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Environment and
Transportation Committee

Subcommittees

Energy

Chair, Natural Resources and
Open Space



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 25, 2026

Testimony in Support of HB 1063

Natural Resources - Hunting - Management

Maryland remains among a shrinking number of states with complex statutory Sunday hunting restrictions. These Sunday hunting laws have been a frequent and recurring point of contention in the Maryland General Assembly, and across the state, for a variety of reasons. Currently, the laws are a patchwork of county-specific provisions, time limitations, landscape restrictions, and species-specific rules. These inconsistencies across Maryland create confusion for sportsmen, landowners, enforcement officers, and citizens looking to participate in outdoor recreational activities. Additionally, sportsmen and outdoor recreationalists have expressed disagreement on the practice of Sunday hunting, as sportsmen want the extra weekend day to hunt, recreationalists feel unsafe knowing hunters may be in the area they are hiking, biking, or horseback riding, and traditionalists want to continue adhering to blue laws. Many landowners argue that Sunday hunting restrictions violate personal private property rights, stating that they should be able to hunt whenever they please on their private property. However, Maryland's large deer population causes damages to property in the form of agricultural crop destruction or landscape alteration, which has made it hard to find a compromise.

For context, during the 2025 legislative session, as Chair of the Natural Resources Subcommittee, a memorandum was written to the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and the Secretary of Agriculture, requesting that both departments develop **'reasonable solutions'** to the never-ending Sunday hunting bill requests presented to the Environment and Transportation Committee. In June 2025 and again in July 2025, DNR hosted Sunday Hunting stakeholder meetings where more than 150 attendees heard from lawmakers and key stakeholders who have historically participated in the Sunday hunting dialogue.

HB1063 addresses the inequity, confusion, and often frustration surrounding Maryland's Sunday hunting laws and offers compromise for competing interests by authorizing DNR to issue deer damage Sunday hunting permits, adjusting the restricted Sunday hunting hours in certain counties, authorizing migratory game bird hunting on Sundays, and modernizing Sunday hunting regulations. HB1063 authorizes three solutions as a result of stakeholder meetings and months of additional feedback:

"Hot Spot Sundays" – deer damage abatement tool for MD farmers and landowners

HB1063 authorizes DNR to issue permits for Sunday deer reduction on contiguous properties of 10 acres or more where documented deer damage has occurred. [N.R. Article 10-415](#) currently allows agriculture operations with deer damage, to obtain permits to kill deer year-round, including all Sundays. This option is

available in every county, including Prince George's, Howard and Baltimore counties, the three listed above with 'absolute' Sunday hunting prohibitions. **The proposal would create 'hot spots' where landscape-level deer damage has been documented by DNR.** Mapping of those areas would be made available to the public, and landowners in those zones who have not been eligible for traditional agricultural damage permits would be eligible to obtain a permit to kill deer on their properties on Sundays in addition to the traditional hunting season days.

Deer damage is clearly defined within the bill language to include widespread destruction of agricultural crops or landscaping, reduction of forest understory or regeneration efforts, and loss of native plant communities. The hunting activities that take place under these permits must comply with the permit guidelines as outlined by DNR, including the prohibition of hunting within 25 yards of equestrian designated trails. This provision allows landowners to relieve their property of deer.

“Shared Sundays” – Equal Sharing of Certain Sundays

HB1063 adjusts the Sunday hunting hours in counties where Sunday hunting is currently restricted to sunrise through 10:30 AM to also include the hours between 3:00 PM and sunset during specified seasons. Recognizing that sunrise and sunset in November-January in Maryland is approximately 7am and 5pm accordingly, Sunday hunting could occur up to 2 1/2 hours after sunrise and then again beginning 2 1/2 hours before sunset. **Hunters would have a total of five daylight hours on those Sundays; non-hunters would also have a total of five hours of daytime opportunity.**

It is important to note that the bill **only applies in counties where time-restricted Sunday hunting already exists** and does not include Sundays in counties where full-day hunting for any season or species already exists. Prohibitions in Prince George's County and Baltimore City would remain the same. Shared Sundays would be prohibited on Sunday in the state park system, preserving those areas for non-consumptive recreational use.

