

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 441  
“An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Fish and Wildlife”**

**DATE OF HEARING: May 14, 2024**

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Tim Peabody, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in support of **L.D. 441**.

This amendment replaces the bill, which is a concept draft. It establishes that money deposited with the Treasurer of State to the credit of the Maine Deer Management Trust Fund may be invested as provided by law and the income from these investments must be credited to the fund.

The Deer Management Fund is a nonlapsing fund used by the Department to fund predator control, to assist landowners with the prevention or management of landowner-deer conflict, and to acquire or enhance deer habitat. For many years, revenue into the fund was limited to voluntary contributions and \$2 from every deer registration fee. Beginning in 2022, the revenue from each antlerless deer permit has been deposited into the fund, greatly increasing the Department’s ability to acquire and manage deer habitat. Since that time, funds from this account have been used to leverage over \$7.7 million in additional state and federal funding, resulting in the fee acquisition of 9,629 acres and creation of 4 new Wildlife Management Areas across Aroostook and Franklin Counties. These properties are being managed with deer habitat as the highest priority.

The Department is intentionally maintaining a healthy balance in this account to ensure that funds are available when opportunities to acquire deer habitat from willing sellers become available. Allowing interest to accrue on these funds is fiscally responsible and will ensure we maximize opportunities to use the fund for its intended purpose.

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