

NEWS & VIEWS

You Can Use

Legislative Update

By Jane Seigler

The 2018 Maryland General Assembly session is underway. During the 90 day session that spans from mid-January to mid-April, the legislature will consider approximately 3,000 bills, only a fraction of which will become law. Once again, the dedicated volunteers of the Horse Council's Legislative Committee are monitoring the legislative goings on and taking action, as necessary, on behalf of Maryland horse people.

As we have in most sessions of the past decade and a half or so, MHC is responding to proposals to expand Sunday deer hunting, which was, until the early 2000s, prohibited in Maryland. Since that time, various bills have been introduced to allow Sunday hunting in certain counties, and then to expand it once it was initially allowed in those counties. MHC's position has been that one weekend day per week should be preserved for other stakeholders (horseback riders, walkers, bikers, birdwatchers, etc.) to have quiet and safe enjoyment of the outdoors.

In recent years, most Sunday hunting bills have been focused on a specific county or counties. This year, a much more sweeping bill (SB 817, cross-filed as HB 1338) was introduced. It would apply statewide, and would authorize the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to:

- a) allow a full day of hunting on 3 Sundays in deer Firearm season, 2 Sundays in deer muzzleloader season, and all Sundays in deer bow season; and,
- b) allow additional Sundays until 10:30 am, presumably in any deer season.

In the current deer gun seasons there are only five Sundays on the calendar. So these bills effectively authorize full day Sunday hunting on all Sundays throughout the deer seasons (gun and bow). Only Carroll and Frederick currently have this many full days of deer hunting on Sundays. The vast majority of counties would see a big increase in full day Sunday hunting in both gun and bow seasons under these bills. In other words, this is the statewide, full day Sunday hunting bill that was defeated more than a decade ago. Also, given that the bills authorize DNR to allow all day Sunday hunting on all Sundays in the current deer season, it is not clear what is intended by language that also authorizes DNR to add more Sundays until 10:30.

With the help of our lobbyist, Frank Boston,

MHC is working hard to oppose these bills. As of this writing, the status of the bills is uncertain. The Senate's originally scheduled hearing has been canceled, and has not been re-scheduled. The House hearing is scheduled for March 7, as of this writing. However, we have received information from the sponsors that the bills may be substantially amended, although the details of any such amendments are not available as the Equiery goes to press. Check the link at the end of this article for up-to-date info on the status of these and any other bills.

In addition to the Sunday hunting bill, MHC has already filed comments expressing safety concerns about a bill (HB 222/SB 268) that would allow drivers to cross a double yellow line to pass slower moving vehicles such as bicycles and farm equipment (including horse trailers). We have filed testimony supporting a bond issue (HB 1037/SB 434) for the Talisman therapeutic riding center on the Eastern Shore; and a bill (HB 7/SB 182) providing a \$50 tax credit to offset expenses for venison donated to the Maryland Food Bank or the Maryland Chapter of Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry. We also submitted comments to point out some problems with a bill (HB 1232), that would dedicate 1% of purse funds for aftercare of retired racehorses and sanctuary thoroughbreds.

Here are some other bills we are watching:

- HB 46 - Obliging farm equipment wider than 15 feet to display amber lights. Applies to equipment carrying hay bales.
- HB 119 - Adds Calvert County to the counties (currently St. Mary's and Charles) where DMP holders may hunt deer with firearms throughout the year, including all deer hunting seasons.
- HB 212/SB 1038 - Authorizes a court to prohibit a defendant convicted of certain animal cruelty crimes from owning, possessing, or residing with an animal for time up to the life of the defendant, etc.
- HB 396/SB 354 - Al-

lowing counties that have an agricultural land preservation program to assess an agricultural land preservation fee to fund said program.

- HB 421/SB 463 - Authorizes the State Racing Commission to hire an equine director, and requiring Standardbred and Thoroughbred track licensees, owners and breeders to pay the cost, 80% by Thoroughbreds and 20% by Standardbreds.
- HB 565 - Makes mandatory the previously permissive language concerning impounding animals.
- HB 1177 - To create/join the Interstate Anti-Doping and Drug Testing Standards Compact to create uniform rules on permitted drugs and medications.
- HB 1429 - Altering the safety zone for archery hunters to 50 yards statewide.
- HB 1629 - Establishing the Maryland Animal Abuse Registry requiring people convicted of certain crimes involving animals to register with a county sheriff; requiring a court to order a defendant convicted of an animal abuse crime to participate in and pay for certain counseling; etc.
- SB 747 - Prohibiting holders of Deer Management Permits (crop damage permits) from shooting at night.
- SB 851/HB 1592 - Requiring each licensed owner and trainer to be a member of the Mary-

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land Jockey Injury Compensation Fund, and adding trainers to the definition of employer, etc.

To find more information about or the current status of, any of these bills, to find out who your legislators are and how to contact them, and for more information on how bills are created and move through the legislative process, go to: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmgaf/rm1st.aspx?tab=home>.

