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An Act To Eliminate Permits for Wild Turkey Hunting, Expand the Bag Limits and Expand Opportunities for Registering Wild Turkeys

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

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §11109, sub-§3, ¶E-1, as repealed and replaced by PL 2015, c. 494, Pt. D, §2, is amended to read:

E-1. A resident apprenticeship hunter license, which includes a bear hunting permit ~~and a wild turkey hunting permit under sections~~section 11151 and ~~11155, respectively~~, is \$26 and permits hunting of all legal species, subject to the permit requirements in subchapter 3.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §11109, sub-§3, ¶P, as repealed and replaced by PL 2015, c. 494, Pt. D, §2, is amended to read:

P. A nonresident apprenticeship hunter license, which permits the hunting of all legal species and includes a bear hunting permit ~~and a wild turkey hunting permit under sections~~section 11151 and ~~11155, respectively~~, is \$115.

Sec. 3. 12 MRSA §11155, as amended by PL 2015, c. 281, Pt. E, §10, is repealed.

Sec. 4. 12 MRSA §11701, first ¶, as amended by PL 2013, c. 236, §6, is further amended to read:

The commissioner may establish open seasons for hunting wild turkeys, designate areas that are open to the taking of wild turkeys in any part of the State, ~~prescribe the form and regulate the number of permits to be issued~~, determine the number and sex of the birds to be harvested, establish bag limits, ~~establish permit eligibility requirements~~, establish legal hunting times, specify the types of weapons to be used during any open wild turkey hunting season and make any other rules that the commissioner considers necessary for the protection of the wild turkey resource. The rules must permit the use of a crossbow during the spring open wild turkey hunting season.

Sec. 5. 12 MRSA §11701, sub-§1, ¶A, as enacted by PL 2013, c. 387, §3, is amended to read:

A. A person to take up to 23 male wild turkeys without any additional fee for ~~the taking of the 2nd~~more than one wild turkey;

Sec. 6. 12 MRSA §11701, sub-§2, as amended by PL 2015, c. 127, §5 and affected by §6, is further amended to read:

2. Fall seasons. ~~Beginning with the 2016 fall open season, the~~The commissioner shall establish by rule 2 fall open seasons for hunting wild turkeys. Unless the commissioner determines that sound management principles require otherwise, the rule must establish 2 fall open seasons that include the

month of October and a week in the month of November and allow a person to take up to a total of 23 wild turkeys over both seasons regardless of sex without any additional fee for the taking of ~~a 2nd~~ more than one wild turkey.

Sec. 7. 12 MRSA §11752, sub-§2, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §181 and affected by §422, is amended to read:

2. Tagging. ~~Prior to presenting a wild turkey for registration~~ registering a wild turkey by a method allowed under section 12302-A, a person may not possess or leave in the field or forest a wild turkey killed by that person unless the wild turkey has securely attached to it a plainly visible tag that conforms to the requirements established under this section.

Sec. 8. 12 MRSA §12301-A, sub-§3, ¶B, as amended by PL 2013, c. 387, §4, is further amended to read:

B. Attach a seal to each bear, deer, moose or wild turkey in the manner directed and with the materials furnished by the commissioner or provide proof of registration to a person who registers a wild turkey under section 12302-A, subsection 1-A;

Sec. 9. 12 MRSA §12302-A, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §228 and affected by §422, is amended to read:

1. Requirement. ~~A~~ Except as provided in subsection 1-A, a person who kills a bear, deer, moose or wild turkey shall:

A. Remain with that animal until it is registered, except as provided in section 12303-A;

B. Present that animal for registration in that person's name at the first open registration station for that animal on the route taken by that person; and

C. Leave the registration seal attached to the animal in accordance with section 12301-A until that animal is processed and packaged for consumption.

Sec. 10. 12 MRSA §12302-A, sub-§1-A is enacted to read:

1-A. Exception; wild turkeys. Notwithstanding subsection 1, paragraph B, a person who kills a wild turkey may register that animal through an electronic or telephone registration system established by the department by rule. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

SUMMARY

This bill eliminates the requirement that a person obtain a permit to hunt wild turkeys. This bill increases the number of wild turkeys a person may take during the spring open season for hunting wild turkeys from 2 wild turkeys of either sex to 3 male wild turkeys. This bill increases the number of wild turkeys a person may take during the fall open seasons for hunting wild turkeys from 2 to 3 of either sex over both seasons. This bill allows a person to register wild turkeys electronically or by telephone.