STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Notice of Agency Rulemaking Proposal

AGENCY NAME: Inland Fisheries and Wildlife **Adv. 10-28-2026**
CHAPTER NUMBER AND RULE TITLE: 09-137 C.M.R. Ch. 16, Hunting [16.08 – Moose Hunting]
TYPE OF RULE: Routine Technical
RULE ACTION: Amendment of Existing Rule
PROPOSAL FILING NUMBER: *[Leave Blank - Assigned by the Department of the Secretary of State]*
BRIEF SUMMARY: The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is proposing to amend Chapter 16 Moose Hunting rules to add a September hunting season in portions of WMD 8, beginning with the fall 2027 moose hunting season. The proposed rule will add a September antlered moose hunting season in WMD 8, excluding portions east of the Kennebec River between the east outlet of Moosehead Lake and the US Route 201 bridge in the Forks Plantation. The proposed season would begin on the Monday following the close of the bear baiting season and runs for 6 days. Adding a September season in WMD 8 will increase moose hunting opportunity without increasing the total number of permits. Redistributing hunters between September and October is expected to reduce conflicts between hunters and other users, provide additional economic opportunities, and reduce damage to privately owned and maintained gravel and dirt roads by spreading vehicle traffic across multiple weeks.
PUBLIC HEARING: November 18, 2026, at 5:00pm, Northern Outdoors, Kennebec River Brewery, 1771 US Route 201, The Forks, ME. 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: November 28, 2026
CONTACT PERSON FOR THIS FILING: Becky Orff, 353 Water St, 41 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333; Phone: 207-287-5202; Fax: 207-287-6395; TTY: Maine Relay 711; Becky.Orff@maine.gov
CONTACT PERSON FOR SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT *(if different)***:** Click or tap here to enter text.
FINANCIAL IMPACT ON MUNICIPALITIES OR COUNTIES *(if any)***:** Click or tap here to enter text.
STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR THIS RULE: 12 MRS, Sections 10104, 11551, 11552
SUBSTANTIVE STATE OR FEDERAL LAW BEING IMPLEMENTED *(if different)***:** Click or tap here to enter text.
AGENCY WEBSITE: maine.gov/ifw
EMAIL ADDRESS FOR OVERALL AGENCY RULEMAKING LIAISON: Becky.Orff@maine.gov

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Choose <u>one</u> of the following: *The summary provided above is for publication in both the newspaper and website notices.*

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Rulemaking Fact Sheet

*(*See *5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1))*

Agency Name: Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Name, Address, Telephone Number, and Email Address of Agency Contact Person:
Becky Orff, 353 Water Street, 41 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333; 207-287-5202; becky.orff@maine.gov

Chapter Number and Rule Title: 16.08 – Moose Hunting
Type of Rule: Routine Technical

Rule Action: Amendment of Existing Rule
Is this an emergency rule?: No

Statutory Authority: 12 MRS Sections 10104, 11551, 11552
Public Hearing(s): November 18, 2026, at 5:00pm, Northern Outdoors, Kennebec River Brewery, 1771 US Route 201, The Forks, ME. 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): November 28, 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 aimed at improving the quality of the hunting experience and reducing conflicts between hunters and other outdoor users. One of these changes is the addition of a September hunting season for antlered moose in all remaining Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) in which moose hunting permits are issued. Although concerns have been raised over the level of public support for this change, a 2024 scientific public survey showed more support than opposition among the general public, outdoor recreationalists, hunters, and guides, including respondents that live within moose hunting areas. In April 2026, the Department added a September season for antlered moose in WMDs 7, 12, 13, and 15, and established a working group to explore the possibility of adding a September season in WMDs in the Moosehead Lake Region. Following facilitated discussions with the Moosehead Area Moose Hunting Working Group that sought to balance the needs of a diverse set of stakeholders (local businesses, hunting and recreational guides, and landowners), the Department is proposing to add a September hunting season in portions of WMD 8, beginning with the fall 2027 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 antlered moose hunting season in WMD 8, excluding portions east of the Kennebec River between the east outlet of Moosehead Lake and the US Route 201 bridge in the Forks Plantation (Figure 1). This season begins on the Monday following the close of the bear baiting season and runs for 6 days. Adding a September season in WMD 8 will increase moose hunting opportunity without increasing the total number of permits. Redistributing hunters between September and October is expected to reduce conflicts between hunters and other users, provide additional economic opportunities for businesses that cater to moose hunters, and reduce damage to privately owned and maintained gravel and dirt roads by spreading vehicle traffic across multiple weeks.

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]**:**
The Department considered the priorities outlined in the Big Game Plan, findings from the 2024 comprehensive scientific survey of the general public, outdoor recreationalists, hunters, and guides, as well as input from the 2026

Moosehead Area Moose Hunting Season Working Group. Based on information and perspectives provided by the Moosehead Area Moose Hunting Working Group on whether portions of WMD 8 could be opened to moose hunting in late September, the Department is proposing to open a portion of WMD 8 to moose hunting in September. This approach is expected to reduce user conflicts, lessen damage to privately owned and maintained gravel roads, and increase moose hunting opportunities without meaningfully increasing the moose harvest. Excluding portions of WMD 8 east of the Kennebec River between the east outlet of Moosehead Lake and the bridge on US Route 201 in the Forks Plantation (Figure 1), should also minimize conflicts with the Moosehead region's tourism industry and other recreational users.

