

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Notice of Agency Rulemaking Proposal

AGENCY: Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Advertise: December 31, 2025

CHAPTER NUMBER AND RULE TITLE: Chapter 16 – Hunting (Moose hunting season)

TYPE OF RULE: Routine Technical

PROPOSAL FILING NUMBER: [Leave Blank - Assigned by the Department of the Secretary of State]

BRIEF SUMMARY: The Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife is proposing changes to the moose hunting season to include adding a September hunting season for antlered moose in all remaining WMDs in which moose hunting permits are issued, and adjusting the timing of the October antlered moose season such that there is always a one-week gap between that season and the September season. Adding additional WMDs to the September season will increase moose hunting opportunity without increasing permits and reduce hunter and user conflicts by redistributing hunters. Adjusting the timing of the October season will ensure that it always occurs during a time period when bulls are more responsive to calling. Please contact the agency contact person for a complete copy of the rule proposal.

PUBLIC HEARING: January 20, 2026 @ 4:00pm – Rangeley Region Guides & Sportsman Assoc., 41 Old Skiway Rd, Oquossoc and January 22, 2026 @ 4:00pm – Greenville Public Safety, 10 Minden St., Greenville. An online option for attending via Microsoft Teams will also be available. For those wishing to attend remotely, please contact the Agency Contact Person for this filing.

COMMENT DEADLINE: February 2, 2026

CONTACT PERSON FOR THIS FILING:

Becky Orff

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CONTACT PERSON FOR SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT *(if different)*: Click or tap here to enter text.

FINANCIAL IMPACT ON MUNICIPALITIES OR COUNTIES *(if any)*: None anticipated

STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR THIS RULE: 12 MRS Section 10104, 11551, 11552

SUBSTANTIVE STATE OR FEDERAL LAW BEING IMPLEMENTED *(if different)*: Click or tap here to enter text.

AGENCY WEBSITE: www.maine.gov/ifw

EMAIL ADDRESS FOR OVERALL AGENCY RULEMAKING LIAISON:

becky.orff@maine.gov

Choose one of the following:

The summary provided above is for publication in both the newspaper and website notices.

STATE OF MAINE
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Rulemaking Fact Sheet

(see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1))

Agency: Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Name, Address, Telephone Number, and Email Address of Agency Contact Person:

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Public Hearing(s) (*include day, date, time, and location*): January 20, 2026 @ 4:00pm – Rangeley Region Guides & Sportsman Assoc., 41 Old Skiway Rd, Oquossoc and January 22, 2026 @ 4:00pm – Greenville Public Safety, 10 Minden St., Greenville. An online option for attending via Microsoft Teams will also be available. For those wishing to attend remotely, please contact the Agency Contact Person for this filing.

Comment Deadline(s) (*include day, date, and time*): February 2, 2026

Principal Reason(s) or Purpose for Proposing this Rule [see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1)(A)]:

The 2017 Big Game Plan identifies two priority changes to the moose hunting season framework to improve the quality of the hunting experience and reduce conflicts between hunters and other users. These changes include adding a September hunting season for antlered moose in all remaining WMDs in which moose hunting permits are issued and adjusting the timing of the October antlered moose season such that there is always a one-week gap between that season and the September season. Although there has been concern over the level of support for these changes, a 2024 scientific public survey indicated more support than opposition by the general public, outdoor recreationalists, hunters, and guides, including those that live within moose hunting areas. Therefore, the Department is proposing to make these changes beginning with the fall 2026 moose hunting season.

Is Material Incorporated by Reference into the Rule [see 5 M.R.S. § 8056(2-A)]? No

Analysis and Expected Operation of the Rule [see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1)(B) & (D)]: The proposed rule will add a September hunting season for antlered moose in all remaining WMDs (7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17) in which moose hunting permits are issued. This season begins on the Monday following the close of the bear baiting season and runs for 6 days. In addition, the rule will adjust the timing of the October season for antlered moose to ensure that it always occurs 2 weeks after the start of the September season, resulting in a one week gap between the seasons. Currently, the October hunting season for antlered moose typically occurs 2 weeks after the start of the September season with a one-week gap between seasons, but in some years, depending on the calendar, it occurs 3 weeks after the start of the September season and thus has a two-week gap between seasons. Adding additional WMDs to the September season will increase moose hunting opportunity without increasing permits and reduce hunter and user conflicts by redistributing hunters. Adjusting the timing of the October season will ensure that it always occurs during a time period when bulls are more responsive to calling.

Brief Summary of Relevant Information Considered During Development of the Rule (including up to 3 primary sources relied upon) [see 5 M.R.S. §§ 8057-A(1)(E) & 8063-B]:

Format Revised 11/7/2025

The Department considered the priorities outlined in the Big Game Plan, a 2023 Legislative Working Group established to discuss conflicts among moose hunters and between moose hunters and other recreationalists, and the 2024 comprehensive scientific survey of the general public, outdoor recreationalists, hunters, and guides. The Department believes the number of antlered moose hunting permits during October in WMDs 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17 has led to increased user conflict. Dividing these permits by allocating half to a September bull season should reduce user conflicts and increase moose hunting opportunity.

Estimated Fiscal Impact of the Rule [*see* 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1)(C)]: None anticipated.

FOR EXISTING RULES WITH FISCAL IMPACT OF \$1 MILLION OR MORE, ALSO INCLUDE:

Economic Impact, Whether or Not Quantifiable in Monetary Terms [*see* 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(2)(A)]:
Click or tap here to enter text.

Individuals, Major Interest Groups and Types of Businesses Affected and How They Will Be Affected [*see* 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(2)(B)]:
Click or tap here to enter text.

Benefits of the Rule [*see* 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(2)(C)]:
Click or tap here to enter text.

Note: If necessary, additional pages may be used.

Chapter 16: HUNTING

16.08 Moose Hunting

1. Moose Hunting Season and Districts
 2. Areas Closed to Moose Hunting
 3. Moose Permits
 4. Restrictions
 5. Moose Permit Auction
 6. Moose Permit Auction by Conservation Organizations
 7. Moose Permit Point System
 8. Depredation Moose Hunt
 9. Adaptive Moose Hunt
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1. Moose Hunting Season and Districts

- A. There shall be an open season for the hunting of moose within Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 27 and 28 beginning on the Monday following the close of the bear baiting season and remaining open for 6 days. In addition, within WMDs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 27 and 28 there shall be an open season for the hunting of moose beginning on the third Monday following the close of the bear baiting season and remaining open for 6 days.~~second Monday of October and remaining open for 6 days. In addition, within WMDs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 18, 19, 27 and 28, there will be an open season beginning on the Monday following the close of the bear baiting season and remaining open for 6 days.~~
- B. There shall be an open season in WMDs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 19 to begin on the Monday preceding the opening day of the regular firearm deer season and remaining open for 6 days with antlerless only permits being allocated.
- C. There shall be an open season for the hunting of moose within WMDs 16, 22, 23, 25 and 26, from the 4th Monday preceding Thanksgiving to the Saturday following Thanksgiving; and the Saturday preceding the first day of this season is an open day for the hunting of moose for residents of the state only.
- D. Hunters drawn in the following WMDs may hunt in either WMD during the open season in those WMDs.
 - a. WMDs 7 and 13
 - b. WMDs 12 and 15
 - c. WMDs 14 and 17
 - d. WMDs 27 and 28.