

## Preamble

WHEREAS, The current population of deer in the State of Maryland, which is estimated at more than 250,000, is far beyond what the available habitat can accommodate; and

WHEREAS, Despite the disruption of rural habitat areas because of development projects and recreational uses, deer are remarkably adaptable to residential areas, including urban and suburban sprawl areas, where they enjoy safety from natural predators and hunters; and

WHEREAS, As demonstrated by a 1998–1999 survey of Anne Arundel, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties in which the number of deer in the areas studied increased by approximately 50% in the course of only 1 year, this population is not only thriving but reproducing at a startling rate; and

WHEREAS, When a deer herd reaches its upper density limits, as is now the case, the results are the poor health and weakened physical condition of the animals themselves, as well as their overconsumption of native plants, shrubs, and trees that are necessary for the survival of other species in the natural ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, In tandem with this multiplication of the deer population have been alarming spikes in the rate of tick-borne illnesses transmitted to human beings, such as Lyme disease; and

WHEREAS, The rate of reported deer-vehicle collisions has more than doubled in the State since 1990, and these collisions have caused multiple fatalities and serious injuries; and

WHEREAS, Deer-vehicle collisions likewise cause property damage of about \$10 million per year, which, in turn, leads to higher insurance rates for all drivers; and

WHEREAS, A recent University of Maryland study found that, because of deer, 92% of the State’s farmers suffer damage to corn, wheat, and soybean crops, an annual economic loss in excess of \$38 million which is considered a conservative estimate because it does not include damage to fruits, vegetables, and other crops; and

WHEREAS, Nonlethal control mechanisms, such as fencing, fertility control, repellents, relocation, deterrent reflectors along roadways, and behavior modification by the installation of lights, have proven largely ineffective because they cannot be used routinely and inexpensively and moreover, they impact only a small number of deer; and

WHEREAS, Extended research has shown that hunting is the most effective method to reduce the size of the deer herd, and it is likewise the most cost-effective method to do so; and