

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

# **The Maryland Wildlife Advisory Commission**

**Will Meet at 10:30 AM  
On Wed., April 16, 2025  
Department of Natural Resources  
Google Meet**

**Meeting Agenda:**

**Approval for April 16, 2025, Meeting Agenda**

**Approval of March 19, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

**2025 Legislative Session Outcome (Associate Director Brian Eyler)**

**WAC Legislative Concepts Review (Group Discussion)**

**Maryland Farm Bureau Update (Tyler Hough)**

**Natural Resources Police Update (Lieutenant Brian Miller)**

**Old Business:**

- **Revamping Trapping Course Update - (Commissioner Kaitlin Rossignuolo)**
- **License Portal Update (MD Outdoors) - (Associate Director Brian Eyler)**
- **Use of Drones for Deer Recovery and Hunting – (Director Stonesifer & Associate Director Brian Eyler)**
- **Chronic Wasting Disease Website Update – Associate Director Brian Eyler**
- **Maryland Bucks-Bears-Stags Access to Specimens & Designated Storage Area – Director Stonesifer**
- **Suspension and Restitution Update -**
- **Potential Agenda Topics for May and September Meetings – Group Discussion**
  - **May Agenda Item:** Morgan State University Bear Hunter Opinion Survey (Dr. Scott Knoche from Morgan State University)
  - **Non-Lead Ammunition Regulation**

**New Business:**

**Public Comment:**

**Adjourn**

***NOTE: Free Parking will be available on the Navy Stadium Parking Lot, which is the third entrance on right off of Taylor Avenue.***

**The Proposed Schedule for the 2025 Meetings  
Of the Wildlife Advisory Commission is as follows:**

<b>January 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>February 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>March 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>April 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>May 21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>June 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>In-Person Meeting at Tawes State Office Building</b>
<b>July 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>No Meeting</b>
<b>August 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>September 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>October 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Google Meet</b>
<b>November 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>In-Person Meeting at Tawes State Office Building</b>
<b>December 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>No Meeting</b>

***PLEASE NOTE THAT MEETING DATES ARE HELD  
ON THE THIRD WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH***

**Note:** Unless notified otherwise, all meetings will be held via Google Meet. When meeting in person, they will be held in the C-4 Conference Room of the Department of Natural Resources—Tawes State Office Building beginning at 10:30 a.m. Available parking is located at the Navy Stadium Parking Lot.

***NOTE: Free Parking will be available on the Navy Stadium Parking Lot, which is the third entrance on right off of Taylor Avenue.***

# THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES

APRIL 16, 2025

Chair Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. This meeting was held by teleconference. Chair Wagner requested a roll call from individuals at the virtual meeting. Unfortunately, due to the anonymity of Google Meet callers, it was impossible to determine the identities of every participant.

## **Approval of April 16, 2025, Meeting Agenda**

- Motion:
  1. Commissioner Parks moved to accept the agenda for the April 16, 2025, Wildlife Advisory Commission meeting.
  2. Commissioner Showalter seconded.
  3. All in favor. Motion passed.

## **Approval of March 19, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

- Motion:
  1. Commissioner Keithley moved to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2025, meeting.
  2. Vice Chair Schroyer seconded.
  3. All in favor. Motion passed.

## **2025-2026 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons Update – Game Bird Section Leader Josh Homyack**

- Game Bird Section Leader Josh Homyack explained the impacts of SB335/HB0892 Natural Resources – Canada Geese Bag Limits to the Commission.
  1. The Canada Geese bag limits are being changed accordingly to the resident Canada Goose Zones of Charles, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties.
  2. The bill requires staff to change the daily bag limits several times throughout the year in the Resident Population (RP) Zone in these counties.
  3. When the Atlantic Population (AP) Canada Goose Season is open, the bill requires the RP Zone in these counties to have the same bag limit as the AP Zone.
  4. The bag limit will fluctuate between five and one, as the season progresses.
  5. Staff are updating the Canada Goose Zone maps, which are an interactive GIS-based map system on the DNR website.
  6. The zone descriptions in the hunting guide, along with the dates for those bag limit changes, fluctuate between five and one.
  7. Staff will put an extra chart in the hunting guide.
  8. Staff will also make the changes in the season selections that we forward to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
  9. Staff have been busy making these changes for Charles, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties.
  10. Due to the bill passing, the season will look different than what the Commission voted on and what the Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee reviewed and commented on.
- Commission's Comments:
  1. Chair Wagner commented that it is a dangerous path to have legislators and lobbyists determining seasons based on unscientific data while ignoring the scientific data that staff have discovered and utilized. Chair Wagner added that this is something we ought to be aware of, as DNR is supposed to manage Canada geese, and staff excel at managing them scientifically. It is unfortunate to see bills like this introduced that contradict what is scientifically established. Many hunters are frustrated that this bill has passed. Additionally, it makes it a little more challenging for the Commission to have conversations with hunters to justify why Maryland changed the law, and nobody knows why. Chair Wagner clarified that these comments are his own.
  2. Commissioner Smith expressed that hunting in residential areas is very challenging because

locating a flight path where geese congregate is difficult; the birds are so scattered that it is hard to hunt them unless you are hunting on farmland.

