

**§10109. Acquisition and disposal of land**

**1. Acquisition of land; wildlife management and public access.** The commissioner may acquire property pursuant to this subsection for fish hatchery or fish feeding stations or wildlife management areas or public access sites.

A. The commissioner may acquire in the name of the State, by gift, bequest or otherwise, real and personal property for the location, construction and convenient operation of a fish hatchery or fish feeding station or a wildlife management area or public access sites to inland or coastal waters. When acquiring land or interest in land for a wildlife management area or for a public access site, the commissioner shall examine options for obtaining public vehicular access rights to the land. If an acquisition is made that does not include guaranteed public vehicular access, the commissioner shall describe the acquisition in the annual report submitted pursuant to section 10103, subsection 11 and the justification for that acquisition. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. The commissioner may purchase, lease or take and hold, for and on behalf of the State as for public uses, land and all materials in and upon it or any rights necessary for the purpose of establishing, erecting and operating fish hatcheries or fish feeding stations or wildlife management areas or public access sites to inland or coastal waters. [PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §31 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

C. When the commissioner finds that a public need requires the taking of any land or rights for the purposes set out in this subsection, the commissioner shall cause the land or rights to be surveyed, located and described so that the land or rights can be located. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

D. A plan of the land or rights must be filed and recorded in the registry of deeds where the land or rights are located. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

E. The filing of the plan and description vests the title to the land and right in the State or its grantees, to be held at the pleasure of the State. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

[PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §31 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

**1-A. Acquisition of land; deer wintering areas.** The commissioner shall identify areas that are important to the conservation of deer in northern, eastern and western Maine, and may acquire these lands, including with funds provided by the Land for Maine's Future Trust Fund or the Conservation and Recreation Fund in accordance with Title 5, section 6207. These lands must be designated as wildlife management areas and managed with deer conservation as the highest management priority, and the commissioner shall ensure that appropriate deed restrictions are placed on the land that reflect these priorities. The commissioner shall also develop appropriate purchase and sale agreements that ensure that deer wintering areas on land to be acquired pursuant to this subsection are preserved as deer wintering areas prior to purchase. Beginning January 15, 2023 and annually thereafter, the department shall report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over inland fisheries and wildlife matters on the acquisition and management of deer wintering areas. [PL 2023, c. 284, §20 (AMD).]

**2. Acquisition of land; state game farms.** The commissioner may purchase suitable lands and erect buildings on those lands within this State necessary for the operation of state game farms for the propagation of wild animals and wild birds for restocking the woods and forests of the State. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

**3. Compensation to landowners.** The owners of property taken under this section must be compensated for that taking.

A. The owners of property, either real or personal, taken by the commissioner under this section, are entitled to damages equal to the reasonable value of the property, as is provided when land is taken for highway purposes under Title 23, chapter 3. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. In the event of a disagreement over the value of property taken under this section, the reasonable value must be determined by the county commissioners of the county in which the land is situated, upon the written application of any interested party. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

C. If any party in interest is aggrieved by the decision of the county commissioners under paragraph B rendered in conformity with this section, an appeal may be made to the Superior Court of the county in the same manner as is provided when land is taken by the State for highway purposes. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]  
[PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

**4. Unneeded property.** The Governor, on recommendation of the commissioner, may sell and convey on behalf of the State the interests of the State in property taken or acquired by purchase under this Part and determined no longer necessary for the purposes of this Part. The commissioner, with the approval of the Governor, may lease these same properties. The proceeds from these sales or leases must be credited to the funds of the department.  
[PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

**5. Transfer of property containing deer wintering habitat.** Prior to final negotiations and legislative and administrative review of the sale of state-designated lands or an interest in designated lands that contain significant deer wintering habitat, the commissioner shall report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over conservation matters and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over inland fisheries and wildlife matters regarding the proposed sale. For purposes of this section, "designated lands" has the same meaning as in section 598-A.  
[PL 2011, c. 381, §4 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2003, c. 414, §A2 (NEW). PL 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 655, §B31 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 655, §B422 (AFF). PL 2011, c. 381, §4 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 409, §5 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 284, §20 (AMD).

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