



Program Evaluation Report



Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

State Government Evaluation Act (3 M.R.S.A., Chapter 35)

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Introduction

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) preserves, protects, and enhances the inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the state. Established in 1880 to protect big game populations, MDIFW has since evolved in scope to include protection and management of fish, non-game wildlife, and habitats, as well as restoration of endangered species like the bald eagle.

In addition to its conservation duties, MDIFW is also responsible for enabling and promoting the safe enjoyment of Maine's outdoors — from whitewater rafting to boating, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.

The agency's constituents include the fish, wildlife, and people who call Maine home, as well as the visiting outdoor enthusiasts and ecotourists who call Maine Vacationland and contribute hundreds of millions of dollars each year to the state's economy.

A Brief History

In 1880, the Legislature made two Maine Fisheries Commissioners responsible for enforcing laws relating to important game species. This early enforcement effort represented the beginning of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. At the time, game wardens were appointed to patrol the state's woods and waters and bring poaching under control. They did not receive a salary, but instead received half the amount of the fines paid by violators they apprehended.

The mission of the Department was soon expanded to include the propagation of game fish, and through the early 1900s, many new hunting and fishing laws were enacted to conserve fish and wildlife. Today, the Department carries out a wide variety of fish and wildlife conservation programs focused on maintaining abundant game resources, as well as managing non-game wildlife and restoring endangered species.

The Department's mission has significantly broadened with responsibilities for white-water rafting, watercraft, snowmobiles; ATVs; hunter, trapper and recreational vehicle safety; conservation education; and other matters.

Although the Department's mission has been steadily expanded, it remains focused on the protection and enhancement of the state's inland fisheries and wildlife, while at the same time providing for the wise use of these resources.

Enabling Legislation and Relevant Mandates

Title 12, MRSA PART 13, CHAPTERS 901-941 as enacted by Public Law establishes the statutory basis for the Department and its operations. The principal mandate of the Department is to preserve, protect, and enhance the inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the State; to encourage the wise use of these resources; to ensure coordinated planning for the future use and preservation of these resources; and to provide for effective management of these resources.

Additional mandates include: (1) recreational vehicle (watercraft, snowmobile, and ATV) registration, safety, special event permitting, and law enforcement, (2) the administration of hunting, fishing, trapping, and related licenses and permits established by the Legislature, (3) regulation of commercial white water rafting, taxidermy, guides, camp trip leaders, educational trip leaders, wildlife propagators and exhibitors, (4) search for lost persons, (5) hunter, trapper, and archery training, (6) acquisition, development, and management of access to public land and waters, (7) protection of private property (animal damage/nuisance wildlife and trespass), (8) landowner relations, (9) promotion of the state's fish and wildlife resources, (10) conservation education, (11) public health issues associated with fish and wildlife resources (rabies/fish and wildlife consumption advisories), and (12) public outreach.

The Commissioner is also a member of the Baxter Park Authority, Land for Maine's Future Board, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Board, and advisor to several other Boards and Commissions.

There are several Federal Agencies with congruent responsibilities affecting fish and wildlife or the use of these resources, which the Department must interrelate and respond to. These include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, National Parks Service, Forest Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Environmental Protection Agency, the Army Corp of Engineers, and the U.S. Geological Survey. On the state level, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF), Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and other agencies and commissions impact directly on the resources for which this Department is responsible. Initiatives and mandates such as shoreland zoning, municipal comprehensive planning, and economic and community development bring additional external forces to bear on Department operations and management decisions. As an example, **Appendix A** contains a spreadsheet of agencies and organizations that the Department typically coordinates and interacts with on a regular basis.

Department Revenues/Finances

The Department's overall budget is comprised of three parts: general fund, federal grant funds and other special revenue funds. The Department's revenue from license sales, registrations, fees and other items is constitutionally protected and can only be used for the administration of the Department.

The Legislature appropriates to the Department a general fund appropriation that is not less than the revenues collected by the Department for a given year. In essence, this gives the Department an "advance" from the general fund against anticipated revenue which is then repaid to the general fund with the Department's revenue from license sales, registrations and fees as it is received through the fiscal year. This allows the Department to overcome fluctuations in license sales and fees that occur throughout the year impacting cash flow and instead have a predictable and responsible budget. The difference between the annual appropriated amount and the actual revenue earned through license sales, registrations, fees and other items is the true general fund contribution to the Department, which is approximately 46% in Fiscal Year 2024.

Federal Funds come from the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. These funds are distributed to State fish and wildlife agencies through grants authorized under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (PR) and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act (DJ). The funds are generated by excise taxes and import duties on equipment and gear manufactured for purchase by hunters, anglers, boaters, archers, and recreational shooters. Federal taxes on motorboat and small engine fuels are also a source of DJ funding. These federal funds require a matching share which comes from state hunting, trapping and fishing licenses, as well as other sources. This program is an example of a user pay, user benefits program based on hunters, trappers, and anglers who recreate here in Maine. In this case all the residents and visitors to Maine benefit from the sportsman's dollars as they are used to manage all the Fisheries and Wildlife resources of the State of Maine both game and nongame.

