



The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Office of the Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

July 15, 2011

Re: Potential for Sunday Hunting to Increase Hunter Numbers and Generate Revenue for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Dear Governor McDonnell:

Thank you for your commitment to your sportsmen constituents as evidenced through your membership in the Governor's Sportsmen's Caucus, and your support of pro-sportsmen and second amendment legislation in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

As the Northeastern States Manager for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation I am working on the issue of Sunday hunting throughout the region. Prior to joining CSF I wrote my Master's Thesis on the issue, examining the potential for a change in Sunday hunting policy to significantly affect hunter numbers and therefore generate increased revenues for the state agencies charged with managing wildlife.

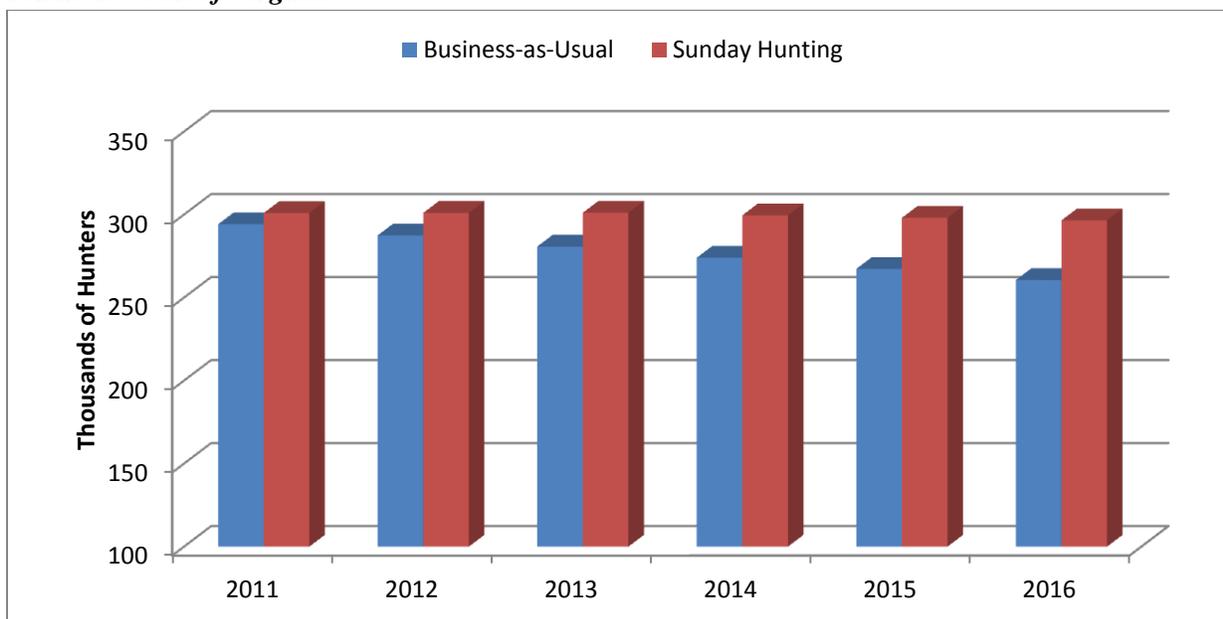
Throughout the nation, sportsmen's dollars, stemming from both sporting licenses as well as excise taxes collected from the sales of sporting goods through the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts, make up the majority of the revenue for these agencies. Estimates on the total impact of sportsmen's dollars range from approximately 65% to upwards of 75% of their overall yearly budgets. However, a potential threat to this system of conservation funding is looming on the horizon. Over the past 30 years, participation in consumption driven wildlife associated recreation has dramatically decreased. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia had over 470,000 hunting license holders in 1980; by 2006 this number had fallen to only 310,000, a decrease of 34% in less than three decades.

In response to this decline, there have emerged a wide variety of programs that are designed to encourage participation in the sport. No one program alone will reverse the trend, as the reasons for this decline are varied and complex. However, the sum product of this effort has proven successful in slowing or reversing this trend in other states, particularly when multiple initiatives are implemented concurrently.

One of the key arguments in favor of Sunday hunting at this time is that it will likewise serve to increase hunter numbers. My thesis explored this argument by examining license sales statistics surrounding changes in Sunday hunting policy over the past 40 years. When analyzing the rates of growth of license sales, a statistically significant trend emerged in that there was a 2.6% improvement between the three year periods just prior to and immediately following a change in Sunday hunting policy. The average effect of this change was that the decline of hunters essentially halted for three years (-0.03% per year). When extending the range of the analysis, license sales in the subsequent three years began to decline once again; however, they did so at a slower rate than was witnessed prior to the change in Sunday hunting policy.

For the Commonwealth of Virginia, these results mean that if Sunday hunting were implemented this year (2011), license sales would remain relatively constant through 2013 (-0.03% per year), and then begin a slight decline through 2016 (-0.52% per year) which was the final year in the projection. When compared to the 30 year historical rate of decline of the Virginia hunting population of greater than 1% per year, the true effect of these seemingly negative results becomes apparent. The graph below represents the findings of this research, as they relate to the potential for Sunday hunting to recruit or retain hunters for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Difference in hunter numbers between “Sunday Hunting” and “Business-as-Usual” scenarios for the Commonwealth of Virginia



In total, it is estimated that there will be nearly **20,000 more hunters in Virginia by the end of 2013** if Sunday hunting were passed this year. Because each of these additional hunters will purchase hunting licenses and sporting goods such as firearms and ammunition, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries will realize **an additional \$2.94 million in funding stemming from hunters by 2013.**

By 2016 these numbers jump to over 35,000 more hunters, resulting in an additional \$10 million in funding (a nearly 12% increase when compared to the business-as-usual projection in 2016).

Thank you again for your dedication to protecting and advancing the sportsmen's tradition in the Commonwealth of Virginia. If you have any questions on this research, or would like to discuss this issue further, please feel free to contact me at anytime.

Sincerely,

Brent Miller

Northeastern States Manager
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
110 North Carolina Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20003
Phone: 202-543-6850 ext. 13