

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

L.D. 1569 Sec. 6

**AN ACT TO RESTORE THE WHITE-TAILED DEER POPULATION AND
IMPROVE MAINE'S WILDLIFE ECONOMY AND HERITAGE; FUNDING DEER
MANAGEMENT EFFORTS**

SPONSORED BY: PRESIDENT RAYE OF WASHINGTON

**COSPONSORED BY: REPRESENTATIVE CRAFTS OF LISBON
REPRESENTATIVE DAVIS OF SANGERVILLE
REPRESENTATIVE ESPLING OF NEW GLOUCESTER
SENATOR MARTIN OF KENNEBEC
REPRESENTATIVE SHAW OF STANDISH
SENATOR TRAHAN OF LINCOLN**

JANUARY 9, 2012

The Department has been successful securing additional funding for specific deer related projects. The staff time devoted to securing these funding opportunities however is significant and can detract from other work program activities. With these come great opportunities as we continue down our path of increasing deer numbers. Below are the specific projects.

Funding / Grants Secured by the Department

Grant Award for Landowner Outreach

Secured: \$95,000

MDIFW has been awarded a grant through NRCS (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services) via their Wildlife Habitat and Environmental Quality Incentives Program. This grant will help fund three part-time positions over the next 12 month period dedicated to landowner outreach regarding DWA habitat restoration. We have been working closely with NRCS over the last 2 years to improve our efforts reaching out to small landowners specifically for DWA management. Regional Wildlife Biologist Rich Hoppe has done a great job working with their offices in Aroostook County to pilot this effort which was instrumental to NRCS offering this opportunity to expand those efforts. This is a great example of successful partnering and will enhance our ongoing efforts to increase our deer herd.

Funding Need: \$30,000

This is a \$125,000 project of which \$30,000 must be state and local match. We have three consultants ready to begin this important work but we can not start until the match dollars are identified. The Department has solicited donations from business, individuals, rod & gun clubs and other organizations with few dollars committed thus far. As we continue working with these partners this could change quickly. An initial contribution of \$8,000 would allow us to begin the program while the balance is sought.

Predation Management in DWAs

Secured: \$50,000

The Department has committed \$50,000 to implement a program for predation management in ten priority DWAs between October 2011 and April 2012. This program follows the recommendations from a Deer Predation Advisory Group that met several times in 2011.

Funding Need: \$60,000 annually for 5 years

To be effective long-term, this predation management program needs to be sustained through the fall and winter as well as from year to year in the same DWAs. A commitment of \$60,000 annually for at least the next 5 years will be needed to see measurable results. Additional funding would allow the program to be expanded to more DWAs but this must also be sustained over several years.

Winter Severity Index Stations

Secured: \$3,600

IFW annually monitors winter severity across the state of Maine at 26 Winter Severity Index (WSI) stations. For 20 weeks from December through April we monitor snow depths, deer sinking depths, and ambient temperatures. The combination of these attributes provides us with an annual calculation of how severe the winter is. In 2010 we received funding through the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) for ~\$900 to purchase new temperature data-loggers for these 26 stations. With match from the Federal Pittman-Robertson fund we were able to purchase these loggers and deploy to each station. As of December 13th, 2011 we have deployed these stations.

Aerial Helicopter Surveys-Double Count

Secured: \$112,000

In July 2010 IFW was able to modify an OHF grant for deer so that the funds could be used to test the applicability of a helicopter aerial survey to estimate deer abundance in select south-central WMDs where Any-Deer permits can be adjusted annually. We received \$28,000 through OHF which were matched with additional \$84,000 from the Federal Pittman-Robertson Fund. This level of funding has carried into the 2011-2012 winter framework for conducting these surveys.

Funding Need: \$12,000 to \$24,000 annually

Annual funding to allow a continual rotation of WMD surveys over time, ensuring flight coverage of all applicable WMDs. Not all WMDs can be flown due to expected deer densities, terrain, and applicability of this survey technique. However if funding was available we would conduct 3-6 surveys each year to estimate WMD-

specific deer densities. Costs per flight would approximate \$4,000-\$4,500 or \$12,000 to \$24,000 annually.

Hunter Effort Survey

To gain an understanding of deer population trajectory we must have an understanding of annual hunter effort. The number of hunters and how much time they spent afield each fall is critical to understanding the annual variation in effort by hunters to harvest deer. In 2011 we used additional funding from the legislature to implement a diary type hunter effort survey which included a 2nd complete follow-up survey in case surveys were lost or misplaced. Follow-up surveys increase participant response and bolster sample size to provide more reliable data. Sighting rates of deer by hunters may also provide a useful index of relative abundance among WMDs.

Funding Need: Annual funding for hunter effort surveys. Material costs add up quickly due to large sample sizes that are required. Annually ~\$10,000 dollars should be dedicated to hunter effort surveys.

Tooth Age Determination

Annually department wildlife biologists look at 20% or more of all harvested deer across the state. We measure various physical attributes to gauge population health and status. We also age deer to the fawn, yearling and older age classes by tooth wear and replacement. With additional legislative funding we collected teeth from all yearling and older deer. These data will provide us with a description of all age classes for males and females. It will allow us to calculate adult sex ratios, percent mature deer, and survival curves. These data are critical for characterizing the deer population of both males and females across all management districts that have some level of Any-Deer permits. This information is critical for setting Any-Deer permit allocations by WMD.

Illegally Harvesting Does

As a result of the 125th Legislature, penalties were established for persons who hunt antlerless deer in wildlife management districts where no permits were issued. Violators face a Class D misdemeanor with a minimum fine of \$1,000 and three days in jail. The Warden Service has also enhanced their patrols for illegal hunting of deer. This combination will indirectly increase revenue for the Department.

Predator Control and Deer Habitat Fund

The Department is ready to test and implement these two check off options on our website but has postponed implementation pending the outcome of LD 1242, carried over from the 125th Legislature.

Within LD 1242 is a provision that, if enacted, would modify the fund created by LD 1569. The Department felt it prudent to postpone implementation to avoid future changes and potential confusion among our sports men and women. To date, no funds have been received.