For more information see: **Appendix D: 10-Year Program Evaluation Financial Report**

Department Vision, Values, and Strategic Plan

Mission

MDIFW protects and manages Maine’s fish and wildlife and their habitats, promotes Maine’s outdoor heritage, and safely connects people with nature through responsible recreation, sport, and science.

Vision

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) is the leader in protecting Maine’s fish and wildlife; as well as Maine citizens and visitors who enjoy the outdoors. The Department engages individuals, organizations, landowners and outdoor enthusiasts to conserve and enhance the state’s fish and wildlife populations and habitats, as well as promote and grow Maine’s outdoor heritage.

MDIFW works to ensure and protect public access to Maine’s lands and waters, and actively promotes enjoyable, safe, responsible recreation in Maine’s outdoors — from hunting and fishing to paddling and birdwatching.

The Department and its employees are leaders in conservation and conservation law enforcement. Our workforce is diverse, dedicated and driven. We prize and value continued learning, innovation, and development, and believe in a supportive workplace culture and a commitment to excel.

The Department is a national leader in enhancing and protecting fish, wildlife and their habitats; and providing Maine’s citizens and visitors with unparalleled access to an extraordinary array of natural resources and experiences.

Strategic Plan/Goals

The Department completed its five-year strategic plan in 2020, which will be the framework to achieving Department goals related to workforce, customer experience, communication, public access and maintaining healthy fish and wildlife habitats.

To achieve our vision and stay true to our mission, we have defined the following goals to guide our work through 2025:

1. *Workforce:* Successfully attract, support, and retain a highly skilled workforce and build an organizational structure and culture that values diversity, communication and teamwork.
2. *Healthy Fish and Wildlife Habitats:* Partner with the public to achieve shared goals for sustainability and maintaining and improving healthy fish and wildlife populations and habitats, despite environmental changes and shifts in land ownership.
3. *Access:* Engage landowners and the public to achieve stewardship goals and provide appropriate recreational access.
4. *Communication:* Measurably increase public knowledge of and support for the MDIFW’s work.
5. *Customer Experience:* Promote public engagement with Maine’s natural resources and support safe, responsible, and positive outdoor experiences.

*These goals are inextricably linked and listed in no particular order. They were developed through a department-wide strategic planning process in 2020, see **Appendix E** for the full Strategic Plan Document.*

Personnel and Organizational Structure

Authorized Staffing

The Department has a total of 320 positions throughout the State.

- 7 Office of the Commissioner
- 16 Administrative Services
- 14 Licensing and Registration
- 57 Bureau of Resource Management Wildlife Division (includes administrative staff)
- 62 Fisheries and Hatcheries
- 140 Warden Service
- 12 Recreational Safety
- 12 Public Information and Education

The detailed organization structure and associated job classifications for each administrative unit of the Department are in Appendix B.

Office of the Commissioner

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Office of the Commissioner include:

- Management of all Inland Fish and Wildlife in the State
- Supervision of the Administration and Enforcement of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Laws
- Rule Making/Advisory Council
- Participation on Various Boards, Task Forces, and Study Groups
- Public Involvement
- Legislative Liaison
- Long Range Planning and Coordination
- Coordination with other Executive Branch Agencies
- Liaison with Federal Agencies
- Development of Legislative Proposals and Internal Policies
- Media Relations
- License Revocations

Work Programs Overview

Program: Office of the Commissioner

The Office of the Commissioner provides oversight of the budget and operations of all Department bureaus which includes approximately 300 staff.

The program's goals for the Commissioner's office are to maintain optimum effectiveness and productivity throughout the Department while maintaining staffing levels to ensure demands of our Governor, constituents, and the Legislature are met.

The objective of this program is to ensure that Department revenues sustain the work programs in each year through 2025.

Performance of this program is measured by utilizing the administrative records of revenues and expenditures. During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Alternate Delivery of Service and Efficiency Efforts

Efficiencies Implemented by the Commissioner's Office include:

- Digital communication and marketing methods;
- Newly adopted policy that allows remote access to meetings for internal staff meetings, public stakeholder group meetings, and Advisory Council meetings; and
- Use of emerging technical applications that help staff see Department data in real-time, that allow data queries to respond to information requests and that also enhance the Department's work.

Progress and Accomplishments

MDIFW completed its five-year strategic plan in 2020, which has provided the framework and path forward to achieving department goals related to workforce, customer experience, communication, public access and maintaining healthy fish and wildlife habitats.

