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An Act To Minimize Crop Damage by Deer by Amending Certain Laws Governing Hunting

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §11402, sub-§4, as affected by PL 2003, c. 614, §9 and amended by c. 655, Pt. B, §169 and affected by §422, is further amended to read:

4. Rule. The commissioner by rule ~~may~~shall:

A. Open any of the areas closed to deer hunting under subsection 3, as long as the legislative body of each affected town approves the opening and imposes reasonable restrictions on hunting in that area. For purposes of this subsection, "affected town" means a town, township or municipality that contains within its borders any area proposed to be opened under this paragraph;

B. Create special hunting seasons and zones for the taking of deer in any part of the State to maintain deer populations in balance with available habitat,and to minimize crop or property damage subject to the provisions of this paragraph.

(1) The demarcation of each area must follow recognizable physical boundaries, such as rivers, roads and railroad rights-of-way.

(3) The commissioner may establish limits on the number of deer taken or possessed by persons during a special season. Limits established by the commissioner under this subparagraph are exceptions to the limits imposed under section 11501.

(4) The commissioner may specify types of weapons to be used during a special season; and

C. Establish a youth deer hunting day.

Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

SUMMARY

Current law allows the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to open to deer hunting certain coastal and island communities currently closed to hunting, subject to local approval, and to establish a youth deer hunting day. This bill requires the commissioner to open these communities to deer hunting as long as local restrictions are imposed. It requires, while current law permits, the commissioner to create special hunting seasons to control deer populations. It requires the commissioner to create special zones

for deer hunting. It allows special hunting seasons and special zones to be created to minimize crop or property damage. It also requires the commissioner to establish a youth deer hunting day.