## **2025 Legislative Session Outcome – Associate Director Brian Eyler**

- Associate Director Brian Eyler outlined the bills from the Summary of 2025 Proposed Legislation as of April 8, 2025. **[ATTACHMENT A]**
- Most of the bills on the list did not make it out of committee.
- The bills that were highlighted on **[ATTACHMENT A]** are going to the Governor for signature.
  1. HB0717 Natural Resources – Public Lands – Acquisition, Staffing, Operations, and Funding establishes a land management program, and more importantly for WHS, it requires that we budget for a permanent staff position for every 400 acres of new property that the DNR acquires, which can be beneficial for WHS, recognizing DBM does not have to authorize the PINs. WHS experienced difficulties when acquiring land and lacked the necessary funds to hire staff to manage it. WHS will use this opportunity responsibly to enhance the properties we currently operate and to oversee any new properties.
  2. HB0731 Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossing establishes a working group to address future highway crossings for wildlife. The majority of the responsibility rests with the State Highway Administration and the Department of Transportation.
  3. HB0857 Natural Resources – Pursuing Wounded Deer After Legal Hunting Hours – Authorization, which permits hunters to dispatch deer after legal shooting hours and allows the use of artificial light for this purpose. Staff are drafting the regulations for this bill and are working to have them ready by September. This bill requires hunters to notify the Natural Resources Police before shooting a deer after legal hunting hours.
  4. HB0894 Endangered and Threatened Species – Incidental Taking – Bats, which authorizes the Secretary to issue a take permit for particular bat species in Maryland.
  5. SB0335 Natural Resources – Canada Geese – Bag Limits: Game Bird Section Leader Josh Homyack has already updated the Commission on this bill. Staff are working hard to have this information in the 2025-2026 Maryland Guide to Hunting and Trapping.
  6. SB0399 Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines, which authorizes the area property on three wildland areas in Western Maryland for a new transmission line, was amended to include language stating that any new line must be located within 200 feet of the existing Potomac Edison Line. There are still some concerns related to this bill.
  7. SB0946 Endangered and Threatened Species – Incidental Taking – Bats, which is also the incidental taking of bats.
- Director Karina Stonesifer informed the Commission that, potentially, next year, with our deer cooperator permits (DCP), WHS discovered a sunset clause in the time-of-year restriction for operational permits. When the regulation was updated, WHS extended the period during which permit holders could operate. WHS essentially granted deer cooperators an additional two weeks on either end, allowing the DCPs to function through April 15. The season extension has sunset, and it will now revert to March 30. Therefore, absent any future legislative intervention, those dates will return to their historical norms.
- Q&A Section:
  1. Chair Wagner inquired whether this matter could be reviewed under existing regulations or if it should be added to the agenda.
    - a. Director Stonesifer wanted the Commission to be aware of the change because, as more people become informed, it may raise concerns; however, it is currently under review by the staff. This modification is not something that staff can reverse. WHS anticipates that this administration would not support a bill for night shooting, even if it is a highly restricted program. WHS is limited in the number of bills it can introduce. Therefore, it will require an organization like the Maryland Farm Bureau or another entity to advance a bill.

- b. Maryland Farm Bureau (MFB) Director of Government Relations Tyler Hough noted that this was not on the Maryland Farm Bureau's radar. Mr. Hough said that this is something MFB would need to discuss with Director Stonesifer because it will impact MFB members.
  2. Commissioner Kullberg inquired whether any controversial bills had been passed, and there was nothing for the Commission to be concerned about, given that only six of the bills being tracked had passed through the legislature.
    - a. Associate Director Eyler mentioned that there was nothing wildlife-related that was really controversial that passed.
    - b. Director Stonesifer added that WHS ended up on stable footing for the 2025 Legislative Session.
- Commissioner Kullberg suggested that the Commission consider the other bills on the list and take some lessons learned from this Legislative Session and hopefully get ahead of it for the next session.
- Chair Wagner added that it may be good to review the 2025 Legislative Session, Wildlife and Heritage Tracking Sheet this summer or at another meeting before the next session starts to see where the Commission can influence or help fight some of these bills before they are introduced again.
- Q&A Section
  1. Commissioner Jenkins asked if there is a specific number that hunters will call to report deer sightings after hunting hours.
    - a. The Natural Resources Police Communication Center's number is 1-800-628-9944 or 410-260-8888, as listed in the hunting and trapping guide.
  2. Commissioner Jenkins mentioned that it would be overwhelming and wondered what would happen if someone were unable to get through.
    - a. The NRP Communication Center is designed to handle a relatively high volume of calls. Staff will have to discuss it with NRP.
    - b. Staff will provide instructions in the hunting and trapping guide to ensure that it accurately reflects the information.
  3. Commissioner Showalter inquired about the anticipated summer session.
    - a. If the legislature were to come back, a possible reason would be the budget in the fall.
- Assistant Secretary Paul Peditto informed the Commission that the DNR received notification from the leadership of the House Committee that they want the DNR to conduct some interim homework related to Sunday hunting. Therefore, the DNR will engage with the Commission and various other stakeholders to help meet this assignment. The notification was issued as a formal notice to the Secretary and subsequently to Assistant Secretary Paul Peditto. For this assignment, staff would be tasked with developing a solution that results in either a bill, regulations, or a combination of both, effectively addressing the Sunday hunting issue so that the legislature doesn't have to continue grappling with it, as they have for more than a decade. This directive came from the leadership of the House Environment and Transportation Committee.
- Chair Wagner requested that the Sunday Hunting Discussion be added to the agenda.

