

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

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

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 188

LD TITLE: “An Act To Provide for an Expanded Muzzle-loading Deer Hunting Season”

SPONSORED BY: Representative Tuell of East Machias.

Cosponsored by Senator MOORE of Washington and Representatives: ALLEY of Beals, FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor, GRIFFIN of Levant, JAVNER of Chester, SKOLFIELD of Weld, Senator: ROSEN of Hancock.

DATE OF HEARING: February 4, 2019

Good afternoon Senator Dill, Representative Nadeau and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Resource Management Director speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 188**.

This bill extends the muzzle-loading season on deer for 12 hunting days immediately following the regular firearms deer hunting season. Currently, muzzleloader season dates are established by the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife through the rulemaking process. The bill removes the Commissioner’s authority to scientifically manage the deer harvest during the muzzle-loading season state and replaces it with a statutory mandated season.

While there are areas of the State that could withstand a higher deer harvest and increased hunter pressure, not all areas of the State can. We appreciate the desire to increase participation in the deer hunt and increase harvest in the areas of the State that warrant it. However, the Department feels a statewide approach to managing deer is not an approach that will meet these objectives in the long run.

As the Department implements the recently completed Big Game Management Plan, we are investigating ways to increase the harvest of antlerless deer in those areas of the State where the population exceeds social and biological objectives. However, the Department hopes to do this in a way that is predictable for all hunters, preferably without establishing preferences for certain user groups. Ultimately, any change to deer hunting regulations should strive to achieve a predictable harvest that allows the Department to manage deer in a biologically responsible manner. We would ask the Committee to allow the Department the time to continue implementing the Big Game Management Plan to accomplish that.

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