Emerging Issues

The Commissioner's Office is faced with allocating resources and staffing needs to address very dynamic and complex topics that intersect with multiple state agencies, non-governmental organizations and legislative process such as:

- Increased employee turnover, which include retirements and vacant positions;
- Enhancement of the Department's relationship with Maine's Wabanaki Tribes;
- Access to private land to ensure the Department's ability to sustain the resources we are entrusted to manage and enforce as well as promote continued public use of outdoor recreational activities under the Department's umbrella;
- Increasing requests for information from a public that has become accustomed to receiving constant and immediate answers via technology;
- Work to address climate change initiatives; and
- Varied issues that municipalities struggle with such as discontinued roads, shooting ranges, regulation of floating homes, ordinances related to hunting, fishing, shooting sports, and recreational vehicles all of which overlap with the Department's mission.

Division of Engineering

The Engineering crew performs maintenance, constructs, oversees, and provides support for construction projects, and completes improvements on Department buildings and facilities.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Division of Engineering include:

- Building and Site Planning and Design
- Construction Project Management
- Maintenance and Repairs to Department Facilities

Work Programs Overview

Program: Engineering

The Engineering Division administrative staff oversees and provides support for all capital improvement projects for the Department; solicit bids; administers and oversees professional and construction contracts; maintains seven regional MDIFW owned office facilities; administers and oversees service contracts that include cleaning, plowing, lawn care, security, pest control, and processes invoice payments for all associated utilities and operating expenses.

The Engineering Division is responsible for the following facilities: the central office in Augusta; regional facilities in Gray, Sidney, Jonesboro, Strong, Greenville, Enfield, Ashland, and Bangor; a storehouse and offices at Federal Street in Augusta; and the Engineering shop/storage complex on Hatchery Road in Augusta.

Other facilities where the division provides services and oversight:

- Eight fish hatcheries
- Over 100,000 acres of wildlife management areas on more than 150 properties
- Over 250 seabird nesting islands
- 224 buildings, structures, housing units, remote camps, and storage buildings, including a fish pathology laboratory.
- The Maine Wildlife Park in Gray
- 77 dams and 113 fishways
- 140 boat access sites across the state
- Swan Island Wildlife Management Area (Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area), in Richmond, which includes 5 historic buildings that are maintained by the Department
- 50+ miles of access roads / 18 bridges / numerous culverts

Alternate Delivery of Service and Efficiency Efforts

The increased use of remote meeting technology for engineering staff (when appropriate) helps efficiency. Another efficiency is the ability to modify their work schedules to allow four 10-hour workdays so the engineering crew can work in distant locations around the state, for longer periods of time. They also have the flexibility to stay overnight when the work site is a long drive from Augusta.

Progress and Accomplishments

It is very difficult to provide a list of accomplishments for the Engineering Division as they provide such a huge service for the Department. From carpentry projects such as construction and installation of four large gantries to weigh moose in the North Maine Woods that supported the Wildlife Division with the expanded moose hunt, to keeping all the remote camps maintained for department staff to work from, to completing the continuous maintenance required at our seven regional office facilities, to the support the division offered moving our Augusta Headquarters, Federal Street store house facility, and Bangor facility simultaneously in fall 2021.

The goal is to keep these capital improvement projects moving along and completed in a timely manner.

Incremental objectives are created for each project on an annual basis to ensure that progress is being made.

Performance measures are taken by evaluating how close the project is to completion based on the original date of completion.

The division works off a never-ending list of hundreds of needs of the Department but here are the 2023 highest priority capital improvement projects that are in various stages of completion:

- The Bangor barn replacement which entails working with a realtor and “Leased Space” to secure a storage facility greater than 5,000 square feet to replace the current storage building.
- An RFQ process was used to choose Pare Corporation to generate an accurate list of MDIFW owned dams and impoundments along with each of their maintenance needs as part of the Impoundment/Dam Study.
- Replacement and repair of the Panther Run Dam to ensure future use of the fish trap. This has a budget of \$1,500,000.
- Construction of a new 40’x 100’ foot cold storage garage at the Enfield Regional facility has been recently completed.
- Decarbonization initiative included installation of heat pumps which have heating and cooling efficiencies at the Ashland, Greenville, and Sidney Headquarters.
- A goal to replace the traditional earthen raceways with round tank farms at the Grand Lake Stream Hatchery. Along with an effluent treatment facility and the construction of a new storage barn that will be funded by American Rescue Plan funds.
- Construction of a new 30’ x 70’ storage barn at the Dry Mills Hatchery.
- A move to relocate MDIFW Augusta Main Headquarters to the East Campus by renovating the existing CETA building and constructing two additional buildings and a storage barn.
- The Maine Wildlife Park administration building, and nature store are under design.