**Maryland Farm Bureau Update (MFB) - Tyler Hough, MFB Director of Government Relations**

- Mr. Hough indicated that the 2025 Legislative Session was challenging for all parties involved in agriculture.
- Mr. Hough mentioned that one of the matters MFB followed closely, which would also affect this Commission, was the Department of Legislative Services' (DLS) recommendation to cut open space. Fortunately, that did not proceed as initially proposed, and there were modifications across the board; everyone took a haircut within the budget, which was expected given the budget deficit.
- Mr. Hough outlined that most of the bills MFB monitored were wildlife-related and did not advance. It was one of those bill years when everything revolved around the budget and energy, leading many bills to stagnate.
- Mr. Hough commented that MFB will connect with Director Stonesifer regarding the deer cooperator item, and MFB also hopes to be included in the Sunday hunting discussion with Assistant Secretary

Peditto.

- MFB will discuss those items at future spring banquets and legislative banquets as the MFB starts to develop what the MFB policy outlook is going to look like, as MFB starts to build policy in the early summer and moves towards the MFB annual convention in December.
- Q&A Section
  1. Chair Wagner observed that there has been a significant issue on the Eastern Shore regarding solar energy and its related changes. Chair Wagner inquired about the sentiments of grain growers in the farming community regarding the energy needs for solar farms on the Eastern Shore.
    - a. Mr. Hough explained that with the passing of the solar bill SB0931/HB1036, the Eastern Shore agricultural community is concerned.
    - b. Mr. Hough highlighted that a 5% cap for PPA acres was included in the bill as an amendment. Unfortunately, that equates to 104,000 acres statewide, which will take time for Maryland to reach and for the cap to offer meaningful protection. At the same time, if Maryland loses 104,000 acres of farmland, concerns arise regarding the future of agriculture. There is considerable frustration, especially on the Eastern Shore.
    - c. The Eastern Shore agricultural community believes it will be the first targeted area due to its ideal location for large-scale solar sites, its flat land, which is the easiest to utilize, and its significant presence of absentee landowners. Forty percent of the land in Maryland is farmed and leased, making it very attractive for solar companies, as they can easily outbid farmers for leased land.
    - d. Chair Wagner stated that this puts pressure on wildlife in the Eastern Shore, as most of those areas are not conducive to wildlife habitats. The Commission will be closely monitoring this.

**Natural Resources Police Update (NRP)** – Lieutenant Bill Davis gave an update.

- Lieutenant Brian Miller and Lieutenant Bill Davis are assigned to the Wildlife Advisory Commission.
- Lieutenant Bill Davis did not have the same stats as Lieutenant Brian Miller provided to the Commission.
  1. For March 2025, NRP conducted 6,326 fisheries inspections and 109 game contacts, spent 5,924 hours on public lands patrol, which includes wildlife management areas and cooperative wildlife management areas, and spent 7,033 hours on waterways.
  2. NRP responded to 7,193 calls for service and issued 310 citations and 1,152 warnings for a total of 1,452 enforcement contacts.

**Old Business**

- Revamping Trapping Course Update— Commissioner Rossignuolo informed the Commission that Hunter education staff are revamping the entire program, and it will take some time before Commissioner Rossignuolo has a substantial update. The hunter education staff are working on updates for the archery, muzzleloader, and tree stand courses.
- License Portal Update (MD Outdoors) – The goal is to launch the new system in early May. Currently, the staff is working on securing final approval and completing the final phase of field testing. Everything looks promising. There will be various tweaks even after the rollout progresses through its different stages.
  1. As mentioned earlier, there will be an option to receive physical license cards. A person can order a hard license card on MD Outdoors, which will be mailed to them.
  2. The waterfowl contest has concluded, and a nice winning image was selected. That winning image will appear on the hard license cards.
- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Webpage Update – Staff reviewed the webpage and decided to add a cumulative number of positives, as they had detected CWD back in 2010. Additionally, staff will add graphics that illustrate the number of counties with CWD over time. In doing so, people can see that it is expanding slowly, but it is expanding east. The content will be updated to provide more information.
  1. Chair Wagner inquired about other discussions, any insights, or plans for testing stations or the

