

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 631 (Delegate Allen, *et al.*)
Environment and Transportation

Natural Resources - Protection of Beaver Population and Habitat - County
Authority (Beaver Believer Act)

This bill authorizes a county to enact a local law to promote, protect, and support the population and habitat of beavers in the county.

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: None. The bill does not directly affect small businesses.

Analysis

Current Law:

Hunting of Muskrat, Beavers, and Otters

A person is prohibited from hunting any muskrat, beaver, or otter in any manner except by trapping. A person may not dig into or in any manner molest or destroy any part of a muskrat, beaver, or otter den or house. A person may not possess the hide or skin of any muskrat, beaver, or otter that has been caught in any way except by trapping. Possession of any muskrat, beaver, or otter hide or skin that has been punctured by a hole, which appears to be a shot or bullet hole, is *prima facie* evidence that the muskrat, beaver, or otter was killed illegally.

A person is prohibited from possessing a light for the purpose of hunting muskrats, beaver, or otter at nighttime at any time. Possession of a light is *prima facie* evidence that the light was intended for this purpose.

A landowner or the landowner's lessee has the exclusive right to trap for muskrats down to the mean low watermark or on marsh land adjacent to the landowner's land. A person may not enter upon or place traps upon the land without first obtaining the written consent of the landowner or the landowner's lessee.

Wildlife Management

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responsible for conservation and management of wildlife and wildlife resources of the State. DNR must provide for a statewide system of assistance to local political subdivisions regarding the disposition of wild animals. This assistance may include field services, training, or payment to local jurisdictions for wildlife control in accordance with procedures and plans agreed to between the department and the local jurisdictions. DNR also manages the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund to finance the scientific investigation, protection, propagation, and management of wildlife in the State.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Frederick, and Montgomery counties; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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km/lgc

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