Emerging Issues

The Engineering Division continues to seek opportunities for energy efficiency within Department facilities i.e. installation of electric heat pumps, use of recycled materials and upgrades that reduce maintenance costs.

There is a continued focus on addressing deferred maintenance at Department owned facilities.

There is also a focus on A.D.A. compliance projects at Department facilities, water access sites and on Department owned land.

Another emerging issue is projects that target stormwater management on Department owned facilities to reduce climate change.

Division of Licensing and Registration

The Division of Licensing is responsible for the sale and administration of licenses, registrations, and lottery applications for the Department. In total, these activities generate over \$23 million in revenue for the Department each year.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Division of Licensing and Registration include:

- Administration of License and Permit Sales
- Administration of Recreational Vehicle and Boat Registration Sales

Work Programs Overview

Program: Licensing and Registration

The Licensing and Registration Program is responsible for the sale and administration of licenses, registrations, and lottery applications for the Department. In total, these activities generate over \$23 million in revenue for the Department each year.

The goal of the Licensing and Registration program is to provide licenses and registration to all outdoor recreational users which allows the Department to track numbers of participants and gain revenues from some users of the resources. This program is funded by license revenue, federal funding and other special revenue.

The objective of the Licensing and Registration Program is to administer the sale of licenses, permits, and registrations to our customers accurately and efficiently.

Performance of the Licensing and Registration Program is measured by customer satisfaction while staying within budget.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Alternate Delivery of Service and Efficiency Efforts

Efficiencies implemented by Licensing and Registration include:

- Online Antlerless Deer Purchase Application
- Online Moose Permit Payment Application
- EZ Renew Process for rapid renewal of hunting and fishing licenses
- Online Trapping Licenses Renewals
- MOSES Interface to online Game Registration system including self-registration for turkey

Progress and Accomplishments

Continued to train our agents on the use of the MOSES system, including both re-training of existing agents as well as the conversion of manual agents to the use of MOSES. We are now selling 99.5% of our licenses electronically through MOSES.

Refined and enhanced our new online trapping license sales application. A trapper is now able to renew their trapping license using their personal device 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Currently, 84% of trapping license renewals are done using this new service.

In partnership with InforMe, the state's Ecommerce internet gateway, the Department launched a new application for the online purchase of antlerless deer permits. The application allows the sale of permits allocated through the lottery as well as real-time direct sales of leftover permits to hunters. The hunter/permit information is loaded directly into our Game Registration system to facilitate the deer harvest registration process.

Emerging Issues

Licensing continues to work diligently to convert all our remaining manual agents to MOSES. We aim to accomplish this goal in 2024.

In conjunction with a cross-functional team, licensing is working with InforME to develop an application for the Department. The application will have a lot of features which will make the purchase of licenses and permits easier for our customers.

New for 2024, we will be working with InforME to interface the antlerless-deer lottery application and sales processes directly to MOSES.

Division of Public Information and Education

The Public Information and Education Division works to enhance public understanding and support for department objectives and programs and to encourage and increase responsible and safe participation in outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and recreational vehicle use.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Division of Public Information and Education include:

- Public Outreach
- Conservation Education
- Marketing
- Maine Wildlife Park
- Mandatory Hunter and Trapper Education
- Recreational Vehicle Education

Work Programs Overview

Program: Outdoor User Satisfaction

The Outdoor User Satisfaction Program oversees the development of implementation of programs and public resources to ensure a high level of participation in outdoor recreational activities. The goal of the Outdoor User Satisfaction Program is to assess issues and barriers that limit participation for certain user groups, develops and implements action plans, monitors results and takes appropriate action.

The objective of the Outdoor User Satisfaction Program is to maintain an appropriate and sustained level of users who participate in outdoor recreational activities such as hunting, fishing and trapping.

The performance of the Outdoor User Satisfaction Program is measured by the number of licenses sold and by using public surveys.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Hunter Safety

The Hunter Safety program is mandated within [Title 12 §10108](#) and requires the Commissioner to establish programs on firearm training, archery hunting education and trapping education. It also oversees the development and coordination of the mandatory hunter safety curriculum, manages records of hunting related incidents, manages records of basic hunter education certifications (firearms hunting, bowhunting, crossbow hunting, and trapping), provides enhanced hunter education programs, monitors results from program objectives and formulates action plans accordingly, and supports legislative efforts.

The goal of the Hunter Safety Program is to assure a high level of safety for hunters and the general public as related to hunting activities.

The objective of this program is to train safe, ethical, responsible hunters and reduce the number of reported hunting incidents by providing education and certification to new hunters.

Performance of this program is measured by utilizing hunting incident records.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Recreational Vehicle Safety

The Recreational Vehicle Safety Program is responsible for collecting and analyzing records of recreational vehicle related accidents that result in injuries, formulating action plans, providing education to the public related to safe operation of recreational vehicles, assisting with the development of regulatory proposals and participation in the legislative process.

