

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 1438

“Resolve, Regarding Deer Hunting on Mount Desert Island”

Presented by Representative FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor.

DATE OF HEARING: Wednesday, April 16, 2025

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, neither for nor against **L.D. 1438**.

This resolve directs the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to adopt rules opening Mount Desert Island (MDI) to deer hunting.

Various hunting regulations have existed relating to Mount Desert Island over the years. The present ban on deer hunting was implemented by the 85th Maine Legislature, and reference to a closed season on deer on MDI first appeared in the 1931-1932 regulations book. The precise reason for the ban and all of the conversations that precipitated it are subject to debate at this point, but suffice it to say, some island residents- whether seasonal or year-round, were very displeased with the occurrence of deer hunting on the island. Objections to deer hunting on MDI in the present day (and presumably at the time of the ban) included proximity to the National Park, safety concerns, and the desire to maintain the tranquility and natural state of the island. We will note that the ban included only deer hunting, and the island is currently open to the hunting of other species.

Efforts to open the island to deer hunting have occurred periodically. Proponents of opening the island to deer hunting contend that deer have become too abundant, the island's natural habitat is being damaged by deer, and deer are causing damage to ornamental plants and gardens. Historically, MDIFW has provided information and technical assistance to towns that wish to investigate the issue of allowing deer hunting, and on some occasions, towns have shown considerable support for allowing hunting or targeted deer reduction efforts. In all cases, however, the support has fallen short of the opposition, and towns have been unable to agree on a functional path forward.

The role of MDIFW in this matter remains to provide information and technical assistance to towns that wish to investigate the matter of allowing deer hunting.

Currently, Title 12, and the proposed LD 95 which would move the closed season and special season language out of Title 12 and into Rule, requires town approval for the Commissioner to open the deer season or establish special seasons within a municipality. The Department is prohibited from opening deer hunting in towns that are currently closed if support of the impacted towns cannot be demonstrated. Although we are certainly willing to discuss this issue with towns on MDI to gauge support for opening the deer season, we cannot commit to adopting rules to do so.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.