



Maryland Grain Producers Association
118 Dundee Ave, Chester, MD 21619
Lindsay.mdag@gmail.com (p) 443-262-8491
www.marylandgrain.com

Date: February 27, 2024

Senate Bill 983 - Hunting - Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition - Phase-Out

Committee: Education, Energy and Environment

MGPA Position: OPPOSE

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. MGPA opposes Senate Bill 983 which would require the Department of Natural Resources to phase out the use of lead based ammunition by 2026, prioritizing ammunition used to harvest deer.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service estimated in 2012 that farmers experience over \$10 million in crop damage annually with 75% of that being attributed to deer. The density of deer to suitable habitat in Maryland is high and therefore causes conflict with not only farmers and their crops but also vehicles and homeowners. Responsible hunting and utilization of depredation permits are ways we can help control deer over-population.

Deer cooperator permits and deer depredation permits allow farmers to harvest deer outside of regulated hunting seasons to protect their crops from harm. Some deer cooperators harvest more than 150 deer per year. Many farmers using deer depredation permits harvest approximately 30 deer per year. This bill would exponentially increase the cost of harvesting deer and decrease the efficiency of the ammunition used to do so.

The ammunition of choice for many farmers is lead based. Lead based ammunition is less expensive than lead-free alternatives, more widely available and more effective. A lead based rifle bullet used for harvesting deer costs about \$2 per round. The lead free, copper alternative is \$3.50 making it 75% more expensive. Hunters also report that copper is less effective.

Maryland has a wanton-waste law that requires hunter to retrieve harvested deer from the field or forest and utilize them. This means they are often processed and the carcasses disposed of by the butcher.

We ask that you not force farmers to use more expensive and less effective ammunition to protect their crops and vote no on Senate bill 983.