For more information about how to make your voice heard effectively in Annapolis, check out MHC "Grassroots Lobbying Brochure." <http://www.mdhorsecouncil.org/images/grassrootslobbyingflyer2.pdf>

Maryland Horse Industry Day Brings Horses to Annapolis

By Anne Litz

Maryland horses benefit Maryland. We know this, you know this, your horse knows this and now Annapolis knows this. For the fourth year in a row, horse people and legislators gathered at the Miller State Senate House in Annapolis on January 30 to discuss how essential horses are to Maryland. All equine-interested individuals were invited to attend, and training was offered during conference calls prior to the event as well as on the morning of Horse Industry Day. However even with this prep, one thing was made very clear: you do not need to train horse people to talk about their passion for horses and why Maryland is a horse state.

The Maryland Horse Industry includes more than 80,000 horses; over 200 equine organizations; 16,000 plus horse farms and stables; 35 different equine disciplines; employs nearly 28,000 Marylanders; accounts for \$512 million in sales annually; \$78 million in taxes collected; and includes 587,000 acres of our beautiful State. Maryland Horse Industry Day serves to show how horses, horse farms and horse people promote and maintain open space, revitalize horse racing, protect animal welfare, support equine operations and promote educational equine programs.

The day's networking, awards, presentation, and salutations helped to highlight these legislative priorities. One hundred and eighty attendees met with 40 legislators and guests, plus numerous staffers, from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. Many of these meetings ran over, with legislators telling their own horse stories and the attendees sharing why horses are vital to them and Maryland. Attendees were welcomed into offices and greeted in the hallways by employees and legislators who were game to stop and talk, or say hello as they took a Maryland Flag Horse sticker or two.

During the morning's awards presentations, Touch of Class Awards were presented by Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB) Executive Director Ross Peddicord and MHIB Chair Jim Steele. The first Touch of Class award went to Renee Sherrard Luther Dixon

of Freedom Hills Therapeutic Riding (Cecil County). Freedom Hills was a first place winner in the American Horse Council's "Time to Ride" competition for the Large Stable division, by introducing 2,866 people to horses in 2017. The second Touch of Class award was presented to Oak Crest Farm (Anne Arundel County) and Tina Emmerich, who took top honors in AHC's Time to Ride Phase II contest due to the follow-up experiences from 213 people who participated in Phase I by returning to Oak Crest Farm for a riding lesson, trail ride or ground work with a horse.

Dr. Amy O Burk and the University of Maryland Equine Studies program were honored with a Special Recognition Award from the Maryland Horse Breeders Association. The award recognizes the practical, hands-on opportunity the University of Maryland's breeding program offers students on their way to exciting careers in the horse industry.

After the awards, several people within the horse industry gave presentations, including Goucher College Director of Campaign and Strategic Initiatives Greg Permission, who spoke about Goucher's Equine Education growth and the development of the Maryland Equine Education Center at Goucher. Maryland Jockey Club president and general manager Sal Sinatra spoke about Maryland Thoroughbred racing and improvements that have been made due to the support of those in Annapolis. Sinatra added that MJC looks forward to continuing to work



Delegate David Frasier-Hidalgo from Montgomery County welcomes MC equestrians as part of Horse Industry Day. From left to right: Delegate David Fraiser-Hidalgo, Michael Greaney, Nancy Heller from Great & Small, MHC president Neil Agate, Jane Seigler of Dressage at Sundown, Steve Saleffa and Keith Harpster

with Annapolis on future goals and projects.

President of the Maryland Horse Council Neil Agate announced the acquisition of *The Equiery* by MHC, and the launch of the Maryland Equine Transition Service (METS). With *The Equiery*, MHC has acquired a turn-key multi-media publishing and marketing entity that will enable the Council to not only better serve its membership, but to also reach the entire Maryland equestrian community.

MHC Vice President Stuart Pittman spoke

As Seen on Social Media...

'Tis the season for mud in Maryland... Share your muddy horse/pony photos by sending to editor@equiery.com!

about the importance of METS, and announced receipt of a \$750,000 grant from the Right Horse Initiative to launch the first-in-the-nation project to facilitate the responsible transition of horses whose owners are no longer able to care for them. MHC was the first state horse council in the country to support a federal ban on export of horses for human consumption. Members from every sector of the horse industry came together to develop METS, which is with a partnership with Days End Farm Horse Rescue.

A panel discussion on the importance of the horse industry to Maryland's environmental preservation, tourism, economy, educational prospects, social impact and culture was presented by President of the Senate Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. Senator J.B. Jennings, our host and longtime horse industry supporter; Secretary Mark Belton, Department of Natural Resources; Secretary Steve Connelly, Department of Agriculture; Colby Ferguson, Government Relations Director of the Maryland Farm Bureau; Kelly M. Schultz, Secretary of Labor, Licensing & Regulation; and David R. Brinkley, Secretary of Budget & Management.

"I take a lot of pride in supporting the state's horse industry, not just as a farmer and as an active member of the horse community, but as a legislator who understands the vital role it plays in Maryland's tourism, agricultural and sporting industries," said Senator Jennings in his January 2018 Annapolis Update. "I was honored to speak at a legislative forum for the Maryland Horse Industry, a coalition of many groups representing various sports, activities and educational opportunities that involve horses."

Maryland Horse Industry Day was presented by the Maryland Horse Council, Cloverleaf Standardbred Owners Association, Fasig-Tipton Co., Maryland Association for Wildlife Conservation, Maryland Horse Breeders Association, Maryland Horse Industry Board,

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