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

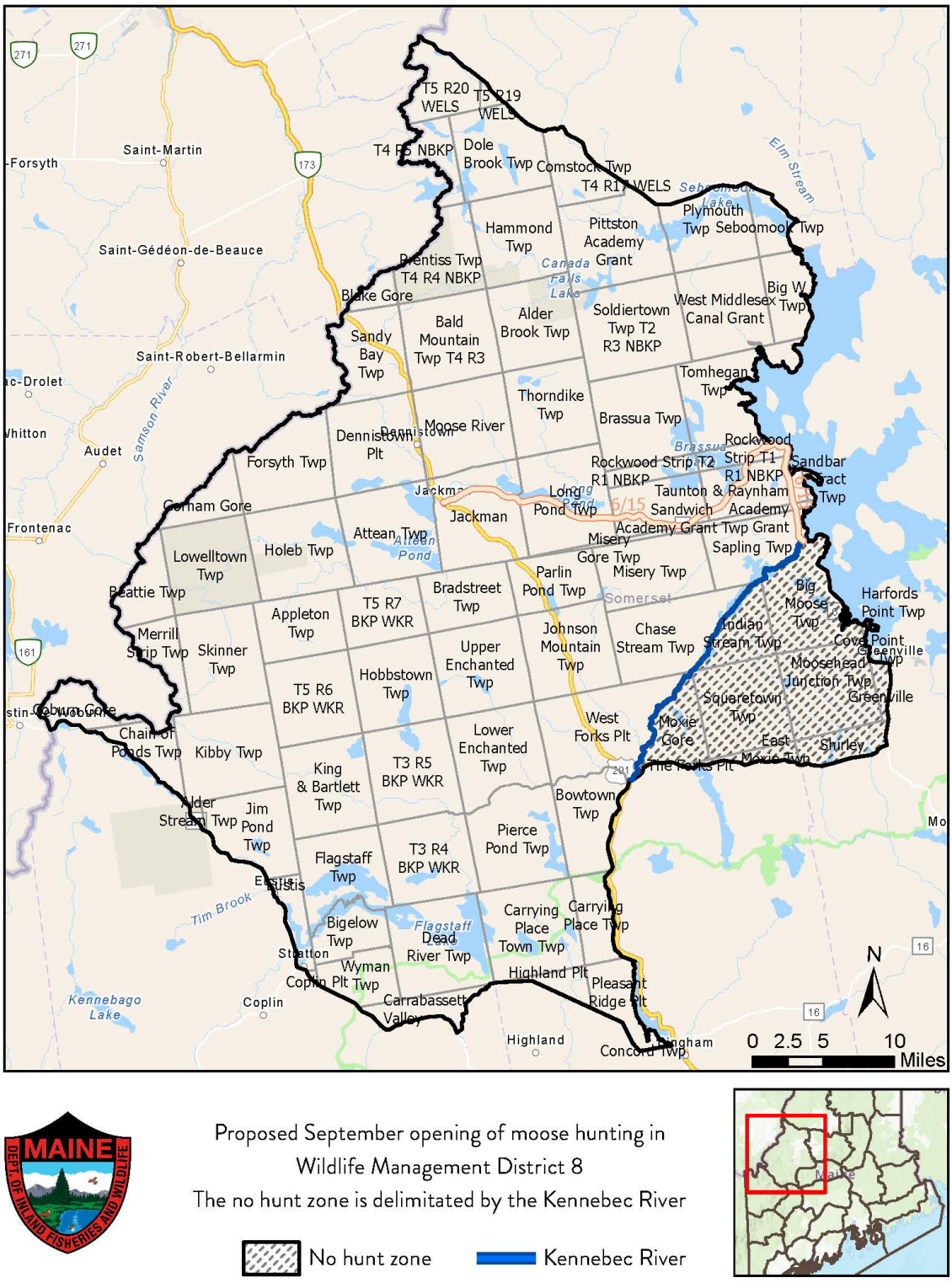
FOR EXISTING RULES WITH FISCAL IMPACT OF $1 MILLION OR MORE, ALSO INCLUDE:

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.



Proposed September opening of moose hunting in
Wildlife Management District 8
The no hunt zone is delimitated by the Kennebec River

No hunt zone Kennebec River

Figure 1. Proposed boundary of September antlered moose hunting in WMD 8. The area located east of the Kennebec River between the east outlet of Moosehead Lake and US Route 201 bridge in the Forks Plantation will be closed to moose hunting during the proposed September season.

AMEND SECTION 16.08 AS FOLLOWS:

09-137 DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Chapter 16: HUNTING

16.08 Moose Hunting

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 (except the area located east of the easterly shore of the Kennebec River between the east outlet of Moosehead Lake and the US Route 201 bridge in the Forks Plantation), 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 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.