



**Date:** 20 March 2009

**To:** Environmental Matters Committee

**From:** Kip Adams, Northern Director of Education and Outreach

**Re:** House Bill 1309

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On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) and the Maryland State Chapter I am writing to oppose HB 1309 which would expand the hunting "safety zone" from 150 to 300 yards around a dwelling house, residence, church, or other building or camp occupied by human beings. The QDMA is an international nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ethical hunting, sound deer management and the preservation of the deer-hunting heritage. The QDMA has over 53,000 members, including more than 3,000 of the nation's leading wildlife and forestry professionals. As such, QDMA is widely regarded as the most respected whitetail organization in the U.S.

Hunters play an important role in Maryland's societal and economic well being. Hunters provide a free ecological service to society by managing deer and other wildlife populations and provide more than \$300 million annually to Maryland's economy. Hunters are necessary to control the state's wildlife populations, and they are a benefit to Maryland's citizenry. Hunters help reduce habitat damage and deer-human conflicts such as deer-vehicle collisions and the incidence of Lyme disease.

However, to be successful hunters need access to deer habitat. House Bill 1309 would significantly reduce the acreage available to hunters, and ultimately allow deer populations to expand. An increased deer population in Maryland could cause severe habitat degradation and escalate the number of deer-human conflicts. I recognize the perceived threat that hunting may entail, but contend that safety is paramount to the future of hunting. According to the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, hunting accidents declined steadily from 1995 to 2007. Hunting is now one of the safest forms of recreation in the U.S., contributing to less than 1% of all sports-related injuries nationwide, and ranking below other activities such as golf, tennis and jogging. The IHEA also reported that in 2007, one accident occurred for every 77,000 deer hunters, and less than one fatality occurred for every 500,000 deer hunters.

While even one hunting-related accident is too many, hunting is clearly safe. In fact, more people die each year in deer-vehicle collisions than to hunting accidents. I am aware of the accidental shooting that precipitated this Bill, but if passed, this Bill will inadvertently put far more people at risk from increased deer densities in Maryland. In closing, the irresponsible act of an individual should not be a reflection on all hunters, nor should it warrant the changes introduced by this Bill. I urge you to oppose HB 1309, and thank you for consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

Kip Adams  
Northern Director of Education & Outreach