


Legislative Report Back
Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

PUBLIC LAW 2019 CHAPTER 98 (LD 27): An Act To Allow the Use of a Crossbow for a Limited Duration during the Archery Season on Deer and the Fall Season on Wild Turkey

10 January 2022


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Outline


- Summarize the impact the expansion of crossbow hunting over the last two years has had on participation in crossbow education courses as well as purchases of crossbow permits
- Summarize the impact the expansion of crossbow hunting over the last 2 years has had on violations detected and/or changes to the number of warden service calls for service.
- Summarize the impact on harvest rates of deer and turkey.
- I will provide DIFW's suggestions for modifications to this law.

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Overview


- **PUBLIC LAW 2019 CHAPTER 98 (LD27):** An Act To Allow the Use of a Crossbow for a Limited Duration during the Archery Season on Deer and the Fall Season on Wild Turkey went into effect and did the following:
 - For a period of 3 years, beginning in 2020, this law allows a person to hunt deer with a crossbow during the open archery season on deer and turkey during the fall wild turkey hunting season. It specifies that a person who uses a crossbow during the open archery season may not harvest an antlerless deer unless that person possesses an antlerless deer permit (ADP)

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Overview


- The department provided additional education to the public on these changes which included a crossbow fact sheet to help staff and hunters navigate the complexities of the changes.
- The department also offers a required stand-alone crossbow education course that prepares hunters to utilize crossbows for hunting purposes in a safe and lawful manner. At this time the crossbow course can be completed in-person or online. In-person courses have been incorporated into many of the archery hunter education courses.

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Report Back Requirements



- What was the impact on the deer and turkey harvest from the use of a crossbow in accordance with the Title 12, section 10953
- Was additional use of crossbows allowed in any **area** where a special archery hunting season on deer was established by the commissioner pursuant to Title 12, section 11402, subsection 4 during the 2020, 2021 or 2022 season.
- Were there any issues or conflicts that arose from the additional use of crossbows.
- Recommendations moving forward for the use of crossbows during the regular archery deer hunting season, any special archery hunting season and the fall open season on hunting wild turkey.


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Crossbow Education Courses



	In-person	On-line
2019	815	Not Offered
2020	475	3565
2021	53	3108


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Crossbow Permit Sales


	Resident	Nonresident	Total
2019	940	223	1163
2020	2821	389	3210
2021	3929	456	4385

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- ## Requirements
- Was additional use of crossbows allowed in any **area** where a special archery hunting season on deer was established by the commissioner pursuant to Title 12, section 11402, subsection 4 during the 2020, 2021 or 2022 season.
 - A statewide expansion of the use of crossbows and did permit the use of crossbows in **areas which overlap** with the expanded archery hunting zone.
 - It **did not** expand the use of crossbows to be included in the **expanded archery permit authority**.
 - Thus we did not permit additional crossbow hunters to kill multiple antlerless deer in the expanded archery season under the authority of their expanded archery license. However, during the regular archery season in October, it is permissible for someone to be hunting with a crossbow in the expanded archery zone, they are just doing so under the authority of their archery license.

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Requirements



- Issues or conflicts that arose from the additional use of a crossbow
 - It is expected to encounter more violations involving crossbows as more crossbow opportunities are present on the landscape.
 - The number of violations detected from 2019, 2020 & 2021 was 10, 23 & 21 respectively.
 - In many instances the crossbow itself was not the cause of the violation, just the implement being possessed at the time.
 - The impact to the warden service calls for service and / or violations detected was not significant.

