

(2) HUNTERS HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE AMONG THE FOREMOST SUPPORTERS OF SOUND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN THE UNITED STATES;

(3) HUNTERS AND HUNTING ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO WILDLIFE MANAGERS AND ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS;

(4) FEES FOR HUNTING LICENSES, PERMITS, AND STAMPS, AND TAXES ON GOODS USED BY HUNTERS, HAVE GENERATED BILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION, RESEARCH, AND MANAGEMENT;

(5) HUNTING IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF EFFECTIVE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT, AS IT IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR REDUCING CONFLICTS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE AND PROVIDES INCENTIVES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF WILDLIFE, HABITATS, AND ECOSYSTEMS ON WHICH WILDLIFE DEPENDS; AND

(6) HUNTING IS AN ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE ACTIVITY THAT OCCURS AND CAN BE PROVIDED FOR ON STATE PUBLIC LANDS WITHOUT ADVERSE EFFECTS ON OTHER USES OF THE LANDS.

(B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

(1) KEEP LAND MANAGED BY THE DEPARTMENT OPEN FOR HUNTING UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT DETERMINES THAT THE LAND MUST BE CLOSED FOR REASONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY, FISH OR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT, OR HOMELAND SECURITY, OR AS OTHERWISE REQUIRED BY LAW;

(2) MANAGE LAND UNDER ITS AUTHORITY TO SUPPORT, PROMOTE, AND ENHANCE HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES TO THE EXTENT AUTHORIZED UNDER STATE LAW; AND

(3) MANAGE LAND UNDER ITS AUTHORITY TO PREVENT, TO THE GREATEST PRACTICAL EXTENT, ANY NET LOSS OF ACREAGE AVAILABLE FOR HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES ON LAND MANAGED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

(C) BY OCTOBER 1, 2006, AND EACH YEAR THEREAFTER, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SUBMIT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1246 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, A REPORT DESCRIBING THE LAND MANAGED BY THE DEPARTMENT THAT:

(1) THE DEPARTMENT CLOSED TO HUNTING DURING THE PREVIOUS YEAR AND THE REASONS FOR THE CLOSURES; AND

(2) TO COMPLY WITH SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT OPENED TO HUNTING DURING THE PREVIOUS YEAR TO COMPENSATE FOR THE ACREAGE CLOSED AS DESCRIBED UNDER ITEM (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2005.

Approved May 10, 2005.