

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 475 (Senator Eckardt)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Talbot County – Deer and Turkey Hunting – Sundays

This bill authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow, in Talbot County, a person to (1) hunt deer (including on public land designated for hunting by DNR) on each Sunday of the deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January, inclusive and (2) hunt turkey on one Sunday of the spring turkey hunting season through participation in a junior hunt (including on public land if designated for hunting by DNR). **The bill takes effect July 1, 2021.**

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

Current Law: 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 primary 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. New for the 2020-2021 season, there was also a three-day primitive deer hunt in early February.

For an overview of Sunday hunting laws in the State, as well as background information on Sunday deer hunting in Maryland, please see the **Appendix – Sunday Hunting in Maryland**.

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.

Small Business Effect: Authorizing additional deer hunting in Talbot County may have 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, to the extent the bill results in a decrease in the deer population in Talbot County, the bill may also affect several other types of businesses, such as farms (due to a reduction in crop damage) and businesses that own or repair vehicles (due to a reduction in deer-vehicle collisions.)

DNR estimates that another 50 to 100 deer could be harvested each year on the additional Sundays in Talbot County.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1129 of 2020, a similar bill, passed the House with amendments and was referred to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken. Its cross file, SB 500, received a hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: HB 325 (Delegate Mautz) - Environment and Transportation.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 14, 2021
an/lgc

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Appendix – Sunday Hunting in Maryland

Sunday Hunting, Generally

Hunting game birds or mammals on Sundays is generally prohibited, with specified exceptions. Chapter 95 of 2020 reorganized and clarified statutory provisions related to Sunday hunting in the State. Chapter 95 also (1) explicitly stated that a person may not hunt on public lands within the State park system on a Sunday and (2) authorized the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to set all of the seasons for Sunday hunting.

Game Birds and Mammals on Private Property and Public Land

DNR may allow Sunday hunting for any game bird or mammal, except migratory game birds, in Allegany, Cecil, Garrett, St. Mary's, and Washington counties during the open season for these animals on private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting in Frederick County from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year on private property and public land designated for Sunday hunting by DNR.

DNR may allow Sunday turkey hunting in Dorchester County during the spring turkey hunting season on private property and public land designated for hunting by DNR.

Deer on Private Property

All Seasons: DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Carroll and Dorchester counties in all deer hunting seasons from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January of the following year; (2) in Kent County on each Sunday in all deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. (however, the time restriction does not apply to a participant in the junior deer hunt, on one Sunday in the deer firearms season as designated by DNR, and on each Sunday during the deer bow hunting season and the deer muzzle loader season); and (3) in Montgomery County on each Sunday in all deer hunting seasons from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. (however, the time restriction does not apply to a participant in the junior deer hunt, and on one Sunday in the deer firearms season and the deer bow hunting season as designated by DNR).

Firearms Season: DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Calvert, Caroline, Charles, Harford, Queen Anne's, Somerset, and Worcester counties on each Sunday of the deer firearms season; (2) in Anne Arundel and Talbot counties on the

first Sunday of the deer firearms season; and (3) in Wicomico County on the first Sunday of deer firearms season, and from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. on the second Sunday of the deer firearms season.

Bow Season: DNR may allow Sunday deer hunting on private property (1) in Calvert, Caroline, Charles, Harford, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester counties on the last three Sundays in October and the first two Sundays in November of the deer bow season and (2) in Anne Arundel County on the first Sunday in November of the deer bow season.

Turkey on Private Property

DNR may allow Sunday turkey hunting on private property in Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Charles, and Kent counties on Sundays during the spring turkey hunting season.

Miscellaneous

Junior Hunt: DNR may allow a person who is age 16 or younger and is participating in a junior hunt to hunt on a Sunday.

Traditional Sunday Hunting: DNR may allow the following persons to hunt game birds and mammals on a Sunday: (1) a person using State-certified raptors to hunt game birds or mammals during open season for these animals; (2) an unarmed person participating in an organized fox chase; and (3) a person using a regulated shooting ground to hunt pen-reared game birds or tower-released flighted mallard ducks.

Deer Management Permit Holders: DNR may allow a person with a deer management permit to shoot deer on any Sunday throughout the year in accordance with the terms of the permit.

Express Prohibitions

In general, a person may not hunt on a Sunday in Baltimore City or Baltimore, Howard, or Prince George's counties. This prohibition in these counties does not apply to the above-described acts of traditional Sunday hunting. In addition, a person with a deer management permit may shoot deer under the permit on a Sunday in these counties. Further, a person may not hunt migratory game birds on a Sunday, and a person may not hunt on public land within the State park system on a Sunday.

Background on Deer Hunting in Maryland

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 5,566 deer on Sundays during the 2019-2020 hunting season. Archery hunters harvested 1,970 deer on Sundays during the 2019-2020 hunting season, while firearm hunters harvested 3,373 deer, and muzzleloader hunters harvested 223 deer. Included in the firearm totals are the 545 deer harvested by junior hunters on the Sunday of the Junior Hunt Weekend.