



28 February 2024

Environment & Transportation Committee
ATTN: Chair Marc Korman
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support for House Bill 957

Dear Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, and Honorable Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee:

On behalf of Safari Club International (SCI), I write to you today in support of House Bill 957 that would allow for a regulated tundra swan hunt in the state of Maryland. SCI is dedicated to protecting the freedom to hunt and promoting wildlife conservation worldwide, and we are respectfully asking for your leadership, in conjunction with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in establishing this unique new recreational opportunity.

As you know, this legislation would require the Maryland DNR to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to establish an annual tundra swan hunt, via permits provided by the USFWS and distributed through a lottery-based system. House Bill 957 would require a permit for hunting of tundra swan and require permit holders to report the necessary information for management purposes to the Department following a potential season.

Currently, nine states – including Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina in the Atlantic Flyway – allow for the opportunity to harvest tundra swans. According to most recent information from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Survey, the population estimate for the Eastern Population of tundra swans is 95,000 which is 9% higher than the previous year. This population of tundra swans winter along the Mid-Atlantic eastern shore coastal areas of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina.

A potential tundra swan season in Maryland would similarly reflect the season in Virginia which “is authorized and conducted as specified in the Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swan Management Plan and Hunt Plan, with limits and guidelines as specified under an MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service”. Currently, there are 5,600 hunting permits allowed for the Eastern Population of tundra swans with most of those permits allocated to North Carolina (4,721). The remaining permits are split between Virginia with 532 and Delaware with 347. With the current population count, potential hunting permits for Maryland would not be additional permits, rather reallocated from nearby states.

Safari Club International strongly believes in the scientific management of wildlife. Using this proven model, as seen with the management other waterfowl and game birds, regulated hunting opportunities as determined by the technical experts at state and federal wildlife agencies, do not detrimentally impact population levels. Hunters have long paid the way for conservation, both for game and non-game wildlife, and maximizing opportunity for hunting is key to long-term funding for all conservation.



Hunting benefits wildlife conservation. In Maryland, the latest numbers show that the state's 93,000 hunters spend \$328 million on hunting related purchases, support over 4,100 jobs, contribute \$301 million to the state's GDP, and provide \$29 million in state and local taxes. Additional funds generated from the application and sale of tundra swan permits would support the DNR's mission and allow for additional conservation work to be accomplished.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 957 and for your consideration of this important bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "W. Laird Hamberlin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Laird Hamberlin
CEO - Safari Club International