



'Downeast hunters and landowners partnering for better deer and better deer hunting'

Downeast Branch QDMA

**P.O. Box 569
East Machias, Maine 04630**

March 2, 2017

To: Chairman Cryway, Chairman Duchesne
Distinguished members of the IF&W committee

My name is Mike Look. I am a retired biology/math teacher and currently President of the Downeast Branch of QDMA.

The Quality Deer Management Association's (QDMA) Downeast Branch strongly supports LD341, An act to Promote Deer Hunting. Downeast QDMA members are highly supportive of any effort, educational and/or regulatory, to reduce the harvest of yearling bucks in Maine. Support for more intensive management of buck harvests continues to grow among hunters and the hunting industry in Maine and across the country. The yearling buck harvest in the United States has steadily declined in the last 15 years and is now at an all-time low of 33% (QDMA Whitetail Report 2016). Unfortunately, Maine continues to fall behind in this category where the yearling buck harvest percentage consistently ranks among the top 5 in the country. Passing LD341 will undoubtedly reduce the harvest of yearling bucks, improving the quality of deer and deer hunting in Maine.

Downeast QDMA is encouraged that the DIF&W included a question regarding the protection of yearling bucks by Antler Point Restriction (APR) in *The Opinions of Maine residents, Landowners, and Hunters Regarding Deer, Moose, Bear, and Turkey* survey conducted in 2016 by Responsive Management. The results of the survey show hunter support in Maine for a law requiring that harvested bucks have at least 3 points on one side, as put forth in LD 341's Antler Point Restriction (APR), was closely split at the statewide level (46% support; 50% oppose) However, when results were broken down regionally (where respondents most often hunted), survey results indicated a majority of hunters in the North/East/West survey region support an APR law requiring that harvested bucks have at least 3 points on one side (53% support vs. 43% oppose).

In QDMA's 2015 Annual Whitetail Report, state agencies were surveyed and asked whether they believed protecting yearling bucks provided biological benefits and/or social benefits to deer hunters. There were three possible answers: yes, no, and in "some situations". Twenty-three of 33 states (70%, including Maine) felt protecting yearling bucks provided biological benefits in at least some situations. 75% of the Northeastern states felt there were biological benefits in at least some situations. Twenty-seven of 32 states (84%, including Maine) felt protecting yearling bucks provided social benefits to deer hunters in at least "some situations". 91% of Northeastern states felt there were social benefits in at least "some situations". As you can see from the yellow map, (in your packet) twenty-two states have antler point restrictions (APR's), as put forth in LD 341, and they are widely supported by their respective hunting communities.

Now, one of the arguments you are very likely to hear today from the opponents of this bill is that an APR will put too much pressure on the mature buck population. This bill will likely protect nearly 2/3 of the yearling bucks from harvest. For Maine, that would mean 4,700 or so less hunters would not be harvesting a yearling buck. Now, those 4,700 hunters are out there hunting and the success rate for getting a buck (2 ½ years old and older) in Maine in 2015 was 4.4%. So, those 4,700 hunters are going to get lucky at the rate of 4.4% which translates into an extra 207 older bucks. You can't very well say that 207 bucks is too many when in less than a year you are going to have an extra 4,700 yearlings live to the 2 ½ years old age class. Repeat this process for one more year and you have 4,700 more 2 ½ years olds plus additional bucks that survive to 3 ½ years old that were spared as yearlings two years prior. Realistically, a small percentage of the 4,700 surviving yearlings will die of various causes which will reduce the overall benefit slightly. This is a simplistic example; however the take home here is that there are going to be a significant number of bucks left on the landscape each year to survive to older age classes, eventually replacing the 207 extra mature bucks that are harvested due to increased pressure in the initial year of implementation of the APR. We believe in QDMA's recommendations for protecting yearling bucks and look forward to the benefits LD 341 will have for Maine's deer herd. (see your packet)

The next argument you may hear is what a great age structure the Maine deer herd has. If Maine's deer herd has such a great age structure, why has MASTC's deer registrations dropped by ~75% in the past 25 years? Why is Maine's harvest of 3 ½ year old bucks consistently ranked among the lowest in the country? (see your packet)

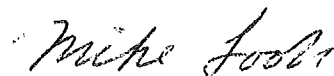
You may also hear how license sales are at an all-time high. George Smith wrote a very good article in his blog explaining the license phenomenon. Actual boots on the ground deer hunters have declined by 20,000 to about 150,000. The high license sales numbers are due to life time licenses being bought for children by parents and grandparents. This

year the DIF&W will report record license sales because of the elimination of the minimum hunting age. In reality very few people come to Maine to deer hunt, anymore. Passing LD 341 will put Maine on a path to become a deer hunting destination again, providing a boost to license sales.

Further, we have received contact in support for LD 341 from Rod and Gun Clubs, the Maine Antler Skull and Trophy Club (MASTC), the 600 member strong Deer Hunters for APR's Club, the new Northern Maine Branch of QDMA, and countless individuals from across the state. There is strong support among the hunting community in Maine for this bill. Hunters are willing to make a short term sacrifice of harvesting fewer bucks for one year to improve the quality of Maine's deer hunting for the future.

In response to majority hunter support for APR regulations in the North/East/West survey region, Downeast QDMA urges the IF&W Committee to pass LD341 for Maine's deer and deer hunting community.

On behalf of our members, thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Look".

Mike Look, President