



Hills Bridge Beagles



Testimony HB 186 – Bow Hunting Sunday Hunting

House Committee on the Environment and Transportation

Position: OPPOSE

Good afternoon, Chairman Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce and Honorable Committee Members

My name is Margaret Crane. I am the Joint Master of the Hills Bridge Beagles, a beagling foot pack that hunts in all the Southern Maryland Counties. The Hills Bridge Beagles (HBB) are recognized foot pack by the National Beagle Club, the AKC parent club of Beagle breed. Beagling is a chasing sport not a killing sport to and we often joke it is a “gateway drug” to hunting because you don’t have to expensive gear or training to participate. The HBB’s season is September through March because rabbits begin having their young as it warms up and because in Southern Maryland the risks to hounds and followers that copperhead snakes and ticks present is too great.

The HBB was formed more than 40 years ago. The pack has between 60-80 followers that come out one or more times in any given season. Our followers range from the very young to the young at heart. Beagling gives people who might not otherwise have the opportunity, a chance to get out in the natural areas, farms and countryside to enjoy all the beauty Southern Maryland has to offer.

As a threshold matter, I and the HBB completely support hunting in Maryland. I allow hunters to hunt my farm. The issue I have with HB 186 is this bill will allow Sunday hunting in Counties where Sunday hunting has not been allowed which basically means non-bow hunters will not be able to enjoy Maryland’s natural resources on Sundays. If HB 186 is passed, the effect will be is natural resources in Baltimore, Howard and Prince George’s County will be completely dedicated to the deer hunters. What does this mean for the HBB and its many followers? What it means is the HBB can either stay out of the woods all together, effectively denying our members an opportunity to get in the woods, or the HBB can run the risk of running into deer hunters who are empowered to believe that no one else should be in the woods.

As you are well aware, several years ago Sunday deer hunting was expanded from seven (7) Sundays to twenty-one (21) Sundays each season. The HBB does everything they can to respect and not interfere with the deer hunters and what this generally means is we do not go out on

Sundays or we seek out places to go where there will not be deer hunters. If more Sundays are added, then there will be no way the HBB can avoid the deer hunters because the HBB has the same basic season as the deer hunters. Unfortunately, my experience with deer hunters in Maryland is they do not want to share the resource. As a result, the HBB and its followers have been subjected to threats and harassment by deer hunters because the deer hunters do not want anybody to “disturb” the deer.

The HBB is not anti-gun or anti-hunting by any means. What the HBB are advocating for is a “*share the resource*” approach. Unfortunately, because my experience has been that deer hunters are not interested in sharing the resource and that’s why they’ve come back one short year later to undo the compromise they agreed to last year. I’d just ask that you consider a *sharing the resource approach* and oppose HB 186.

If you’re interested in learning more about Beagling you can see the HBB on Outdoors Maryland by using the following link <https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-394-23hx3m9f> . This video won an Emmy and was voted Maryland’s Favorite dog video. I would note that the HBB can no longer hunt on the farm shown in the Outdoors Maryland video. The farm, which is Anne Arundel County, was purchased by DNR, and the farm is now limited solely to deer hunting. The Beagles cannot use that farm even one time a year, which is a sad commentary on resource management.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before this committee.

Margaret Crane