- availability of testing for people who want to get their deer tested in our State.
- a. That topic is still on the staff's radar. The bottom line is that staff receive very few requests for that service, but that is not to say that it is the reason not to do it.
  - b. It is not a food safety test. Just because a test comes back as 'not detected' does not mean the animal did not have CWD; it was not at a level that could be detected. Maryland is following the lead of other states and exploring those avenues. The Commission may eventually see WHS offer a testing program.
  - c. Staff expect the demand to increase as the disease becomes more prevalent in our more urban counties.
2. Commissioner Keithley asked from the DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service standpoint, is there a threshold in terms of CWD that marks a certain point?
- a. There is no line in the sand. Staff are not going to eliminate CWD. Unfortunately, we must live with it and keep hunters and staff educated as the best way to manage and mitigate it.
  - b. In Allegany County, it is likely that prevalence rates are 30% or higher where staff first detected CWD; thus, about 3 out of 10 deer currently have CWD in the county.
  - c. Yes, the CWD is spreading slowly. Staff have not observed significant declines in the deer population, even in Allegany County.
  - d. In the future, Maryland could expect to see some long-term population consequences. The staff's goal is to manage CWD and keep hunters educated.
  - e. There is still no evidence that humans can contract CWD, which is a very good thing.
3. Vice Chair Schroyer inquired about the current CWD zones and whether staff have a count of the number of deer dying naturally of CWD.
- a. Staff could probably get an estimate of that number. In Allegany County, the infection rate is 30%.
  - b. Game Mammal Section Leader Jonathan Trudeau stated that he cannot attest to the fatality rate in Allegany County; however, he mentioned that West Virginia is conducting a major project south of Allegany County, where West Virginia has observed its highest CWD prevalence rate. After West Virginia collared 150 deer, CWD was the number one cause of mortality.
  - c. Vice Chair Schroyer noted that he had seen a study, but could not recall where the rate was 0.4, and there was a new discussion that some deer do not die from CWD.
4. Game Mammal Section Leader Jonathan Trudeau informed the Commission that he could obtain some preliminary results from West Virginia on their survival study. Staff recognized that this is a significant component. If someone argues that deer will not die from CWD, that is inaccurate. It is 100% fatal. The duration for which deer can withstand pre-infection differs. Some deer die within six months, while others may take two to three years to succumb. Genetic research has indicated a genetic component, suggesting that some deer are slightly more resistant to the disease, although they can still contract it. Additionally, a genetic aspect suggests that some deer can survive longer periods with CWD; however, this presents a catch-22 because the longer the deer survive and remain on the landscape, the longer they shed prions, the infectious proteins. The longer the deer survive, the greater the likelihood that other deer will contract the disease.
5. The simple terms of how many times deer reproduce before succumbing to CWD and how that affects population growth or decline, which is a significant part of the model. The biggest thing staff are seeing is a shift in age structure, which influences that model.
6. Chair Wagner mentioned it may be helpful to provide the Commission with the information that West Virginia has gathered.
7. Vice Chair Schroyer informed the Commission that he has been gathering information from other states, noting that their approaches vary from mass killing to not doing any culling, as we have in Maryland. He highlighted that Maryland's CWD growth rate is by no means ahead of the spread elsewhere, and again, Maryland has not culled deer. CWD has been part of the nation's landscape since the 1960s, and over the past 60 years, it has not had a significant impact on the entire deer population. There may be higher densities in some of these troubled areas than in states out west.

- Maryland Bucks-Bears-Stags Access to Specimens & Designated Storage Area – Director Stonesifer will provide an update at the May 21, 2025, meeting, which will follow the WHS Leadership Team's quarterly meeting with NRP.
- Suspension and Restitution Update – Suspension requests are being received from NRP, and we are processing them accordingly.
  1. Commissioner Keithley recalled that the Commission had a brief discussion about the Poaching Restitution Act and the associated fine. Commissioner Keithley suggested to Director Stonesifer that the poaching restitution act and fine could be discussed at their quarterly meeting with NRP, and report back to the Commission.
  2. Chair Wagner suggested to Director Stonesifer that the Commission be provided with a general update from the meeting with NRP regarding the poaching restitution act and fine.
  3. Chair Wagner requested that Ms. Spencer place these into one category entitled Karina's NRP Meeting Update for the May meeting.
- Use of Drones for Deer Recovery and Hunting Discussion –
  1. Chair Wagner thanked Director Stonesifer for the information that was shared with the Commission.
  2. Chair Wagner informed the Commission that Montana has been using drones since 2017 to either deter grizzly bears from populated areas or to keep them in certain areas by flying drones over them. Chair Wagner mentioned that the use of drones for grizzly bears in Montana has been 91% effective, and it is more efficient than dogs.
  3. Chair Wagner noted that the potential for misuse of drones is as significant as their utility for tracking and conducting studies or counts.
  4. Chair Wagner posed the following questions: Where do we go with the use of drones? How should we proceed? Do we need to go through the regulatory process, or should we consider alternative means to establish something formally?
  5. Chair Wagner expressed that he believes it is essential to establish a framework in the State of Maryland outlining the Uses of Drones.
  6. Director Stonesifer thanked Jonathan Trudeau and Brian Eyler for compiling the spreadsheet for the Commission. Director Stonesifer informed the Commission that WHS is beginning its regulation review for next year. Therefore, this is an opportunity for the Commission to express concerns, wants, or needs to the staff as WHS starts to develop proposals. WHS will likely depend on the Commission's perspective on this topic and work closely with NRP due to potential enforcement issues related to the use of drones.
  7. Vice Chair Schroyer commented that, as a private landowner, he would not want his neighbors' flying drones over his property to look for deer. For example, if a trophy deer were on my property, it would be easy for someone to fly a drone to harass the deer, causing it to run off my property, which would be an issue, especially in the mountains, where individuals might be inclined to do so. Additionally, Vice Chair Schroyer disagreed with using drones for recovery, stating that hunters can use dogs for that; therefore, there is no need for drones in recovery.
  8. Commissioner Jenkins noted the use of drones. There's a lot of positive potential for it, especially in the marshy areas. However, Vice Chair Schroyer discussed using drones for scouting, a practice that hunters are already employing. Commissioner Jenkins agreed that action should be taken related to the use of drones.
  9. Commissioner Keithley acknowledged that Maryland is unique with its mountainous areas, southern Maryland, suburban regions, Baltimore, and Annapolis. Having drones flying in those areas to search for live or dead deer presents a tricky situation. Maryland is not like Montana, Wyoming, or similar places. The regulatory or legislative process will be challenging. This topic has many facets. Regarding the use of dogs, it has been effective in recovering animals. The use of drones is a complex issue, and it will not be a straightforward matter.
  10. Associate Director Eyler agreed that the use of drones would be tricky to manage and enforce. Associate Director Eyler clarified that DNR cannot stop people from flying drones over your property. The focus should be on whether to allow the use of drones to kill the animal or use them



