

**Preamble**

~~WHEREAS, There have been instances beginning in 1987 through 1995 where black bears were proven to have damaged crops or livestock in Maryland; and~~

~~WHEREAS, The Department of Natural Resources has existing programs for other wildlife species that damage crops under which a farmer can obtain a permit at no cost for removing the animal if the farmer can justify to the Department that animals have damaged the farmer's crops; and~~

~~WHEREAS, It is the purpose of this Act to set up a system to reimburse farmers for damage to their crops or livestock caused by black bears; and~~

~~WHEREAS, It is also the intent of this Act that, when the Department of Natural Resources determines that the black bear carrying capacity has been reached, the Department shall implement all the recommendations of the Black Bear Task Force presented in September 1995; now, therefore,~~

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article -- Natural Resources**

10-423.1.

(A) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS THAT IT IS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST TO PROVIDE FUNDING TO REIMBURSE A PERSON WHO HAS SUSTAINED DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AS A RESULT OF BLACK BEAR.

(B) (1) THERE IS A BLACK BEAR DAMAGE REIMBURSEMENT FUND IN THE DEPARTMENT.

(2) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:

(I) PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF A CONSERVATION BEAR STAMP OR DECAL WHICH MAY BE PURCHASED AT A COST OF \$40 \$5 FOR EACH STAMP OR DECAL; AND

(II) GIFTS, GRANTS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STATE THAT ARE DESIGNATED FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUND.

(3) THE FUND IS A CONTINUING, NONLAPSING SPECIAL FUND, AND IS NOT SUBJECT TO § 7-302 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.

(4) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL HOLD AND THE STATE COMPTROLLER SHALL ACCOUNT FOR THE FUND.

(C) THE DEPARTMENT MAY REIMBURSE A PERSON FROM THE BLACK BEAR DAMAGE REIMBURSEMENT FUND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTIONS (D) AND (E) OF THIS SECTION FOR ANY DAMAGE TO THE PERSON'S:

(1) BEEHIVES, FRUIT, OR OTHER CROPS; OR