

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2021 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 899 (Senator Bailey)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Natural Resources - Canada Geese - Bag Limits**

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This emergency bill establishes that during the migratory Canada goose (Atlantic population) hunting season, the bag limit for all Canada geese in the State, including geese found in the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone and the Atlantic Population Hunt Zone, must conform to the bag limit set for Atlantic population Canada geese that is adopted annually by the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

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**Fiscal Summary**

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

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

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** A Canada goose is considered a wetland game bird, which is a type of migratory game bird. A "migratory game bird" means any wetland game bird, dove, or woodcock, or any part, egg, offspring, or dead body of any of them. A "wetland game bird" means brant, coots, ducks, gallinules, geese, mergansers, rails, snipe, and swan or any part, egg, offspring, or dead body of any of them (including birds raised in captivity and released to the wild or otherwise used for hunting purposes). Statute is silent with regard to resident Canada geese. A Maryland migratory game bird stamp, in addition to a hunting license, is required to hunt all migratory game birds (coots, doves, rails, snipe, waterfowl, and woodcock).

There are two zones for Canada goose hunting in Maryland that are categorized by whether the wintering Canada goose population is primarily resident or nonresident/migratory. The Atlantic Population Hunt Zone, or Eastern Zone, is where most of the wintering goose population is from eastern Canada. The Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Hunt Zone, or Western Zone, is where most of the Canada goose population during the winter, and during other seasons, is primarily resident geese. The Eastern Zone includes all of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Harford, Howard, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, St. Mary's, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester counties and the eastern halves of Carroll, Charles and Prince George's counties. The Western Zone includes all of Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, Montgomery, and Washington counties and the western halves of Carroll, Charles, and Prince George's counties.

During the 2020-2021 hunting season, the migratory Canada goose season was December 18 through January 2 and January 13 through January 30. This season is applicable in the Atlantic Population Hunt Zone, or Eastern Zone, and the bag limit is one per day, with a possession limit of three. This bag limit is consistent with the bag limit for Atlantic population Canada geese set by USFWS.

There are also two resident Canada goose seasons. The timing of these seasons is based on the times when migratory Canada geese are not present. The zones for these resident Canada goose seasons are developed by USFWS based on bands collected from Canada geese.

During the 2020 season, the early resident Canada goose season was September 1 through 15 in the Eastern Zone and September 1 through 25 in the Western Zone. The bag limit for the early resident Canada goose season was 8 per day, with a possession limit of 24. The late resident Canada goose season overlaps timewise with the migratory season, but is distinguished by the areas where it applies. During the 2020-2021 season, the late resident Canada goose season was November 21 through November 27 and December 15 through March 10. The bag limit is 5 per day, with a possession limit of 15. The late resident goose hunt zone applies in all of Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, Montgomery, and Washington counties and the western portions of Carroll, Charles, and Prince George's counties.

Regulations also establish conditions under which a person can obtain a permit to use lethal means to control resident Canada geese outside the provisions of the Canada goose hunting seasons established annually by USFWS. An agricultural producer must have a resident Canada goose depredation permit to use lethal means to control resident Canada geese outside of the seasons established by USFWS.

**Small Business Effect:** According to DNR, the bill results in a significant decrease in the number of resident Canada geese harvested in the affected zone during the late resident

Canada goose season, where the bag limit must be reduced from five to one under current USFWS regulations. Reducing the amount of authorized hunting (by reducing the bag limit in several counties in the State) may result in a loss of business for small businesses that support hunting, including sporting goods stores, restaurants, and motels.

In addition to businesses that could be directly affected, since the bill likely results in a larger population of resident Canada geese in the State, the bill may also affect farms, many of which are small businesses, because Canada geese can cause damage to agricultural crops. For context, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2011, resident Canada geese caused \$500,000 of agricultural damage in the State.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 8, 2021  
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