The goal of the Recreational Vehicle Safety Program is to assure recreational vehicles are used in a safe and responsible manner.

The objective of the Recreational Vehicle Safety Program is to reduce the rates of incidents resulting in injuries, fatalities, and improve land-owner relations.

The performance of the Recreational Safety Program is measured by monitoring the number of reported recreational vehicle accidents resulting in injuries.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Alternate Delivery of Service and Efficiency Efforts

Efficiencies Implemented by Public Information and Education include:

- Special revenue for outreach and education
- Digital communication and marketing methods
- Online education courses (hunting, bear trapping, ATV/snowmobile)

Progress and Accomplishments

Public Outreach and Education

To continue to increase the general public's awareness of and support for MDIFW's programs and projects the Information and Education division coordinated a third phase of the Keeper of the Maine Outdoors campaign to engage a broad segment of the public and invite them to stay connected with the agency and learn more about conservation work in Maine. The third phase was hugely successful and incorporated both digital marketing strategies with more traditional in-person events. This incorporates the promotion of hunting and fishing, the youth and family outdoor recreational programs and activities such as the Camp North Woods and the Becoming an Outdoors Woman programs that the Commissioner may establish as suggested within [Title 12 §10108](#).

The division also worked with agency staff to revamp and launch a refreshed comprehensive online landing page to provide important and useful information to the public about living with wildlife in Maine. The website provides steps to take to avoid conflicts, what to do if encountering sick or injured wildlife and information about common wildlife disease. The website can be viewed at mefishwildlife.com/livingwithwildlife.

Hunter Safety

In recent years the division has focused on increasing opportunity for members of the public to gain certification in hunter and trapper education by fine tuning the balance between online and in-person offerings. In this post

pandemic period we have seen a high demand for course offerings, and the Department has responded by creating course delivery methods that suit the needs of students with different learning styles and available time. The Recreational Safety unit within the division has increased offerings of in-person trapper education courses and has seen a large uptick in students registering for and completing courses resulting in a rise in trapping license sales.

A new five-year plan was completed in 2023 and will result in expanded access to programs, increased equipment to support hands-on learning opportunities, and a greater emphasis on safety, outdoor ethics and landowner respect as well as skill building. Maine has seen an increase in all disciplines in the 3-year period from 2020 through 2023.

Enhanced hunter education programs (Next Steps programs) are now being offered to further develop the skills of new and experienced hunters and trappers. Next Steps programs are a major focus of our R3 initiatives, designed to recruit potential new hunters and trappers, retain existing participants, and reactive lapsed participants by providing a wide array of hunting, shooting sports, trapping, and survival workshops.

During the last 10 years there have been 63 incidents of injured hunters reported to and investigated by the Maine Warden Service. Three of which were fatal. One was self-inflicted, and two incidents involved tow people. Nearly 50% of the 63 incidents were self-inflicted accidents, and 50% were two-party, all but 3 were members of the same hunting party. During this time frame, license sales also increased which would be an indicator that there may have been more people afield participating in hunting. Youth and young adults make up most incidents, while age 30 and up make up the vast majority if incidents.

Recreational Vehicle Safety

The Recreational Safety Unit currently offers safety training for ATVs, snowmobiles and watercraft. ATV and boating education are now mandatory (with exemptions.) During the period of 2015 through 2023 a total of 1,190 people were reported injured, and 41 fatalities occurred as a result of ATV operation as reported by all agencies investigating such. This would equate to an average of 196 personal injuries and 5 fatalities per year. The Maine Warden Service investigates the largest numbers of these incidents as it handles the off-highway situations.

Other law enforcement agencies typically cover other crashes that occur on or in the vicinity of highways. The snowmobile safety training course that is currently offered is not a mandatory program, therefore attendance at the classes has been low. Maine now offers a combined ATV/ Snowmobile safety course which will increase snowmobile safety certifications. The average number of students attending snowmobile safety classes since 2015 has been 190 per year, which is expected to greatly increase. In the area of snowmobile safety, the Department works closely with the Maine Snowmobile Association to increase the knowledge of people about safe operation, landowner respect, personal safety and operator responsibility.

814 personal injury incidents and 53 fatalities involving snowmobilers occurred during the period of 2015 through 2023 resulting in an average of 101 injuries and 6 fatalities per year. These reports are provided by all agencies that have authority to investigate incidents with the vast majority being covered by the Maine Warden Service.

The watercraft safety program was a non-mandatory program and has also experienced the same low enrollment as the snowmobile safety classes. In 2024, boater education will become mandatory for all people born after 1999 and the number of students is expected to greatly increase. The number of in-person classes offered has remained consistent through the reporting period and the student attendance has risen compared to the previous 5 years

with the addition of online training. The Recreational Safety Unit also collaborates with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Power Squadrons to promote the various classes being offered by those entities.

