deer firearms season (that one Sunday already is all day).
- Allows year-round Sunday hunting on "Deer Damage Permits" in addition to Deer Management (agricultural) Permits.
- Generally allows Sunday hunting for migratory game birds.
- Adds Sunday hunting for migratory Canada Geese, Atlantic Population) for certain classes of hunters.

In the course of its efforts over the years to address the Sunday hunting issue, MHC negotiated a compromise that would allow fair shared use of natural resources, by cutting off Sunday hunting, where allowed, at 10:30 am, and this compromise has been embraced by the Legislature. This bill, at least until the pilot program goes into effect, chips away at the concept of "fair & shared" by taking more Sunday time away from non-hunters, adding a second hunting period from 3:00 pm until sunset on Sundays.

**Section 2** is the most significant and far-reaching portion of the bill. It creates a three year Pilot program (7/1/2027 - 6/30/2030), after which it "shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect." It calls for a report to the Legislature on or before December 1, 2029, "on the effectiveness of this Act on deer management and balancing stakeholder interests."

The pilot program eliminates almost all of the existing statute, and substitutes:  
(I) SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS ALLOWING PERSONS TO HUNT ON SUNDAYS DURING THE GAME BIRD AND GAME MAMMAL SEASONS.

***This is the provision that transfers control to DNR.***

(II) THE REGULATIONS ADOPTED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION SHALL AT A MINIMUM ALLOW SUNDAY HUNTING ON THE HOURS AND DAYS AUTHORIZED FOR SUNDAY HUNTING BY SPECIES, HUNTING SEASON, AND COUNTY ON JUNE 30, 2027.

***In other words, there can't be any less Sunday hunting than what was in effect on 6/30/2027, so the program is conceived and designed to only expand Sunday hunting.***

This Section also creates blanket allowance of Sunday hunting on public land (except state parks).

**Thus, Section 2 is the real meat of the bill, and it is fundamentally about who makes public policy decisions - the Legislators who represent all of their constituents, or DNR, which demonstrably represents the interests of just one constituency (hunters) on this issue, even though a majority of Maryland residents oppose Sunday hunting.** An independent statewide survey conducted by Gonzales Research and Media Services in 2018 found that 68.9% of respondents oppose Sunday hunting, and of that, 53% strongly oppose it. A copy of that survey has been filed with this testimony. Even DNR's own 2018 survey found that a majority of the general population is not in favor of Sunday hunting.<sup>1</sup>

Key points -

### **Legislative Workload**

It has been argued that this legislation will help alleviate the clearly intense workload of the Legislators during Session. We fully appreciate the enormous workload of the Legislators, but would point out that, of the approximately 2500 bills introduced in each session, very few relate to Sunday hunting - for example: two in 2024, four in 2025, three in 2026 (not counting cross files of some those bills, and not counting this bill).

Furthermore, this bill will not insulate the Legislature from having to hear future Sunday hunting bills. Citizens can always bring bills to change the system, or to challenge particular DNR policies. In fact, if this bill results in unpopular DNR actions, the Legislature might see an even greater influx of bills.

### **DNR is the Expert**

It may be argued that "DNR already regulates the other six days days, the seventh should be no different." We acknowledge and truly respect that DNR is staffed with dedicated wildlife managers. But the Sunday hunting debate is not about wildlife management, it is about public policy regarding the effect on other users.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/2018\\_DeerPublicOpinionSurvey.pdf](https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/2018_DeerPublicOpinionSurvey.pdf)

## **Transparency, Accessibility, and Equity**

Removing direct authority over Sunday hunting from the Legislature results in a process that is much less transparent and accessible than the current system. For example, the DNR bi-annual meetings where ideas for new regulations are discussed are by invitation only, as were the DNR meetings this summer where the idea of removing control from the Legislature was proposed. DNR consistently excludes the majority of non-hunting interests from its by-invitation hunting regulation process. This summer's "stakeholder meetings" being the most stark example. The first meeting was almost completely devoid of non-hunting interests; requests from others to join the meeting were denied. Those meetings were initiated at the request of Del. Boyce in a memo to Secretary Kurtz wherein Del. Boyce listed nine issues that she wanted discussed and resolved, including "policy inconsistencies," "pattern and practice discrepancies," "concerns of the equine community," and "information about hunting incidents or casualties in the past 30 years, or more, if applicable." None of that was discussed. Instead, at that first meeting, Assistant Secretary Peditto rolled out his plan to remove jurisdiction over Sunday hunting from the Legislature and lodge it within DNR.