to track and find the animal.

11. Commissioner Showalter agreed with Associate Director Eyler. Commissioner Showalter said people have the right to fly a drone over private property. Commissioner Showalter clarified the discussion regarding the restrictions on activities that could be conducted with drones. Commissioner Showalter reviewed the spreadsheet and noted that Vermont and Virginia have some good examples that the Commission could probably pull from. There is a benefit to having more detailed regulations that prohibit the use of drones in hunting or taking wildlife.
12. Commissioner Showalter added that a number of those states specifically define harassment as activity that changes their normal behavior; therefore, Commissioner Showalter indicated that having regulations that permit or prohibit harassment, or the driving of wildlife, would be beneficial. Commissioner Showalter concurred that there may be enforcement challenges and debate about whether a person was just photographing something or harassing wildlife; however, without regulations, there is nothing that NRP could do about someone flying a drone.
13. Commissioner Showalter pointed out that he feels differently when it comes to recovery. Commissioner Showalter used dogs for recovery and agreed that it's more beneficial than using a flashlight to locate a deer. Commissioner Showalter recognized the value of using drones for recovery.
14. Commissioner Smith commented that having detailed language specifying what the pilots can and cannot do would be beneficial, rather than having no guidelines at all. Additionally, the language should reflect the necessity of being a professional pilot.
15. Commissioner Parks commented that he likes the drone concept for recovery. The scouting and the rest of it present challenges. Regarding a professional license, it becomes cumbersome to utilize. Regulation will be challenging because anyone can fly a drone for recreational purposes.
16. Commissioner Kullberg expressed that she did not have sufficient knowledge about the topic; therefore, she would need to gather more information before providing any comments.
17. Assistant Secretary Peditto shared historical conversations that WHS had about legislative initiatives to authorize dogs for tracking. The dogs were intended to chase, track, and corner the deer into a pile, allowing hunters to shoot them all, which has not been the case. Assistant Secretary Peditto cannot recall the last time an NRP officer indicated that somebody was cited for egregious violations related to tracking dogs. There was one famous case where someone was running their tracking dogs off-leash, but not to kill bonus deer.
18. Assistant Secretary Peditto described Maryland as somewhat of an odd state. Maryland is not like Iowa, where a hunter gets one buck tag. A person would have to be unusually motivated to engage in illegal activities related to deer hunting in Maryland, given the liberal bag limits and opportunities that the state offers. Assistant Peditto added that he bases this on his experience with tracking, having used both dogs and drones. Dogs can be very effective, but they do not recognize boundary lines. Therefore, when it comes to finding and recovering deer in urban and suburban areas, as Commissioner Keithley mentioned, a drone can be much more effective and far less intrusive. A person can cross a property line at 1,000 feet in the dark without anyone knowing that they are looking for a dead deer; however, if a person finds that animal, they now have the opportunity to coordinate with the private landowners. In contrast, it is tough to pull that 130-pound hound off that track and start over. Staff can craft the drone regulations, but the question is whether they will be enforceable consistently, which is one of the significant aspects that staff must consider if WHS is tasked with implementing drone regulations.
19. Chair Wagner commented that he is okay with using drones for tracking; however, Chair Wagner expressed concerns about the misuse of drones related to pushing, moving, or shooting deer, based on the unfair advantage that the person has by flying over the deer. Virginia drone regulations are easy to follow, along with some of the other states. Therefore, the hard work has been done in different states, and the Commission can build upon it to develop Maryland's drone regulations. Chair Wagner added that he is 100% in favor of having some regulations and providing NRP with guidelines to investigate and ensure that the use of drones is not being abused. Additionally, Chair Wagner mentioned that it may be an opportunity to develop a license

- or registration with DNR to be a licensed drone operator or licensed dog tracker. Therefore, if someone intends to use a drone for hunting or retrieving, the DNR should be aware of who these individuals are.
20. Director Stonesifer noted that there have been some good conversations discussed with the Commission. Director Stonesifer requested that, if the Commission would allow it, staff go back as a team to discuss and come back in June with some recommendations for the Commission to consider.
  21. Commissioner Parks offered his assistance to Director Stonesifer. Additionally, Commissioner Parks explained that a drone that flies 1,000 feet high is not a \$400 drone. Such a drone costs several thousand dollars, and adding an infrared sensor further increases the price. Therefore, it is not just casual individuals who go out and poach; these are the people using these advanced drones. The Commission should keep that in mind.
  22. Chair Wagner concurred with Director Stonesifer's recommendation, and the Commission will wait to hear from staff at the June meeting.
  23. Vice Chair Schroyer asked if a deer crossed onto the neighboring property, and if the hunter does not have permission and cannot obtain it to retrieve that animal, how does DNR restrict the hunter from flying over the property to locate it?
    - a. Director Stonesifer responded that DNR can't stop that action.
  24. Vice Chair Schroyer pointed out that it is nearly unenforceable. He recommended that Maryland needs a precise yes-or-no regulation regarding the use of drones for scouting and retrieving game species. Vice Chair Schroyer mentioned that he had two friends who lost 140-inch deer in the last few years because their neighbors would not let them retrieve the deer. The Commission should keep in mind that just because a hunter wounded an animal, it does not give that person the right to locate it on a property if they cannot retrieve it.
  25. The Vice Chair Schroyer pointed out that there is a difference in retrieving deer in different parts of the state. In the western part of the state, where the properties are often bigger, there's a better chance a deer will remain on the same property after it is shot. However, in the east, smaller properties make it much more likely a deer will expire on a property where the hunter does not have permission to access it.
  26. Vice Chair Schroyer advised that if the Commission and DNR decide to compile these regulations, we must ensure that we cover all the necessary bases.
  27. Commissioner Showalter outlined that these regulations will not authorize a person to enter someone's property in any way. The point about smaller parcels in the eastern part of the State is important, but there are situations where deer have doubled back. Therefore, even if a person knows the deer has crossed property lines, that person does not have permission to access the area. A drone may very well show that it did this and ran 200 yards in a circle, yet a person may not know that the deer has returned to the property. However, Commissioner Showalter indicated that there is value in locating the animal, even if it is ultimately unrecoverable.
  28. Commissioner Showalter recalled Commissioner Smith's comment about airspace around airports and commercial use. It is essential to understand that it preempts much of what we are discussing. The FAA has regulations, and if a person is using a drone commercially, that person needs a Part 107 drone registration for commercial use. Commissioner Showalter would not support the Commission's involvement in FAA regulations concerning the commercial use of drones. Commissioner Showalter suggested that the regulations state that a person must comply with FAA regulations. If an FAA license is required for commercial drone use, then it should be accepted, as this falls outside the Commission's purview. The Commission should focus on the wildlife aspect related to the use of drones.
  29. Assistant Secretary Peditto responded to Vice Chair Schroyer's comment about access to small sample sizes. In Assistant Secretary Peditto's experience, if a person can show a private landowner, who may not usually give access, that a deer is lying dead at a location on their property, they are more likely to let the hunter retrieve it than in the traditional model, which involves asking, "My deer went onto your property. Do you mind if I wander around a bit and

look for the deer?" With the use of a drone, a hunter can guide the landowner to the remote unit and display the deer's location.

30. Assistant Secretary Peditto explained that on some occasions, a hunter can contact NRP, and an officer can serve as a neutral arbiter in the moment, saying, "Look, we've got an NRP officer here. They are going to walk in with us. We're going to get the deer out, and we're going to leave. Thank you very much." This is a tool that can facilitate access. Assistant Secretary Peditto recognized that not every landowner will grant access, but the use of the drone could increase the likelihood of success.

31. Director Stonesifer reiterated that staff will report back in June on the use of drones.

- Chair Wagner requested that the Non-Lead Ammunition Regulation be deferred to a future meeting.