Emerging Issues

In recent years there has been a noticeable decline in volunteers supporting important outreach and education programs that are overseen by the Division. Volunteers have traditionally served as certified instructors who lead mandatory and elective educational programs related to safe and responsible use of the Maine outdoors and have also supported operations of the Maine Wildlife Park. As a result of the decline in participation during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, additional resources have been required to effectively recruit and train new volunteers. The decline in support from volunteers has also placed a need on putting additional paid staff positions into place to ensure outreach and education objectives are continuing to be met. Creating more efficient and accessible learning opportunities by utilizing online platforms has also been necessary to overcome some of the challenges associated with the decline.

Recently Maine has experienced a large influx of new residents, which has created a much larger group of outdoor users, many who are inexperienced and ill prepared for the Maine outdoors. In order to ensure that issues associated with crowding, abuse of public and private land and to ensure the safe and responsible use of the Maine outdoors, increased resources and staff support are needed to provide additional outreach, education and communication efforts to influence the behavior of the growing population of outdoor users.

As the Department moves forward with implementing more modern and efficient methods of providing important information to the public, it has identified the need to overcome challenges in balancing resources to support segments of the public who rely on traditional communication methods (printed materials, in-person customer service, etc.) and the larger and growing segment of users who prefer more modern resources (online applications, social media and email communication).

Bureau of Warden Service

Maine Warden Service was formally established on March 9, 1880. The bureau is administered by the Colonel, who is supervised by the Commissioner. Maine Game Wardens are uniformed law enforcement officers with full police powers and statewide jurisdiction.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Bureau of Warden Service include:

- Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement
- Long Range Planning and Coordination
- Administration of Wildlife Violators Compact
- Administration of Guides Licensing Process
- Administration of Felon Black Powder Permit Process
- Administration of Taxidermy and Guide's Advisory Board
- Assisting Fish and Wildlife Management and Human and Wildlife Conflicts
- Recreational Vehicle Law Enforcement
- Landowner Relations
- Commercial Whitewater Rafting
- Search and Rescue
- Aquatic Invasive Species Enforcement
- Public Outreach and Education
- Enforcement of other laws, e.g. Trespass, Litter, Dog Leash, etc.
- Enforcement of Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Work Programs Overview

Program: Hiring and Training

The Bureau of Warden Service has a open hiring process where they are continuously accepting application. There are two warden supervisors who oversee the hiring process, recruit potential applicants, and monitor the training after a warden is hired. There is a paid Deputy Game Warden program that helps create targeted enforcement and education efforts in specific areas of the state as well as offering a recruitment and training tool for potential full-time wardens.

The goal for hiring is to maintain full staffing levels.

The objective is to have a robust recruitment of applicants.

The performance is measured by the number of vacancies that are filled with competent recruits who go on to work in the field as a full-time game warden.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

The goal for training is to ensure that all wardens are appropriately trained meeting all mandatory training requirements of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy as well as specialized resource enforcement, accident investigation, and search and rescue training.

The objective is to provide competent staff to carryout all the responsibilities of a game warden.

The performance measure is data analytics of resource and recreational vehicle enforcement activities; recovery of lost/missing persons.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Specialty Teams

Warden Service maintains a number of specialty teams, which include staff who receive additional training and certifications in a variety of specific topics. These teams are deployed to critical, complex incidents under jurisdiction of the Warden Service and provide additional support to other state, federal and municipal enforcement agencies. These specialty teams include: Dive Team, Incident Management Team (for Search and Rescue & Natural Disasters), K-9 Team, Special Investigations Team, Evidence Recovery Team, Forensic Mapping Team, Honor Guard, Situational Use of Force Team, Critical Incident Stress Management Team.

The goal of specialty teams is to ensure the safest, most efficient, and professional resolution for all persons involved in a complex investigation or search and rescue response, and other obligations of the bureau.

The objectives are to keep members of these teams trained, and equipped to meet bureau responsibilities.

The performance measure is data analytics of calls for service in areas of bureau responsibility During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Search and Rescue

The Maine Warden Service has statutory responsibility for search and rescue (SAR) in the state of Maine for all persons that have gone into the woodlands or onto the inland waters of the State on a hunting, fishing, or other trip and has become lost, stranded or drowned [Title 12 §10105](#) (4) The Search and Rescue Program implements search and rescue operations, retains and assesses lost and missing person records, identifies opportunities and needs, formulates action plans, supports efforts for outreach and education and legislative action, and coordinates Project Lifesaver. Maine wardens are trained in Managing the Search Function, a nationally recognized search and rescue training program established by the National Association of Search and Rescue.

