



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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April 16, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1438:

"Resolve, Regarding Deer Hunting on Mount Desert Island"

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee On Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes the towns of Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben. I'm here to speak in support of LD 1438 – ***"Resolve, Regarding Deer Hunting on Mount Desert Island."***

This bill is a common-sense step toward addressing a longstanding and increasingly serious issue on Mount Desert Island (MDI): the overpopulation of white-tailed deer. By directing the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to adopt rules allowing deer hunting on the island, LD 1438 will help restore ecological balance, improve public safety, and support better public health outcomes.

The white-tailed deer population on MDI has reached unsustainable levels. These elevated numbers are leading to:

- Severe forest regeneration issues: Deer are consuming young tree saplings, especially native species like cedar, maple, and ash, preventing natural forest regrowth and altering forest structure.
- Negative impacts on native plant communities and biodiversity: Over browsing is threatening rare plant species and displacing understory vegetation that supports birds, insects, and other wildlife.

Overpopulation of deer also increases the risks of human-deer conflicts. Results can include a significant rise in deer-vehicle collisions, causing vehicle damage, injury, and in some cases, fatalities.

High deer densities are also directly correlated with elevated populations of ticks that transmit Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses. Maine is already one of the states with the highest rates of Lyme disease in the country, and residents and visitors on MDI are especially at risk due to the close proximity of deer to homes, trails, and public spaces.

This is not the first time MDI communities have recognized the need for deer population control. Towns such as Bar Harbor and Mount Desert have established deer reduction committees or explored controlled hunts and fertility control programs. However, without broader authority granted by the state and support from IFW, local efforts have been limited in scope and effectiveness.

Additionally, other coastal communities in Maine have successfully implemented managed hunts to control deer populations, such as on Islesboro and Peaks Island, where special seasons and expanded hunting rules have been used to mitigate the very same problems we're seeing on MDI.

LD 1438 takes a necessary and measured approach to addressing a complex but urgent issue. By empowering the Commissioner of IFW to adopt hunting rules for MDI under existing law, the state can help communities regain control of an environmental and public health challenge that has grown beyond their capacity to manage alone.

This legislation reflects a responsible wildlife management strategy, respects landowner rights, and supports both ecological health and public safety. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1438.

Thank you for your time, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader