

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-THREE

S.P. 742 - L.D. 1826

**An Act to Designate Deer Wintering Areas Under the Jurisdiction of the
Bureau of Parks and Lands**

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

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §1805-A is enacted to read:

§1805-A. Designation of deer wintering areas

The director may designate a deer wintering area on a parcel of land under the jurisdiction of the bureau. The designated area must contain high-quality deer wintering habitat with a documented history of significant use by deer. The bureau shall manage the designated area with deer conservation as the highest management priority and may also manage the designated area to benefit other wildlife species that rely on mature softwood forests. The director may designate a deer wintering area or remove the designation as a deer wintering area of a parcel of land under this section only pursuant to a habitat management agreement developed in collaboration with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. A designated area under this section is eligible for funds from the Maine Deer Management Fund under section 10264. The designation of a deer wintering area under this section does not preclude or discourage the department from managing another parcel of land to promote habitat for deer. The department and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall include a summary of additions or changes to deer wintering areas under this section in an annual report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over inland fisheries and wildlife matters and to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over agriculture, conservation and forestry matters.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §10264, first ¶, as amended by PL 2021, c. 409, §6, is further amended to read:

The Maine Deer Management Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is established within the department as a nonlapsing fund to be used by the commissioner to fund or assist in funding predator control and to acquire or enhance deer habitat. If the funds from the fund are used to directly enhance or manage a deer wintering area on land under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands, the land must be designated as a deer wintering area pursuant to section 1805-A. The commissioner shall establish on the department's online licensing system

checkoff options that allow a person to donate money for predator control or deer habitat acquisition or enhancement. The checkoff options must be prominently displayed and contain web links to information about how the checkoff revenues have been and will be used. The commissioner shall also print in a prominent place on every paper application for a hunting license checkoff options that allow a person to donate money to the fund for predator control or deer habitat acquisition or enhancement. Revenues from the checkoffs must be deposited in the fund and used for purposes indicated by the checkoffs.

Sec. 3. Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands and Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to survey regions to locate unmapped deer wintering areas. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands and Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall survey public lands in the northern, eastern and western regions of the State to locate existing and unmapped deer wintering areas. The bureau may designate any unmapped deer wintering areas located pursuant to this section as a deer wintering area pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 12, section 1805-A.