

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 966 (Senators Dyson and Middleton)
 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Calvert County, Charles County, and St. Mary’s County - Deer Hunting

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a program to train rifle shooters to hunt deer to control the deer population in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary’s counties. The bill adds a deer hunting season specific to Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary’s counties and allows additional hunting of deer in those counties with a shotgun under a “deer management permit.” DNR must adopt regulations to implement the bill.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2014.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: DNR general fund expenditures increase by \$120,900 in FY 2015 for additional staff to implement the bill. Future year expenditures reflect annualization and inflation. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	120,900	110,100	115,300	120,800	126,500
Net Effect	(\$120,900)	(\$110,100)	(\$115,300)	(\$120,800)	(\$126,500)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: None. The bill is not expected to affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A person may hunt deer with a shotgun approved by DNR from January through March in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties.

A "deer management permit" is a permit issued by DNR authorizing the holder to hunt deer outside of deer hunting season for the purpose of preventing damage to crops. DNR is prohibited from requiring a holder of a deer management permit in Calvert, Charles, or St. Mary's counties to apply for renewal more than once every three years.

A person who holds a deer management permit in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties may use a shotgun approved by DNR to (1) hunt deer throughout deer season in the locations and under the conditions set forth in the permit and (2) hunt deer on State agricultural crop land located in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties to the same extent as the person is authorized under the deer management permit to hunt on private land in those counties.

Priority for participation in the tri-county rifle shooter program must be given to applicants who hold a deer management permit.

Current Law: 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 seasons to hunt deer in Maryland: deer bow hunting season; deer firearms season; and deer muzzle loader season.

DNR currently issues deer management permits to individuals so that they may harvest a certain number of deer outside of the regular deer hunting seasons in order to mitigate severe crop damage. There is no fee associated with this permit.

Background: 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, resulting in an escalation of 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.

According to DNR, regulated hunting remains the most cost-effective deer population control mechanism available throughout most of the State. However, DNR advises that allowing three additional months of shotgun deer hunting effectively eliminates its ability to manage deer populations in a scientific manner in the region.

State Fiscal Effect: DNR’s wildlife programs are funded primarily with revenue from a variety of special funds and federal Wildlife Restoration formula grant funds. As a result, positions similar to the one required by the bill are typically funded with special funds. However, DNR advises that due to very low special fund balances and a small number of staff to manage the southern Maryland wildlife management areas, general funds are required to implement the bill.

DNR’s general fund expenditures increase by \$120,910 in fiscal 2015, which accounts for a 90-day start-up delay. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring two natural resources technicians to assist with the rifle shooter training program required by the bill and with the issuance of deer management permits. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, vehicles, communication costs (including cell phones and monthly charges), other one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Positions	2
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$77,871
Automobile Purchase/Operations	32,417
Other Operating Expenses/Equipment	<u>10,622</u>
Total FY 2015 State Expenditures	\$120,910

Future year expenditures reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

DNR advises that, because the bill does not authorize a fee for the new deer management permit, a fee cannot be collected. This is consistent with the existing deer management permits issued to landowners. In addition, DNR is not eligible for federal matching funds for the activities under the bill as training for wildlife damage mitigation activities is specifically excluded from receiving funds from the federal Wildlife Restoration grant program.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 259 of 2010, a similar bill, passed the Senate and passed the House as amended; however, the Senate refused to concur with the House amendments, and no further action was taken. Its cross file, HB 502, passed the House as amended and was referred to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken. SB 944 of 2009, another similar bill, passed the Senate as amended and was referred to the House Environmental Matters Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Charles and St. Mary's counties, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 3, 2014
mc/lgc

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