

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

No. 1826

S.P. 742

In Senate, April 27, 2023

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

Reference to the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by President JACKSON of Aroostook.
Cosponsored by Representative LANDRY of Farmington and
Senators: BLACK of Franklin, CURRY of Waldo, LaFOUNTAIN of Kennebec,
Representatives: DILL of Old Town, FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor.

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

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

3 **§1805-A. Designation of deer wintering areas**

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

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

22 The Maine Deer Management Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is
23 established within the department as a nonlapsing fund to be used by the commissioner to
24 fund or assist in funding predator control and to acquire or enhance deer habitat. If the
25 funds from the fund are used to directly enhance or manage a deer wintering area on land
26 under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau
27 of Parks and Lands, the land must be designated as a deer wintering area pursuant to section
28 1805-A. The commissioner shall establish on the department's online licensing system
29 checkoff options that allow a person to donate money for predator control or deer habitat
30 acquisition or enhancement. The checkoff options must be prominently displayed and
31 contain web links to information about how the checkoff revenues have been and will be
32 used. The commissioner shall also print in a prominent place on every paper application
33 for a hunting license checkoff options that allow a person to donate money to the fund for
34 predator control or deer habitat acquisition or enhancement. Revenues from the checkoffs
35 must be deposited in the fund and used for purposes indicated by the checkoffs.

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

1 **SUMMARY**

2 This bill allows the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of
3 Parks and Lands to designate, pursuant to a habitat management agreement with the
4 Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, deer wintering areas on parcels of land under
5 the jurisdiction of the bureau that are high-quality deer wintering habitat with a documented
6 history of significant use by deer. The bureau is required to manage the designated area
7 with deer conservation as the highest management priority and may also manage the
8 designated area to benefit other wildlife species that rely on mature softwood forests, and
9 the designated areas are eligible for funding from the Maine Deer Management Fund. This
10 bill also directs the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks
11 and Lands and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to survey public lands in
12 the northern, eastern and western regions of the State for unmapped deer wintering areas
13 for inclusion as designated deer wintering areas by the bureau.