Most Marylanders do not have the bandwidth to regularly check the Maryland Register for new proposed rules, and the notice and comment process afforded there does not provide for oral testimony and question-and-answer interchange between the regulators and the regulated. Although the Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review (AELR) reviews proposed regulations, that review is generally limited in scope to determining whether the regulations conform to the statutory authority of the agency and the legislative intent of the statute under which the regulations are proposed. Moreover, there is no possibility for a public hearing except in some cases by request of an AELR member. Moreover, the public is generally unaware of this process.

## **Safety**

It is important not to lose track of the fact that it is just not safe for members of the general public to be out in the woods with armed hunters. Legislation pending in this Session, **SB 545/HB 716**, which would require written permission for surveyors to enter private land during deer firearms season, is an acknowledgement of that very fact. During the House hearing, **the Sponsor stated that "every year there are accidental deaths from hunting," and "you can't have people walking around in the woods" . . . "the safety factor is a big thing."**

The Hunting Accident Report submitted with our written testimony clearly demonstrates that.

Through the years MHC has testified numerous times about how Sunday hunting is not only opposed by most Marylanders, but that it is patently unsafe for hunters and non-hunters to contemporaneously share outdoor spaces. It is inarguable that armed hunters present a safety risk not presented by other user groups. It just makes sense that those other user groups should have at least one day when they do not have to take that risk. That decision should be with the Legislators who represent all of their constituents.

### **Sunday Hunting is not an effective Deer Management Tool**

Proponents of Sunday hunting bills urge passage because they claim that Sunday hunting is among the best tools to reduce the deer population. That claim is belied by the facts. In 2003, Gov. Ehrlich signed the bill allowing the first Sunday hunting in Maryland - on two Sundays in the entire deer season. **For the 2004 - 2005 season, the deer harvest was 93,868.** In ensuing years, more and more Sundays were added to the calendar. **By this past season,** 16 of Maryland's 23 counties had Sunday hunting on 21 out of the 22 total allowable days, and two counties had 15 Sundays. Yet **the total deer harvest was 71,649, a decline of almost 25%.**

it may be suggested that Maryland should adopt this bill because other states allow Sunday hunting to be exclusively regulated by their game control agencies, most recently Pennsylvania. It goes without saying that each state has unique circumstances. Patently, Maryland is not like Pennsylvania in many respects. For example, **Pennsylvania's population density is 286 people per square mile; Maryland's is 632 people per square mile.** Thus, determination of where and when discharge of weapons should be allowed has wholly different considerations.

We urge the Committee to give SB 643 an Unfavorable Report.

Respectfully submitted,

The Maryland Horse Council  
(844) MDHORSE (844-634-6773)  
info@mdhorsecouncil.org

# Sunday Hunting SB643.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebecca Peregoy

Position: UNF

My name is Rebecca Peregoy. I am an equestrian, farm owner, biotechnologist, and hiker. I also served in the United States Army, where I was trained to safely and accurately hit pop-up targets out to 300 meters in one shot. That training taught me absolute discipline around weapon safety.

My father was an active hunter from when he was a child in the 1950s, hunting rabbits & squirrels for food through the 1980s. He stopped hunting after meeting other hunters who admitted to taking “sound shots”—firing only because they heard a deer. After a lifetime of safe hunting, he no longer felt safe in the woods. I share this to show that my concern is not with hunting as a tradition, but with safety.

And whether someone is holding a firearm, a compound bow effective at roughly 30–60 yards, or a recurve bow effective at about 20–40 yards, the fundamentals never change:

You must know your target, know what lies beyond it, and maintain full situational awareness.

When any of those conditions break down, accidents follow. A 25-yard safety zone from trails as discussed in this bill (Section B, 3, 2) is simply not enough distance.

Maryland’s hunting incident reports from 2021 through 2025 show this clearly. Every year, hunters are injured or nearly killed due to misidentification, poor visibility, ricochets, or unsafe backdrops. A hunter was shot by a 10-year-old relative who mistook him for game. A father was hit when his son’s bullet ricocheted off the ground. Another hunter was shot in the face and chest at 40 yards after being mistaken for a turkey. Bullets have passed through homes and living rooms, and shotgun pellets have struck vehicles 160 yards away. Last year, a 16-year-old was shot during a deer drive when multiple hunters fired at a running deer. These are not flukes—they are annual occurrences.

Maryland is especially vulnerable because of its density. Pennsylvania recently changed its law so Sunday hunting is regulated exclusively by its game commission, not the legislature. That change is often cited as a model for Maryland. But this ignores a critical fact: Pennsylvania’s population density is 286 people per square mile; Maryland’s is 632—more than double. What may be safe there cannot be assumed safe here. More people per square mile means more homes, more roads, and more families in the line of fire.

