

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 500 (Senator Eckardt)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Talbot County - Turkey and Deer Hunting - Sundays

This bill authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow a person in Talbot County (1) to hunt turkey on a Sunday through participation in the junior hunt for turkeys; (2) hunt deer with a firearm on a Sunday through participation in the junior deer hunt; and (3) hunt deer with a firearm on a Sunday during the winter portion of the deer firearms season in the deer management region that Talbot County is part of, as designated by DNR. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

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 for certain businesses in Talbot County, as discussed below.

Analysis

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 – General Prohibition

Except as otherwise provided, a person may not hunt any game bird or mammal on Sundays.

Deer on Private Property

In Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Charles, Harford, Queen Anne'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.

In Wicomico County, DNR may authorize a person to hunt deer on private property on the second Sunday in the deer firearms season from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.

In Calvert, Caroline, Charles, Harford, Queen Anne's, Somerset, and Worcester counties, a person may hunt deer on private property on the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November and each Sunday in the deer firearms season. In addition, DNR may allow deer hunting on private property statewide (with the exception of Baltimore City and Baltimore, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties) on the first Sunday of the bow hunting season in November and the first Sunday of the deer firearms season.

In Carroll County, DNR may authorize deer hunting on Sundays on private property from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year.

In Montgomery County, DNR may allow a person to hunt deer on a Sunday throughout the deer hunting season on private property. DNR may only allow such hunting from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m., subject to specified exceptions. The time restrictions do not apply (1) to a participant in the junior deer hunt; (2) on private land only on one Sunday designated by DNR during deer bow hunting season; and (3) on private land only on one Sunday designated by DNR during the firearms season.

In Kent County, DNR may allow a person to hunt deer on a Sunday on private property throughout all deer hunting seasons. However, DNR may only allow a person to hunt deer during firearms season from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m., subject to specified exceptions. The time restrictions do not apply (1) to a participant in the junior deer hunt and (2) on private land only on one Sunday designated by DNR during the firearms season.

In Dorchester County, DNR may authorize deer hunting on a Sunday on private property during the bow hunting season from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year. Additionally, DNR may authorize deer hunting on a Sunday during the deer muzzleloader season on private property in Dorchester County. Finally, DNR may authorize deer hunting on the second and third Sunday of the deer firearms season on private property in Dorchester County.

Deer Management Permits

Deer management permit holders and their agents are explicitly authorized to hunt on any Sunday throughout the State. Deer management permits can be issued for both private and State-leased agricultural land.

Game Birds and Mammals on Private Property and Public Land

DNR may allow hunting on Sundays in Allegany, Cecil, Garrett, and Washington counties for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, during the open season for these animals on specified private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR. Additionally, DNR is authorized to allow Sunday deer hunting in Frederick County from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year on specified private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR. In St. Mary's County, DNR may allow a person to hunt any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, on any Sunday during the open season for these animals on private property or public land (except State parks) designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

Hunting Turkey on Private Property and Public Land

A person may hunt turkey on private property in Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Charles, Dorchester, and Kent counties on Sundays during the spring turkey hunting season. In Dorchester County, a person may hunt turkeys on Sundays on public land designated for hunting by DNR during the spring turkey hunting season.

Junior Hunts

Under current law, a person who is age 16 or younger and is participating in a junior hunt may hunt on a Sunday. Hunting turkey on a Sunday of the junior turkey hunt is already available in Talbot County.

Background: Because white-tailed deer thrive in habitat that is composed of woods and openings and because hunter access in those areas is limited, suburban development has provided excellent deer habitat in the State. This has resulted in growing deer populations

in suburban areas. Higher populations of deer can lead to a greater number of negative interactions with suburban residents, such as deer-vehicle collisions and vegetation damage. Deer also cause agricultural damage.

According to DNR, regulated hunting is the most cost-effective deer population control mechanism available throughout most of the State, and Sunday hunting has contributed positively to managing the State's white-tailed deer population in the 20 counties where it is now permitted.

Hunters have harvested more than 75,000 deer on Sundays since becoming a legal hunting day in 2003. Deer hunters harvested 8,416 deer on Sundays during the 2018-2019 hunting season. Archery hunters harvested 1,944 deer on Sundays during the 2018-2019 hunting season, while firearm hunters harvested 5,423 deer, and muzzleloader hunters harvested 153 deer. Included in the firearm totals are the 896 deer harvested by junior hunters on the Sunday of the Junior Hunt Weekend.

During the seven Sunday hunting days in Talbot County during the 2018-2019 hunting season, 236 deer were harvested by hunters. Firearm hunters harvested 148 deer on the two Sundays open to firearm hunting in Talbot County. DNR estimates another 40 to 50 deer could be harvested on the additional Sunday in Talbot County under the bill.

Small Business Effect: Authorizing additional deer hunting in Talbot County likely has a meaningful economic impact on certain types of businesses. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that, in 2011, the average hunter in Maryland spent \$49 per hunting day on trip-related expenditures. In 2011, the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation estimated that hunters in Maryland spend more than \$260 million annually on food, lodging, equipment, and transportation.

In addition to businesses directly affected by hunting, the bill may also affect several other types of businesses. Most farms, for example, are small businesses. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 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.

The bill may also affect vehicle owners and businesses involved in the repair of vehicles. DNR estimates that there was an average of more than 31,000 deer-vehicle collisions in each of the last five years and that the average cost per collision is \$4,179. The car insurance industry projected total annual damage in Maryland due to deer-vehicle collisions is \$133 million. Reducing the deer population in Talbot County likely reduces

the number of deer-vehicle collisions, which has a positive impact on vehicle owners and a corresponding negative impact on vehicle repair businesses.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: HB 1129 (Delegates Mautz and Adams) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Department of Legislative Services

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