### **New Business –**

- Assistant Secretary Peditto announced that one of the Commission's members received arguably one of the most prestigious Pope and Young Club Awards at their National Convention, which is among the largest and most significant awards someone can receive in North America for hunting and wildlife conservation. Commissioner Keithley was recently recognized at the Pope and Young Club Convention in Glendale, Arizona, as a recipient of the Pope and Young Club Stewardship Award. This award recognizes individuals whose commitment to hunting reflects the correct principles and the conservation value of hunting. To put this in perspective, in the last decade, no other individual has received that award; over the past 10 years, it has often gone to multiple individuals or, in nine out of the last 10 years, has been awarded to major archery hunting organizations such as the New York Bow Hunters and the Iowa Bow Hunters Association. However, Commissioner Keithley received this award by himself this year. Assistant Secretary Peditto expressed his happiness that the Wildlife and Heritage Service leadership and our small DNR team were able to participate in the nominations process. He wanted to give Commissioner Steve Keithley his props and thank him for all he has done and continues to do.
  1. Commissioner Keithley expressed appreciation for the comments. Commissioner Keithley acknowledged that it was very humbling to have the national stage for a few moments for his acceptance speech in front of the archery Hall of Famers, Super Slammers, and friends. At the end of Commissioner Keithley's acceptance speech in Arizona, Commissioner Keithley recognized seven hunting friends from Southern Maryland who died in that horrible plane crash on January 29, 2025. Commissioner Keithley requested and received a moment of silence in honor of those individuals.
  2. Commissioner Keithley received comments from attendees. Commissioner Keithley provided a brief history of Hunters of Maryland LLC, and people wanted to know his strategy for relationship building in Annapolis and with the legislature.
  3. The Commission's members congratulated Commissioner Keithley.

### **Public Comment –**

- The public may contact the Members of the Commission at [wac.dnr@maryland.gov](mailto:wac.dnr@maryland.gov).

### **Adjournment**

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

The next meeting will be virtually using Google Meet at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 21, 2025.

### **Attendance**

Members:	TJ. Jenkins, S. Keithley, K. Kullberg, J. Parks, K. Rossignuolo, J. Schroyer, R. Showalter, M. Smith, and C. Wagner
Absent:	
Guest:	C. Pickett, J. Seigler, T. Hough, and A. Ward
Staff:	C. Coriell, B. Davis, H. Devine, B. Eyler, K. Harvey, J. Homyack, B. Long, J. McKnight, I. Montañez, J. Moulis, P. Peditto, T. Spencer, K. Stonesifer, J. Tabora,

	and J. Trudeau
--	----------------

**Summary of 2025 Proposed Legislation  
Wildlife and Heritage Service  
(as of April 8, 2025)**

<b>Number/ Chapter (Cross File) Total: 37</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Primary Sponsor</b>	<b>Final Status</b>	<b>Original House Committee(s) and Hearing Dates</b>	<b>Opposite House Committee(s) and Hearing Dates</b>
<a href="#">HB0173</a>	Baltimore County - Deer Management Program - Establishment	<a href="#">Delegate Nawrocki</a>	Withdrawn by Sponsor	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a>	
<a href="#">HB0483</a>	Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation - Alterations	<a href="#">Delegate Ziegler</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Ways and Means</a> 2/06/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">HB0511</a> ( <a href="#">SB0449</a> )	Frederick and Washington Counties - Bow Hunting - Openly Carrying Handguns	<a href="#">Frederick County Delegation</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a> 2/26/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">HB0540</a>	Maryland Green Schools - Website, Outreach, and Designations (Green Schools Stewardship Act)	<a href="#">Delegate Wolek</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Ways and Means</a> 2/12/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">HB0654</a>	Wicomico County - Sunday Hunting Time Restrictions - Repeal	<a href="#">Wicomico County Delegation</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a> 2/28/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">HB0717</a>	Natural Resources - Public Lands - Acquisition, Staffing, Operations, and Funding	<a href="#">Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee</a>	To the Governor for signature	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a> 2/12/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 3/25/2025 - 1:00 PM
<a href="#">HB0731</a> ( <a href="#">SB0635</a> )	Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings	<a href="#">Delegate Ruth</a>	To the Governor for signature	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a> 2/19/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a>
<a href="#">HB0741</a> ( <a href="#">SB0634</a> )	Hunting - Nonlead Ammunition, Fox Chasing, and Deer Management	<a href="#">Delegate Allen</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a> 2/19/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">HB0766</a>	Wildlife Advisory Commission - Membership - Alterations	<a href="#">Delegate Otto</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a> 2/19/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">HB0832</a> ( <a href="#">SB0417</a> )	Carroll County - Natural Resources - Sunday Hunting	<a href="#">Carroll County Delegation</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a> 3/12/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">HB0854</a> ( <a href="#">SB0128</a> )	Hunter Safety Education - Issuance of Identification Number	<a href="#">Delegate Hornberger</a>	Withdrawn by Sponsor	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a>	