In a 2018 Gonzales Research survey, 68.9% of Marylanders oppose Sunday hunting and 53% strongly oppose it and with good reason. In a state this densely populated, expanding days of weapons use increases the risk for hikers, riders, birdwatchers, cyclists, nature lovers, and even children in their own backyards. The mere possibility of risk reduces outdoor use by non-hunters, decreasing park attendance and natural-resource revenue.

Sunday is not just tradition—it provides a safety buffer for the 99% of Marylanders by allowing all other outdoor users to relax and enjoy nature without fear.

Only 1.9% of the state's population hunts, the ninth lowest percentage nationally and as others have noted, the number of people applying for hunting licenses, is decreasing annually.

Sunday is not just tradition—it provides a safety buffer for Marylanders that allows all other outdoor users to relax and enjoy nature without fear.

Finally, studies show that adding Sunday hunting does not increase the total number of deer killed—only the days on which they are killed. If the goal is both safety and effective deer management, the solution is to adjust bag limits, not eliminate the public's one worry-free day.

For the sake of hunters and non-hunters alike, and out of a duty to protect public safety, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on this bill.

Thank you.

# **SB643.pdf**

Uploaded by: William Mistr

Position: UNF

To: The Honorable Members of the Maryland State Senate

From: William Mistr

Date: February 19, 2026

Subject: VOTE NO on SB643 – Natural Resources-Hunting-Management

Distinguished Senators,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB643. While this bill is presented as an expansion of hunter opportunity, it is built on a fundamental misunderstanding of migratory bird management. If passed, SB643 will not add more time for hunters; instead, it will destabilize fragile bird populations, jeopardize the local economy, and dissolve a long-standing social contract between different groups of Marylanders.

### 1. The "Zero-Sum" Reality: No New Hunting Days

The most critical fact regarding SB643 is that it does not add more hunting days. Under federal law (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service), Maryland is strictly capped on the total number of days allowed for migratory bird seasons.

- The Trade-Off: To open a Sunday for AP Canada Goose hunting for a select group of hunters, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) (according to Senator Jack Bailey's Chief of Staff) will remove a weekday (typically a Monday or Tuesday).
- The Harm: This trades low-pressure weekdays for high-pressure Sundays when hunter participation is at its peak. This "compressed" intensity leads to a significantly higher harvest rate, which triggers stricter federal penalties—such as even shorter seasons or lower bag limits—in future years.

### 2. Biological Risk: Why the "Day of Rest" Matters

Migratory birds like the Atlantic Population (AP) of Canada geese and various duck species are not "resident" birds; they are international travelers using Maryland as a critical refueling station.

- The "Burn Out" Effect: Constant, seven-day-a-week hunting pressure prevents birds from resting or feeding. Science shows that without a mid-week reprieve, birds "burn out" of an area and abandon Maryland's waterways entirely, moving further south.
- The AP Goose Crisis: These geese are currently in a "restrictive" status with a one-bird daily limit due to poor breeding success. Increasing harvest efficiency on Sundays is a direct contradiction to the conservation efforts currently in place to prevent a population collapse.

### 3. Economic Impact

Maryland has already seen the consequences of over-harvesting. In 1995, the AP goose population plummeted, forcing a six-year total moratorium on hunting.

- **The Cost:** That closure cost Maryland's Eastern Shore millions in lost tourism, hospitality, and gear sales.
- **Sustainable Future:** To protect this revenue, we must maintain the current "conservative" management. SB643 risks pushing us back toward a total season closure by prioritizing short-term convenience over long-term population health.

### 4. Shared Public Space and Safety

For decades, the prohibition of Sunday hunting has served as a successful compromise, ensuring that hikers, birdwatchers, and equestrian enthusiasts have one guaranteed day of tranquility and safety on shared lands.

- **Broad Opposition:** This bill is opposed not just by animal advocates, but by many veteran hunters who understand that "resting" the birds is the only way to ensure a successful, season-long hunt.
- **Regulatory Chaos:** The bill allows a "patchwork" of county-by-county opt-outs, making it nearly impossible for citizens to know which regulations apply as they cross local water boundaries.

### Conclusion

SB643 is a "lose-lose" proposition. It offers no new days of hunting, increases the stress on a fragile ecosystem, and risks the very populations that fuel our local outdoor economy. Whether you are a hunter, a conservationist, or an outdoor enthusiast, the science is clear: uninterrupted pressure is unsustainable.

I urge you to issue an unfavorable report on SB643.

Sincerely

William Anderson Mistr

410-952-9045