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Crossbow Related Violations



2019 (10 viol)	2020 (23 viol)
• 4 Hunting over bait	• 3 Hunting over bait
• 2 Killed under exp. archery permit	• 1 Bear bait – no permission
• 1 Loaded crossbow in motor vehicle	• 2 Exceeding bag limit on deer
• 2 Night hunting	• 1 False registration of deer
• 1 Discharge too close to a dwelling	• 1 Felon viol. dangerous weapon bail
	• 3 Night hunting
	• 2 Killed under expanded archery permit
	• 2 Hunting without license/permit
	• 2 No crossbow permit
	• 3 Killing doe without ADP
	• 1 Discharge too close to dwelling
	• 1 Hunting without CB safety course

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Crossbow Related Violations



2020 (23 viol)


- 3 Hunting over bait
- 1 Bear bait – no permission
- 2 Exceeding bag limit on deer
- 1 False registration of deer
- 1 Felon viol. dangerous weapon bail
- 3 Night hunting
- 2 Killed under expanded archery permit
- 2 Hunting without license/permit
- 2 No crossbow permit
- 3 Killing doe without ADP
- 1 Discharge too close to dwelling
- 1 Hunting without CB safety course

2021 (21 viol)

- 6 Hunting over bait
- 2 False registration of deer
- 1 Felon without a license
- 3 Night hunting
- 2 Fraudulent license
- 3 Hunting without crossbow permit
- 4 Trespassing with crossbow

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IMPACT TO HARVEST & MANAGEMENT OF DEER, BEAR, MOOSE & TURKEY:



Year	Weapon	Bears Taken	% of Total Harvest	Deer Taken	% of Total Harvest	Moose Taken	% of Total Harvest	Turkeys Taken	% of Total Harvest
2014	Bow	286	8.8%	2,109	9.4%	11	0.5%	102	1.8%
2014	Crossbow	45	1.4%	59	0.3%	0	0.0%	17	0.3%
2015	Bow	226	7.5%	2,090	10.3%	9	0.4%	103	2.0%
2015	Crossbow	38	1.3%	40	0.2%	0	0.0%	12	0.2%
2016	Bow	213	7.5%	1,746	7.4%	13	0.8%	98	1.7%
2016	Crossbow	53	1.9%	74	0.3%	0	0.0%	27	0.5%
2017	Bow	169	5.8%	2,044	7.5%	4	0.2%	103	1.8%
2017	Crossbow	48	1.7%	104	0.4%	1	0.1%	29	0.5%
2018	Bow	227	6.8%	2,160	6.7%	8	0.4%	83	1.3%
2018	Crossbow	62	1.9%	206	0.6%	1	0.1%	43	0.7%
2019	Bow	127	5.4%	2,111	7.5%	8	0.3%	114	1.7%
2019	Crossbow	59	2.5%	224	0.8%	0	0.0%	45	0.7%
2020	Bow	255	6.6%	2,644	8.0%	4	0.2%	N/A	N/A
2020	Crossbow	111	2.9%	720	2.2%	2	0.1%	N/A	N/A
2021	Bow	186	4.9%	2,355	6.1%	9	0.3%	112	1.9%
2021	Crossbow	95	2.5%	1,106	2.8%	5	0.2%	73	1.2%

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Recommendations from IFW:




- We respectfully request and recommend to the Committee that no changes be made at this time

- We support the increased opportunities for crossbow and would also suggest repealing the sunset provision that is scheduled to occur on January 1, 2023 so that the current use of crossbows would remain in effect if nothing else should change.

- Allow the department to present a full package of changes related to crossbow law in 2023.

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Recommendations from IFW:



- We intend on proposing a full revision for everything related to crossbow in the 131st First Regular Session (2023).
- Our suggestion would be to include crossbow in the definition of archery equipment so that the use of crossbow would expand more than it is now and be consistent with traditional bow and arrow hunting.
- There are so many complexities and exceptions between the two methods of hunting it has become increasingly confusing for hunters and our staff to explain the differences, some of this is due to increased opportunity that has been given over time.
- Our suggestion to expand the use of crossbows further aligns with our mission to recruit more hunters and perhaps reactivate archery hunters who have been physically unable to draw a bow or are under the age of 65, while simplifying the laws.
- There would need to be close scrutiny of crossbow and archery laws to merge them together, thus we would recommend a 2024 implementation date.

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Our Mission

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife protects and manages Maine's fish and wildlife and their habitats, promotes Maine's outdoor heritage, and safely connects people with nature through responsible recreation, sport, and science.