The goal of the Search and Rescue Program is to assure the safety of missing, lost and stranded persons in the woods and on the inland waters of Maine.

The objectives of the Search and Rescue Program are to successfully find missing, lost, stranded and drowned persons in the Maine outdoors, and educate outdoor users on safe outdoor recreation.

The performance of the Search and Rescue Program is measured by utilizing missing and lost persons records. During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Landowner Relations

More than 94% of Maine's land is privately owned. MDIFW relies on private landowners providing public access to their land to ensure future outdoor recreational activity levels exist as they do today. The Landowner Relations Program [Title 12 MRSA §10108](#) (4-A) assesses factors impacting public access to private land, formulates action plans, implements landowner relations initiatives, supports outreach and education, takes law enforcement

action, monitors results and takes appropriate action, coordinates the Keep Maine Clean Program [Title 12 MRSA §10108](#) (4-B).

The goals of the Landowner Relations Program:

1. Encourage landowners to allow outdoor recreationists access to their property to hunt, fish or engage in other outdoor recreational pursuits;
2. Foster good relationships between landowners and outdoor recreationists; and
3. Promote high standards of courtesy, respect and responsibility by outdoor recreationists in their relations with landowners.

The objective of the Landowner Relations Program is to maintain and increase opportunities for public access to private lands.

Performance measures of the Landowner Relations Program is measured through surveys of landowners and calls for service.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Alternate Delivery of Service and Efficiency Efforts

Efficiencies Implemented by Maine Warden Service:

- Acquired Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) camera for aircraft.
- Acquired Side Scan Sonar for drowning recoveries.
- Acquired FARO 3-D crime/accident scene documenting equipment.
- Acquired and trained staff in Cellebrite Digital Evidence processing software.
- Utilization of conference calling for all Supervisory Staff.
- Reduced Supervisory meetings from monthly to quarterly.
- Continue to secure outside resources and funding for some of our equipment needs.
- Annual required MCJA training being taken utilizing an online service (Dirigo Safety).
- Increased Deputy Warden positions to focus on Landowner related issues.

Progress and Accomplishments

Enforcement

In 2022 Maine Game Wardens conducted more than 75,000 inspections of outdoor users including hunters, anglers, boats, ATVs, snowmobiles, and trappers. They responded to more than 24,000 calls for service, ranging from investigations into the illegal take and possession of fish and wildlife, recreational vehicle and boat crashes, resolving sick and nuisance wildlife conflicts, trespassing, private property abuse, and assisting other agencies.

Search and Rescue

Since 2016, the Maine Warden Service has searched for or rescued an average of 441 people a year. In fiscal years 2015-2021 a detailed analysis of time records, direct costs and administrative costs showed an average expenditure of \$432,805.32 for SAR efforts. In addition to these agency costs, the volunteer search and rescue units which comprise the Maine Association of Search and Rescue (MASAR) have provided thousands of volunteer hours at SAR incidents. Wardens and MASAR members also give numerous preventative search and rescue

courses to children and other outdoor groups. The Department's Division of Public Information and Education also provides a wide variety of outdoor preparedness education to the public. Maine has been recognized as a leader in SAR in the country.

The Warden Service has increased efficiency in locating and rescuing lost persons through training and investments in technology. Examples of these investments are Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) camera for warden service aircraft, side scan sonar for drowning recoveries, updated GPS units for field wardens, and deployment of Project Lifesaver radio tracking bracelets. Such technology will provide more time for resource related law enforcement, save lives and SAR costs, and provide greater service to the people of Maine.

Landowner Relations

The Landowner Relations Program is focusing its efforts on addressing the top three reasons land is getting shut off for public access: litter, destruction of property, and lack of respect towards the landowners of Maine. The Department's plan involves building partnerships with landowners and all user groups, which will help secure more access to private property for future generations. In addition, the program will be supplying warden service staff with tools needed to address law violations and take a proactive approach with helping the landowners.

The Landowner Relations Program is supported by the Division of Public Information and Education in producing outreach and education materials as well as deploying regular communication to all segments of the public who recreate on public land in Maine for any purpose.

In 2022, the Department sent information to more than 60,000 snowmobilers who have snowmobiled in Maine within the past five years, with landowner relations messaging.

In 2022 four landowner relations ATV-related emails were sent, averaging around 30,000 unique individuals opening each message.

The Department regularly communicates with more than 200,000 licensed hunters and recent hunter education participants, sending multiple messages each month regarding accessing private land.

The theme of the Department booth at the 2022 Fryeburg Fair was landowner relations.

On Keep Maine Clean Day in 2022, "Landowner Cleanup Day" [Title 12 §10108](#), an annual event managed by the Landowner Relations program, 64,000 pounds of litter and 924 illegally dumped tires were removed from private land, providing relief and assistance to landowners across the state.

