

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 1113

(Senator Eckardt)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environment and Transportation

Talbot County - Deer Management Permit - Firearms

This bill authorizes a deer management permittee in Talbot County to use a shotgun or breech loading center fired rifle approved by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to hunt deer throughout the year, including all deer seasons, in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit. Additionally, a permittee in Talbot County who leases State land for crop cultivation may hunt deer on the leased land in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit. DNR may authorize an individual in Talbot County to hunt deer on Sundays under a deer management permit.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal overall, but potential meaningful impact to farmers in Talbot County from a reduction in crop damage stemming from increased deer harvests under deer management permits.

Analysis

Current Law/Background:

Hunting Seasons – Generally

In general, DNR establishes the open season to hunt forest and upland game birds and mammals by regulation each year. DNR may adopt regulations to enlarge, extend, restrict, or prohibit hunting wildlife. There are three seasons to hunt deer in Maryland: deer bow hunting season, deer firearms season, and deer muzzleloader season. Deer hunting with archery equipment extends from early September through the end of January. Firearms season is two weeks in November and December starting the Saturday after Thanksgiving. There is also a two-day firearms season in January. There are two muzzleloader seasons: one in mid-October and a second in late December.

Sunday Hunting

Hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited, with specified exceptions. Among the exceptions, in Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Charles, Dorchester, Harford, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, a person may hunt deer on private property with a bow and arrow or crossbow during open season on the last three Sundays in October and the second Sunday in November.

Deer Management Permits

Maryland landowners or agricultural lessees that are experiencing severe economic loss from deer to commercially grown crops (including row crops, truck crops, pasture, nursery stock, orchards, and certain tree plantings) may be eligible to receive a deer management permit. Deer management permits allow the permittee to remove deer from the designated property outside the established deer hunting seasons and/or deer bag limits. These permits are issued by the Wildlife and Heritage Service within DNR.

A hunter with a deer management permit in Charles and St. Mary's counties may use a shotgun or a breech loading center fired rifle approved by DNR to hunt deer throughout deer season in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit. Additionally, a deer management permit holder in Charles and St. Mary's counties who leases State land for crop cultivation may hunt deer on the leased land in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit. DNR may authorize individuals in Charles and St. Mary's counties to hunt deer on Sundays under a deer management permit.

According to DNR, regulated hunting is the most cost-effective deer population control mechanism available throughout most of the State.

Small Business Effect: Authorizing additional deer hunting in Talbot County may have a potential meaningful economic impact on some farmers in that county by reducing crop damage. Most farms are small businesses. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service estimated that Maryland deer caused \$7.7 million in agricultural damage statewide. Based on past estimates of crop damage losses, DNR estimates that an individual deer causes \$33.05 in agricultural damage annually. To the extent that the bill reduces crop damage, farmers benefit.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1596 (Delegate Mautz) - Rules and Executive Nominations.

Information Source(s): Talbot County, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 11, 2016
min/lgc

Analysis by: Kathleen P. Kennedy

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510