“Heroes and Mentors Sundays” - Canada Goose Hunting Proposal

HB1063 authorizes Sunday hunting for migratory Canada Geese by repealing the current prohibition against Sunday hunting for migratory game birds. The bill specifically ensures access for junior hunters, senior hunters, apprentices, and full-time students with a permit during open Canada Goose seasons, supporting hunter recruitment and hunter retention among seniors and youth. Providing these hunters **additional prime days to hunt with mentors who will provide them safe instruction, individualized attention, and will support their interest in continuing to hunt and become outdoor stewards** is the prime element of Maryland's 'R3' (recruitment, retention and reactivation).

During this process, there have been concerns about the migratory waterfowl population. My office has received questions about bag limits, a potential moratorium with the added Sundays, and the loss of compensatory days. Generally, migratory bird hunting is regulated nationally by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under the [Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918](#). The USFWS sets the federal framework for the duration of the season and allows states the ability to set their specific seasons as long as they follow the federal framework. Due to the regulations in Maryland restricting Sunday hunting of migratory birds, the USFWS offers compensatory hunting days to make up for the days lost. Some worry that allowing Sunday hunting will cause Maryland's hunting season to be shorter as it will no longer be eligible for compensatory days. However, **the season length will still consist of the same number of allowable hunting days**

regardless of the presence of compensatory days. Instead of having to make up missed Sundays in the form of compensatory days, hunters would simply be able to hunt on Sundays to achieve their total number of hunting days as nearly every other state. For example, the 2025-2026 duck hunting season consisted of 60 days. All Atlantic Coast States have the same number of days regardless of allowed Sunday hunting. The difference is in how the States schedule the days.

HB1063 goes into effect July 1, 2026 with a sunset of this provision June 30, 2030. A report to the General Assembly must be submitted by December 1, 2029 to determine the effectiveness and management of these policies by DNR as well as the evaluation of the satisfaction of stakeholder interests.

HB1063 is fundamentally an attempt to balance the ecological impacts of deer overpopulation, the needs of landowners, the limited availability of weekend time hunting opportunities, and the importance of preserving public safety and recreational uses of private and public land. HB1063 does not authorize statewide Sunday hunting, nor does it eliminate local distinctions. Instead, it provides DNR with defined authority to regulate Sunday hunting in a structured, transparent, and flexible manner. HB1063 represents a thoughtful first step to modernizing a Sunday hunting framework while balancing competing interests.

Thank you for your consideration, and I urge a favorable report on HB 1063.

Sincerely,



Regina T. Boyce

REGINA T. BOYCE
Legislative District 43A
Baltimore City

—
Vice Chair
Environment and
Transportation Committee

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Housing and Real Property

Chair
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MEMO

TO: Josh Kurtz, Secretary, Department of Natural Resources
FROM: Regina T. Boyce, Vice Chair, Environment & Transportation Committee
DATE: March 18, 2025
RE: Sunday Hunting

Every year since I joined the Environment & Transportation Committee, 2019, the Committee has listened to countless testimonies for and against Sunday hunting bills. Sunday hunting is a debatable matter which the committee would like the opportunity, in partnership, to resolve for counties that are interested in a policy change.

During the interim, I am requesting that the Department of Natural Resources, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture as appropriate, review hunting definitions, calendar, and polices - per species and county - to determine:

1. schedule gaps;
2. policy inconsistencies;
3. pattern and practice discrepancies;
4. rules regarding hunting on private property policy where applicable;
5. hunting definitions for fox chasers and any appropriate fees;
6. what counties have requested Sunday hunting in the past, the reasons for the request, and what species and hours the requests covered;
7. concerns of the equine community;
8. information about hunting incidents or casualties in the past 30 years, or more, if applicable; and
9. discrepancies between hunting laws/schedule and the crop damage permit.

With the determination of the above, the Committee is expecting the Department to present reasonable solutions, including those that can be implemented through the regulatory process and those requiring legislation during the next session, if necessary.

Sincerely,



Regina T. Boyce

CC: The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair, Environment & Transportation
Secretary Kevin Atticks, Department of Agriculture
Carroll County Delegation
Wicomico County Delegation