

**Remote Meeting Participation Policy of Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife  
Boards and Commissions**

**1. Purpose**

The following serves as the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIFW) policy regarding all Department Boards and Commissions and the means by which members, Department staff and the public may participate in meetings of the MDIFW Board or Commission.

**2. Definitions**

**In-person meetings.** In-person meetings are meetings in which all members of the Board or Commission and all members of Department staff and members of the public are located within the same physical space.

**Remote meetings.** Remote meetings are meetings in which all members of the Board or Commission and all members of the Department staff and public participate by telephonic, video, electronic or other similar means of communication that allows an individual to participate in a meeting without being physically present.

**Hybrid meetings.** Hybrid meetings are meetings where Board or Commission members, Department staff, and/or members of the public may participate either in-person or remotely.

**3. In-Person Meetings**

Members of the Board or Commission and Department staff are asked to be physically present for public meetings except when that is not practicable. Situations in which physical presence of an individual may not be practicable include:

- a. The existence of an emergency or urgent issue that requires the Board or Commission to meet by remote methods – meeting notification requirements and public participation are not waived in matters of emergency or urgency.
- b. Concern based on individual health risks associated with in-person participation.
- c. Illness, physical condition, or travel complications that cause an individual significant difficulty attending in-person
- d. Significant distance or weather that impedes travel

If a member of the Board or Commission finds it is not practicable to participate in-person, for any reason listed above, they must notify the Commissioner or Commissioner's designee as soon as possible. The Commissioner or Commissioner's designee may authorize remote participation of the individual(s) by means facilitated by the Department. Remote participation of Board or Commission members and Department staff must be consistent with the provisions of the following section.

**4. Remote and Hybrid Meetings**

The Department strongly encourages in-person participation. Exceptions are meant to afford members with the ability to participate remotely on an occasional basis when there are extenuating circumstances. In recognition of the value of diverse public input, the Commissioner, in consultation with the Chair of the Board or Commission, may choose to conduct any public meeting in a remote or hybrid manner, pursuant to this policy, when:

- a. the geographic location of the project area(s) and community(ies) affected by Board or Commission discussion causes significant difficulties for members of the public traveling and attending in-person; or
- b. the anticipated level of public interest cannot be supported by suitable venues for in-person meetings; or
- c. Board or Commission members find it is not practicable to participate in-person for the reasons provided in the preceding section.

The following applies to all remote and hybrid meetings undertaken by MDIFW Boards and Commissions in conducting their official business.

- a. To the extent required by law or otherwise practicable, all other requirements, policies and practices applicable to Board/Commission meetings apply.
- b. A Board/Commission member who is participating remotely is considered present when on camera for the purposes of a quorum and voting.
- c. Board/Commission members, staff and invitees listed as presenters or participants on the agenda must be able to hear and speak to all other members. Participants are asked to mute their microphones unless they are speaking.
- d. All votes taken during a remote or hybrid Board/Commission meeting must be taken by roll call vote.
- e. When remote participation is provided for members of the public, members of the public must have a meaningful opportunity for participation substantially equivalent to opportunities provided at in-person meetings.
- f. A technical failure on the part of a person that interrupts that person's electronic or telephonic connection to the meeting or proceeding does not invalidate any action taken by the Board/Commission or Department at that meeting.
- g. Participants in a remote or hybrid meeting must not transmit as part of their video any sign, logo, slogan, images, props or paraphernalia, except State of Maine agency or applicant logos or pictures or visual aids that are commonly used in presentations necessary for the Board/Commission to conduct its business.
- h. Members of the public wishing to offer questions or comments may not do so unless called upon by the Chair.
- i. Remote technology which requires a social media account, or software or membership that must be purchased will not be employed as the sole method of attending remote meetings.
- j. Comments and remarks included in a "chat" or similar medium are not part of the meeting record unless recognized by the Council Chair or Commissioner.