

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

HB 225 -- OPPOSE

I am a long-time member -- and former board member -- of the **Tuckahoe Equestrian Center Foundation, Inc.**, a non-profit which leases property within Tuckahoe State Park. We have a clubhouse, arena, lighted jousting path, an active youth group, and a **current membership of 292**. Many of our activities take place in the park, which has trails on both side of the Tuckahoe River: **about half the trails are in Queen Anne's County, and the other half are in Caroline County.**

All public land is bordered by private land. Property delineations within the woods are often difficult to know – and even if property lines were flagged with tape or paint – bullets and arrows don't respect property lines. DNR reports of hunting accidents are woefully incomplete. **One unreported accident occurred in 2014: a biker in Tuckahoe State Park was shot in the legs.** In 2016 an 87 year old man was struck in the head by a bullet while walking on his own property which adjoined Patuxant River Park in Montgomery County. In 2019 a woman was shooting a groundhog in her back yard and grazed a man's shoulder; he was walking in a park which bordered her land.

How many other accidents would there be if the perception of danger deprived so many Marylanders of the ability to recreate outside?

Many horse owners do not own horse trailers – their own property and properties of neighbors may be the only place that they *can* enjoy their passions. And yet, maybe they can't. Because of "externalities". An externality is an economic term which defines an external effect – often unforeseen or unintended, that accompanies a process or activity. For example, a negative externality is a business that causes pollution that diminishes the property values or health of people in the surrounding area. **Regulations that allow more Sundays to hunt can have the unintended consequence of depriving a property owner of his ability to enjoy his own property.**

My husband is an avid birdwatcher. The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) has chapters in 15 counties, and many county chapters schedule bird walks on Sunday mornings. In fact, the Kent County MOS chapter has bird walk scheduled in Queen Anne's County on April 25, 2021 in Sassafrass WMA.

Many people look forward an outing in the fall when the bugs and heat abate, or to birdwatch in the woods at spring migration. These people, too, might only have Sundays available. We need to encourage children to get outside, away from their hand-held devises! Why is it unreasonable for people to want a single day to enjoy the outdoors, when hunters already have 6 days to hunt?

Providing another day to hunt does not make environmental sense, especially when it comes to waterfowl. Due to poor spring production of Canada goose in 2018, the Atlantic Flyway biologists estimate that 2018 it was the worse Atlantic population of Canadian geese in 22 years. Population surveys indicate breeding mallards have declined about 20% and they are now 32% below the long term average. Therefore, the Atlantic Flyway water fowlers in the U.S. reduced bag limits on geese and mallards for the 2019-2020 season. With these statistics, why would anyone want to open more Sundays to hunt waterfowl?

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The horse industry's \$2.1 billion impact on Maryland's economy is huge. Horse farms make up 10% of Maryland's land, and pastures are among the best filtering devices to protect the Bay from runoff. Other advantages of pastures? They are excellent absorbers of carbon dioxide, they are critical habitat for many grassland bird species that are in severe decline, and they provide open space for all to enjoy.

Please, in the name of equity for all and science for a better environment, vote against HB 225!

Respectfully submitted,
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