

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

H.P. 60 - L.D. 95

An Act to Amend and Simplify Certain Wildlife Laws

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

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §10851, sub-§1, ¶D, as amended by PL 2023, c. 239, §11, is further amended to read:

D. For a resident 70 years of age or older. For a person who holds a valid senior lifetime license under this section at any time during the calendar year that person turns 70 years of age, that lifetime license includes all hunting permits and licenses authorized in this Part and may renew at no cost a guide license under section 12853. A license holder under this paragraph who qualifies to hunt during the special expanded archery season on deer under section 11153 and who meets the eligibility requirements of section 11106 must have included in that person's license one antlerless deer permit and one either-sex permit. A person who is 70 years of age or older may purchase a senior lifetime license that entitles the holder to all the privileges described in this paragraph for a one-time \$8 fee.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §10853, sub-§3, as repealed and replaced by PL 2019, c. 638, §1, is amended to read:

3. Paraplegics. A resident paraplegic or a nonresident paraplegic who is a resident of another state may obtain upon application, at no cost, all hunting, trapping and fishing licenses, including permits, stamps and other permission needed to hunt, trap and fish. A license holder under this subsection who qualifies to hunt during the special expanded archery season on deer under section 11153 and who meets the eligibility requirements of section 11106 must have included in that person's license one antlerless deer permit and one either-sex permit. The commissioner shall issue all fishing, trapping and hunting licenses and permits applied for under this subsection if the commissioner determines the applicant meets the requirements of this subsection and is not otherwise ineligible to hold that permit or license. For the purposes of this subsection, "paraplegic" means a person who has lost, or who has permanently lost the use of, both lower extremities.

A license issued to a resident paraplegic under this subsection remains valid for the life of the license holder if the license holder continues to be a resident as that term is defined under section 10001, subsection 53 and the license is not revoked or suspended. A

nonresident paraplegic may apply for and be qualified to be issued the complimentary licenses and permits referred to in this subsection as long as the state where the person resides provides a reciprocal privilege for resident paraplegics of this State.

Sec. 3. 12 MRSA §10853, sub-§4, as repealed and replaced by PL 2017, c. 475, Pt. A, §19, is amended to read:

4. Disabled veteran. A resident disabled veteran or a nonresident disabled veteran who is a resident of another state may obtain upon application, at no cost, all hunting, trapping and fishing licenses, including permits, stamps and other permission needed to hunt, trap and fish, and, upon meeting the qualifications as established in section 12853, subsection 4, a guide license. A license holder under this subsection who qualifies to hunt during the ~~special~~ expanded archery season on deer under section 11153 and who meets the eligibility requirements of section 11106 must have included in that person's license one antlerless deer permit and one either-sex permit. The commissioner shall issue all fishing, trapping and hunting licenses and permits requested under this subsection if the commissioner determines the applicant meets the requirements of this subsection and is not otherwise ineligible to hold that permit or license. For the purposes of this subsection, "disabled veteran" means a person who:

B. Was honorably discharged from the Armed Forces of the United States or the National Guard; and

C. Has a service-connected disability evaluated at 50% or more.

Each application must be accompanied by satisfactory evidence that the applicant meets the requirements of this subsection. An applicant for a license or permit under this section is subject to the provisions of this Part, including, but not limited to, a lottery or drawing system for issuing a particular license or permit. A permit or license issued under this subsection remains valid for the life of the permit or license holder, as long as the permit or license holder continues to remain a resident of this State or another state and the permit or license issued under this subsection is not revoked or suspended. For a nonresident to be eligible under this subsection, that nonresident's state must have a reciprocal agreement with this State.

Sec. 4. 12 MRSA §10853, sub-§8, as amended by PL 2023, c. 646, Pt. A, §15, is further amended to read:

8. Members of federally recognized Indian nation, band or tribe. The commissioner shall issue a hunting, trapping and fishing license, including an archery hunting license under this chapter, and including all permits, stamps and other permission needed to hunt, trap and fish, to a person who is an enrolled member of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians or the Mi'kmaq Nation that is valid for the life of that person without any charge or fee pursuant to section 11109, if the person presents certification from the appropriate reservation chief or governor or the Mi'kmaq Nation Tribal Council stating that the person described is an enrolled member of a federally recognized Indian nation, band or tribe listed in this subsection. Holders of these licenses are subject to this Part, including, but not limited to, a lottery or drawing system for issuing a particular license or permit. Members of a federally recognized Indian nation, band or tribe listed in this subsection are exempt from the trapper education program required for a license under section 12201, the bear trapping education course required by section 12260-A, subsection 4 and the archery hunter education course under section

11106. A license holder under this subsection who qualifies to hunt during the ~~special~~ expanded archery season on deer under section 11153 and who meets the eligibility requirements of section 11106 must have included in that person's license one antlerless deer permit and one either-sex permit.

Sec. 5. 12 MRSA §11109, sub-§3, ¶A, as amended by PL 2023, c. 431, §2 and affected by §23, is further amended to read:

A. A resident junior hunting license, for a person under 16 years of age, is \$8 and permits hunting of all legal species, subject to the permit requirements in subchapter 3. Notwithstanding the permit fees established in subchapter 3, a resident junior hunting license includes all permits, stamps and other permissions needed to hunt at no additional cost. A license holder under this paragraph who qualifies to hunt during the ~~special~~ expanded archery season on deer under section 11153 and who meets the eligibility requirements of section 11106 must have included in that person's license one antlerless deer permit and one either-sex permit. A resident junior hunting license does not exempt the holder of the license from lottery-related application requirements under this Part. A resident under 16 years of age who hunts without a resident junior hunting license commits a civil violation.

Sec. 6. 12 MRSA §11109, sub-§3, ¶F, as amended by PL 2023, c. 431, §3 and affected by §23, is further amended to read:

F. A nonresident junior hunting license, for a person under 16 years of age, is \$35 and permits hunting of all legal species, subject to the permit requirements in subchapter 3. Notwithstanding the permit fees established in subchapter 3, a nonresident junior hunting license includes all permits, stamps and other permissions needed to hunt at no additional cost. A license holder under this paragraph who qualifies to hunt during the ~~special~~ expanded archery season on deer under section 11153 and who meets the eligibility requirements of section 11106 must have included in that person's license one antlerless deer permit and one either-sex permit. A nonresident junior hunting license does not exempt the holder of the license from lottery-related application requirements under this Part. A nonresident under 16 years of age who hunts without a nonresident junior hunting license commits a civil violation.

Sec. 7. 12 MRSA §11109-A, sub-§3, ¶C, as amended by PL 2023, c. 49, §1 and affected by §3, is further amended to read:

C. Three antlerless deer and one deer of either sex during the ~~special~~ expanded archery season in accordance with ~~section 11402, subsection 4~~ rules adopted pursuant to section 11401.

Sec. 8. 12 MRSA §11153, as amended by PL 2015, c. 281, Pt. C, §5, is further amended by amending the section headnote to read:

§11153. ~~Special-season~~ Expanded archery season deer permits; fees

Sec. 9. 12 MRSA §11153, sub-§1, as amended by PL 2015, c. 281, Pt. C, §5, is further amended to read:

1. ~~Special-season~~ Expanded archery season deer hunting permits; authority to issue for ~~special-season~~ fees. The commissioner may implement a permit system to regulate hunter participation in a ~~special-season~~ the expanded archery season established

by the commissioner pursuant to section ~~11402, subsection 4, paragraph B~~ 11401, subsection 2, paragraph B and the number, sex and age of deer harvested. A person may hunt or possess a deer of either sex during ~~a special season~~ the expanded archery season on deer if that person has a valid permit issued by the commissioner. If permits are issued, the fee for an either-sex permit is \$32 and the fee for an antlerless deer permit is \$12.

Sec. 10. 12 MRSA §11153, sub-§2, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 and affected by c. 614, §9, is amended to read:

2. Prohibition. Except as otherwise authorized pursuant to this Part, a person may not hunt deer during ~~a special season~~ the expanded archery season established under this section unless that person has a valid permit issued pursuant to this section.

Sec. 11. 12 MRSA §11401, sub-§1, ¶A, as amended by PL 2009, c. 134, §1, is further amended to read:

A. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection and sections 10952, 11152, 11153, 11403 and 11404 or by rule adopted by the commissioner pursuant to ~~section 11402, subsection 4~~ subsection 2, there is an open season for deer in each calendar year in all counties of the State between September 15th and December 20th annually. In a year that the regular season extends beyond November 30th, the regular season must start no later than the 4th Monday preceding Thanksgiving.

Sec. 12. 12 MRSA §11401, sub-§2 is enacted to read:

2. Rule. The commissioner by rule may:

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

B. Create special hunting seasons or expanded archery seasons for the taking of deer in any part of the State to maintain deer populations in balance with available habitat, 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.

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

(3) The commissioner may specify types of weapons and hunting methods to be used during a special season or expanded archery season.

(4) The commissioner may specify fees for permits issued during a special season, as long as they do not exceed the fees established in section 11153; and

C. Establish a 2-day youth deer hunting period, to be held on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Saturday designated as an open day for residents of the State pursuant to section 11401.

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

Sec. 13. 12 MRSA §11402, as amended by PL 2023, c. 593, §2, is repealed.

Sec. 14. 12 MRSA §12804, as amended by PL 2015, c. 301, §40, is further amended to read:

§12804. Conservation of threatened and endangered species

1. Conservation of ~~nongame~~ threatened and endangered species. The commissioner may establish such programs as are necessary to bring any endangered or threatened species to the point where it is no longer endangered or threatened, including:

- A. Acquisition of land or aquatic habitat or interests in land or aquatic habitat;
- B. Propagation;
- C. Live trapping;

D. Transplantation. Prior to the transplantation, introduction or reintroduction of an endangered or threatened species in the State, the commissioner shall, in conjunction with the Department of Marine Resources, when appropriate, develop a recovery plan for that species, conduct a public hearing on that recovery plan pursuant to Title 5, Part 18 and submit that plan to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over inland fisheries and wildlife matters. The introduction or reintroduction of that species must be conducted in accordance with the recovery plan developed under this paragraph and may not begin sooner than 90 days after all conditions of this paragraph have been met; and

E. In the extraordinary case where population pressures ~~within a given group ecosystem can not~~ for a given species cannot be otherwise relieved, regulated taking.

2. Habitat. For species designated as endangered or threatened under this subchapter the commissioner may by rule identify areas currently or historically providing physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the species and that may require special management considerations. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

3. Protection guidelines. The commissioner may by rule develop guidelines for the protection of species designated as endangered or threatened under this subchapter. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

5. Confidential information. Specific information concerning the location of a threatened or endangered species or species of special concern is confidential ~~and not a public record under Title 1, chapter 13~~ if, in the judgment of the commissioner, disclosure of that information would threaten the continued existence of the threatened or endangered species or species of special concern. If the commissioner determines that information is confidential under this subsection, the commissioner may not disclose the information except to the landowner whose property is the location of the threatened or endangered species or species of special concern.