**Summary of 2025 Proposed Legislation  
Wildlife and Heritage Service  
(as of April 8, 2025)**

<a href="#"><u>HB0857</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(SB0100)</u></a>	Natural Resources - Pursuing Wounded Deer After Legal Hunting Hours - Authorization	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Hornberger</u></a>	To the Governor for signature	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a> 2/19/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#"><u>Education, Energy, and the Environment</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>HB0878</u></a>	Department of the Environment - Water Resources - Protection of Vernal Pools (Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2025)	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Hill</u></a>	No vote	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a> 2/19/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>HB0882</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(SB0272)</u></a>	Prince George's County - Natural Resources - Sunday Deer Hunting and Archery Hunting Safety Zones	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Valderrama</u></a>	No vote	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a>	
<a href="#"><u>HB0892</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(SB0335)</u></a>	Natural Resources - Canada Geese - Bag Limits	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Jacobs</u></a>	Third reading passed 136-0	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a> 2/19/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>HB0894</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(SB0946)</u></a>	Endangered and Threatened Species - Incidental Taking - Bats	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Jacobs</u></a>	To the Governor for signature	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a> 2/19/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#"><u>Education, Energy, and the Environment</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>HB0954</u></a>	Public Safety - State and Local Governments - Use of Unmanned Aircraft	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Grammer</u></a>	No vote	<a href="#"><u>Judiciary</u></a> 2/25/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>HB1024</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(SB0958)</u></a>	Agriculture - Catastrophic Damage Caused by Deer	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Hutchinson</u></a>	No vote	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a> 2/26/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>HB1270</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(SB0399)</u></a>	Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Hinebaugh</u></a>	Third reading – special motion.	<a href="#"><u>Economic Matters</u></a> 3/06/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>HB1299</u></a>	Natural Resources - Western Maryland - Elk	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Hornberger</u></a>	No vote	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a> 3/05/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>HB1511</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(SB0736)</u></a>	Natural Resources - Wildlife Damage Prevention and Reimbursement Fund - Establishment	<a href="#"><u>Delegate Ruth</u></a>	Rereferred to ENT after first vote	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a> 3/12/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>SB0100</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(HB0857)</u></a>	Natural Resources - Pursuing Wounded Deer After Legal Hunting Hours - Authorization	<a href="#"><u>Senator Bailey</u></a>	Third reading passed 46-0	<a href="#"><u>Education, Energy, and the Environment</u></a> 2/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>SB0128</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(HB0854)</u></a>	Hunter Safety Education - Issuance of Identification Number	<a href="#"><u>Senator Bailey</u></a>	Withdrawn by Sponsor	<a href="#"><u>Education, Energy, and the Environment</u></a>	

**Summary of 2025 Proposed Legislation  
Wildlife and Heritage Service  
(as of April 8, 2025)**

<a href="#">SB0272</a> (HB0882)	Prince George's County - Natural Resources - Sunday Deer Hunting and Archery Hunting Safety Zones	<a href="#">Senator Jackson</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 2/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">SB0335</a> (HB0892)	Natural Resources - Canada Geese - Bag Limits	<a href="#">Senator Bailey</a>	To the Governor for signature	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 2/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a>
<a href="#">SB0399</a> (HB1270)	Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines	<a href="#">Senator McKay</a>	To the Governor for signature	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 2/11/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#">Economic Matters</a>
<a href="#">SB0417</a> (HB0832)	Carroll County - Natural Resources - Sunday Hunting	<a href="#">Carroll County Senators</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">SB0449</a> (HB0511)	Frederick and Washington Counties - Bow Hunting - Openly Carrying Handguns	<a href="#">Senator Folden</a>	Third reading passed 44-0, referred to ENT	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a>
<a href="#">SB0551</a>	Private Passenger Motor Vehicle Insurance - Collisions With Wild Animals - Prohibited Actions by Insurers	<a href="#">Senator Bailey</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Finance</a> 2/12/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">SB0634</a> (HB0741)	Hunting - Nonlead Ammunition, Fox Chasing, and Deer Management	<a href="#">Senator Lewis Young</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">SB0635</a> (HB0731)	Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings	<a href="#">Senator Lewis Young</a>	Third reading passed 38-9, referred to Rules & Exec. Nominations	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#">SB0711</a>	Off-Highway Recreational Vehicle Recreation Oversight Board - Establishment	<a href="#">Senator McKay</a>	Third reading passed, referred to ENT	<a href="#">Judicial Proceedings</a> 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#">Environment and Transportation</a>  <a href="#">Ways and Means</a>
<a href="#">SB0736</a> (HB1511)	Natural Resources - Wildlife Damage Prevention and Reimbursement Fund - Establishment	<a href="#">Senator Folden</a>	No vote	<a href="#">Education, Energy, and the Environment</a> 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	

**Summary of 2025 Proposed Legislation  
Wildlife and Heritage Service  
(as of April 8, 2025)**

				Budget and Taxation	
<a href="#"><u>SB0796</u></a>	Dorchester County - Sunday Hunting - Repeal of Time Restriction	<a href="#"><u>Senator Mautz</u></a>	No vote	Education, Energy, and the Environment 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	
<a href="#"><u>SB0870</u></a>	Boating - Migratory Waterfowl Season - Prohibited Acts	<a href="#"><u>Senator Mautz</u></a>	Withdrawn by Sponsor	Education, Energy, and the Environment	
<a href="#"><u>SB0946</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(HB0894)</u></a>	Endangered and Threatened Species - Incidental Taking - Bats	<a href="#"><u>Senator Carozza</u></a>	To the Governor for signature	Education, Energy, and the Environment 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	<a href="#"><u>Environment and Transportation</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>SB0958</u></a> <a href="#"><u>(HB1024)</u></a>	Agriculture - Catastrophic Damage Caused by Deer	<a href="#"><u>Senator Mautz</u></a>	No vote	Education, Energy, and the Environment 3/04/2025 - 1:00 PM	