

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

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

IN SUPPORT OF L.D.95

“AN ACT TO AMEND AND SIMPLIFY CERTAIN WILDLIFE LAWS”

SPONSORED BY: Representative CLUCHEY of Bowdoinham

DATE OF HEARING: Monday, January 27, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts 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. 95**.

This bill repeals certain provisions of law related to special regulations regarding deer hunting seasons that are now redundant due to that language being placed in Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife rule. This bill also reorganizes certain laws regarding rulemaking related to open and closed seasons for deer hunting and clarifies the distinctions between the expanded archery season and a special hunting season and corrects cross-references. It also creates a Freedom of Access Act public records exemption by making location data regarding species of special concern confidential in statute, just as location data regarding threatened and endangered species are.

This is the Department’s omnibus wildlife bill that seeks to clarify and better organize several areas of Title 12 that relate to wildlife conservation. Last year, as part of a broader effort to align the use of crossbows with bow and arrows during archery seasons, the Department conducted rulemaking to move special deer hunting regulations into Rule Chapter 16 - Hunting. Removing these regulations from Title 12 will reduce the opportunity for conflict between statute and rule and ensure that the Department has the flexibility to adjust these seasons when required. As part of this effort, we also found that the current statutory framework for the expanded archery season is unclear. Therefore, this bill establishes the expanded archery season as a distinct season from the other special seasons that the Department occasionally implements on off-shore islands and in other unique circumstances.

Finally, this bill creates an exception from FOIA for location data of special concern species, which are species that are not listed as threatened or endangered but have the potential to become so in the future. Currently, the Department must provide location data for these species upon request, creating a significant risk of illegal collection for some species. Allowing the Department to withhold records for these species, when doing so is important for their conservation, will help reduce the potential that they may need to be listed as threatened or endangered in the future.

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