

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND  
WILDLIFE**

**IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 1826**

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

**PRESENTED BY: President Jackson of Aroostook**

CO-SPONSORED 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

**DATE OF HEARING: May 8, 2023**

Good morning, Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry 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, in support of **L.D. 1826**.

This bill allows the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, Bureau of Public Lands (BPL) to designate, pursuant to a habitat management agreement with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, deer wintering areas within BPL’s jurisdiction that are high quality deer wintering habitat with a history of significant use by deer as “Deer Wintering Areas”. This designation allows BPL to access funding from the Maine Deer Management Fund to support the management of these parcels. The Bureau must manage the designated areas with deer conservation as the highest management priority but may also manage the areas to benefit other wildlife species that rely on mature softwood.

The Department has a long history of working with BPL to support the wildlife and fisheries resources on Maine’s public lands. We currently provide a full-time Wildlife Biologist position that works with BPL foresters and land managers to support the Bureau’s habitat management efforts. This bill will allow BPL to carry out management actions to enhance critical wintering habitat for deer in northern, eastern, and western Maine. These management actions can be more costly than traditional commercial forest practices. The funds from the Deer Management Fund can be used to subsidize

these necessary but less profitable activities that help ensure the forest conditions are most supportive of wintering deer. The designation of these lands as deer wintering areas assures their long-term management for deer conservation and secures the return on the investment of the Deer Management Funds in that management.

The Department has enjoyed a great partnership with BPL on managing Maine's public lands for the wildlife and fisheries resources found there. This bill allows both agencies to do even more for wintering deer on public lands in the areas of the state that are hardest for deer to survive. We encourage the Committee to support LD 1826 so this important work can continue.

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