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An Act To Restore the Deer Herd in Certain Wildlife Management Districts in Maine

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

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §10158 is enacted to read:

§ 10158. Deer management advisory committee

1. Establishment. The commissioner shall establish a deer management advisory committee, referred to in this section as "the advisory committee."

2. Membership. Membership of the advisory committee consists of the chair of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Advisory Council established by Title 5, section 12004G, subsection 20 and the chief executive officer of, or another person from, each of the following organizations, appointed by the commissioner:

- A. A statewide organization representing guides;
- B. A statewide trapping organization;
- C. A statewide organization representing professional foresters;
- D. A statewide sportsman group;
- E. An organization established to provide public visibility to issues relating to the outdoors;
- F. An organization headquartered outside the State that is dedicated to ensuring a highquality and sustainable future for white-tailed deer and white-tailed deer hunting;
- G. An organization established to preserve, protect and enhance the deer population in Aroostook County;
- H. A conservation organization focusing on deer conservation in Washington County;
- I. A conservation organization established to promote and preserve Penobscot County's sporting heritage; and
- J. A national organization established for the conservation of wild turkey.

The commissioner shall appoint a chair and cochair from the membership of the advisory committee. The purpose of the advisory committee is to inform the commissioner about how to aggressively manage the deer resource to enhance the deer population in the State.

The commissioner shall meet with the advisory committee at least once a year at the call of the chairs of the advisory committee but may meet more often as the commissioner determines necessary. The commissioner may, within existing budgeted resources, reimburse advisory committee members for mileage or other expenses related to attending meetings of the advisory committee.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §10263 is enacted to read:

§ 10263. Maine Deer Management Fund

The Maine Deer Management Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is established within the department as a nonlapsing fund to be used by the commissioner to fund or assist in funding the management of the deer herd in wildlife management districts established by the commissioner by rule, including Aroostook, Somerset, Piscataquis, Penobscot, Hancock, Franklin and Washington counties. Within the wildlife management districts identified pursuant to this section, the funds must be used to reduce predation on deer, protect and increase deer wintering areas and improve deer habitat. Funds may be used to cover costs incurred by the State in obtaining an incidental take permit from the Federal Government for the Canadian lynx and efforts to have the Canadian lynx delisted from the United States Endangered Species Act of 1973. Revenue from the deer stamp under section 11109B, the deer management registration plates under Title 29A, section 456H and the Maine deer management voluntary checkoff under Title 36, section 5291 must be deposited in the fund. The commissioner may accept and deposit into the fund monetary gifts, donations or other contributions from public or private sources for the purposes specified in this section. The fund must be held separate and apart from all other money, funds and accounts.

Sec. 3. 12 MRSA §11109-B is enacted to read:

§ 11109-B. Deer stamp

1. Deer stamp. A person may not hunt for deer without a deer stamp issued pursuant to this section. Funds received by the department under subsection 2 must be deposited in the Maine Deer Management Fund established in section 10263.

2. Fee. The fee for a deer stamp is \$10.

3. Exceptions. The requirements of this section do not apply to:

- A. A person hunting without a license on that person's land as authorized under section 11108;
- B. A person who holds a valid junior hunting license under section 11108A;
- C. A person who holds a valid apprenticeship hunter license under section 11108B; or
- D. A person who holds a valid license under chapter 913, subchapter 3.

4. Penalties. The following penalties apply to violations of this section.

A. A person who violates this section commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

B. A person who violates this section after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5year period commits a Class E crime.

Sec. 4. 29-A MRSA §456-H is enacted to read:

§ 456-H. Deer management registration plate

1. Deer management plates. The Secretary of State, upon receiving an application and evidence of payment of the registration fee required by section 501 and the excise tax required by Title 36, section 1482, shall issue a registration certificate and a set of deer management registration plates to be used in lieu of regular registration plates. These plates must bear identification numbers and letters. Vanity plates may not duplicate vanity plates issued in another class of plate. The Secretary of State shall begin issuing deer management registration plates by April 1, 2012.

2. Initial registration fee. In addition to the regular motor vehicle registration fee prescribed by law, the initial contribution for the deer management registration plate is \$20, which must be deposited with the Treasurer of State and credited to the Maine Deer Management Fund established under Title 12, section 10263.

3. Renewal fee. In addition to the regular motor vehicle registration fee prescribed by law, the annual renewal contribution for deer management registration plates is \$20, which must be deposited with the Treasurer of State and credited to the Maine Deer Management Fund established under Title 12, section 10263.

4. Issuance. The Secretary of State shall issue a deer management registration plate in a number or letter sequence or a combination of a number and letter sequence.

5. Design and approval. Notwithstanding section 468, subsection 5, the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall submit a new proposed design for the deer management registration plate every 6 years for approval or modification by the Secretary of State.

6. Payment for costs associated with the production and issuance of the first 2,000 plates. The sponsor of the deer management registration plate shall provide \$40,000 to the Secretary of State for costs associated with the production and issuance of the plates. The Secretary of State shall deposit these funds in the Specialty License Plate Fund, established under section 469. The Secretary of State shall provide 2,000 credit receipts to the sponsor to provide to each supporter that contributed \$20. A credit receipt may be used only to obtain one set of deer management special registration plates.

7. Transfer of fees. On a quarterly basis, the Secretary of State shall transfer the revenue from the issuance and renewal of the deer management registration plates to the Treasurer of State for deposit and crediting pursuant to subsections 2 and 3.

Sec. 5. 36 MRSA §5291 is enacted to read:

§ 5291. Maine deer management voluntary checkoff

1. Maine Deer Management Fund. When filing a return, a taxpayer entitled to a refund under this Part may designate that a portion of that refund be paid into the Maine Deer Management Fund established in Title 12, section 10263. A taxpayer who is not entitled to a refund under this Part may contribute to the Maine Deer Management Fund by including with that taxpayer's return sufficient funds to make the contribution. Each individual income tax return form must contain a designation in substantially the following form: "Contribution to Maine Deer Management Fund: () \$5, () \$10, () \$25 or () Other \$... ."

2. Contributions credited to Maine Deer Management Fund. The State Tax Assessor shall determine annually the total amount contributed pursuant to subsection 1. Prior to the beginning of the next year, the assessor shall deduct the cost of administering the deer management checkoff, but not exceeding \$5,000 annually, and report the remainder to the Treasurer of State, who shall credit that amount to the Maine Deer Management Fund, which is established in Title 12, section 10263.

SUMMARY

This bill does the following:

1. It establishes a deer management advisory committee to inform the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife about how to more aggressively manage the State's deer population;
2. It establishes the Maine Deer Management Fund for the purpose of funding deer management efforts in the State;
3. It creates a \$10 deer stamp and prohibits a person from hunting deer in the State without a deer stamp;
4. It creates a deer management license plate and directs \$20 from each deer management license plate to be deposited into the Maine Deer Management Fund;
5. It creates a Maine deer management voluntary checkoff so that taxpayers can voluntarily support deer management efforts; and
6. It requires revenue received from the deer stamp and the deer management checkoff to be deposited in the Maine Deer Management Fund.