The program has also developed and distributed landowner relief kits to all warden service staff. These kits are currently being used to solve and correct landowner related law violations and misuse. We are also focusing our efforts through all our departmental offered education classes.

Emerging Issues

In recent years Warden Service has experienced a sharp decline in qualified applicants which is also an issue for all law enforcement at the national and state level. The Bureau has established a continued open application process, a seasonal deputy game warden program and has two warden supervisors assigned to oversee the recruitment

and training. This has helped increase recruitment of qualified applicants especially as the Bureau is currently facing 22% of the workforce is either eligible to retired or has retired during 2023.

During the Covid pandemic beginning in 2020, Maine experienced a large influx of new residents and visitors, which has created a much larger group of outdoor users, many who are inexperienced and ill prepared for the Maine outdoors. Wardens provide essential in-person, field level education, promotion, and enforcement of our natural resource laws. In order to ensure that issues associated with crowding, abuse of public and private land and to ensure the safe and responsible use of the Maine outdoors, Warden Service continued to seek funding and training for technological advancements for search and rescue, education and best practices for enforcement.

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) is identified as a leading threat to conserving our native fish and aquatic wildlife in both the new Strategic Fisheries Management Plan and the State Wildlife Action Plan. The need for dedicated capacity to enforce laws related to the spread of AIS (Clean, Drain, Dry) is an current discussion within the Department and legislature.

Bureau of Resource Management

The role of the Bureau of Resource Management is to assess the status of Maine’s fish and wildlife species, determine population trends, identify factors that influence populations, and manage these factors to enhance or maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations. This will ensure that Maine’s fish and wildlife will be here for generations to come.

Primary Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Bureau of Resource Management include:

- Resource Assessment, Planning, and Coordination
- Fish and Wildlife Management
- Fish Culture, Stocking, and Evaluations
- Regulatory Proposals
- Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation
- Fish and Wildlife Surveys, Inventories, Assessments, and Research
- Habitat Acquisition and Management
- Protection of Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Human and Wildlife Conflicts
- Management of Department Lands and Public Use Facilities
- Environmental Assessments and Recommendations to Agencies of Jurisdiction
- Human-Wildlife Conflict Management
- Comprehensive Planning Assistance to Municipalities
- Assistance to Private Landowners Regarding Habitat Protection and Enhancement
- Public Outreach and Involvement
- Participation on Various Commissions, Task Forces, and Study Groups
- Special Purpose Fish and Wildlife Permits
- Shooting Range Access, Enhancement, and Participant Engagement

Work Programs Overview

Program: Wildlife Management

The Wildlife Management Program surveys, inventories and assesses wildlife populations, performs long term planning, conserves native species, implements population management systems, implements habitat protection management systems, creates regulatory proposals, supports efforts of law enforcement, handles conflict management, public education and outreach, participation from the public, and legislative action.

The goal of the Wildlife Management Program is to conserve viable populations of wildlife species consistent with biological, social, and economic considerations.

The objective of the Wildlife Management Program is to achieve the strategic planning objectives established in existing and recently developed plans (e.g., 2017 Big Game Management Plan, 2020 Furbearer Management Plan, and 2021 15-year Strategic Fisheries Management Plan, 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan, etc.) within established

planning periods. The Department is preparing to update its State Wildlife Action Plan (with a focus on at-risk nongame species) in collaboration with key constituents and conservation partners in 2024.

The performance of the Wildlife Management Program is measured by criteria and actions described in management plans. There are several legislatively established programs that fall under the management of the Wildlife Division within [Title 12 §10108](#) and those include the Hunters for the Hungry Program, the Pheasant Program, and the Coyote Control Program.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Fisheries Management

The Fisheries Management Program surveys, inventories and assesses freshwater fish populations, manages populations, controls invasive species, protects and manages habitat, provides regulatory proposals, supports law enforcement efforts, handles conflict management, public outreach and education, public participation and legislative actions.

The goal of the fisheries management program is to conserve viable populations of freshwater fish species consistent with biological, social, and economic considerations.

The objective of the fisheries management program is to maintain the distribution and abundance of all native fish and naturally occurring wildlife species.

The performance of the Fisheries Management Program is measured by the number of species listed under the provisions of the Maine Endangered Species Act, and those classified as species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in accordance with criteria established by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

Program: Fish Propagation

The Fish Propagation Program monitors water quality and treats hatchery effluent water, monitors fish health, maintains facilities, reviews and approves new stocking proposals, supports fishing regulations, makes capital investments to replace antiquated infrastructure and to create new effluent treatment systems, and identifies new fish production opportunities.

The goal of the Fish Propagation Program is to propagate and stock hatchery fish to enhance recreational angling opportunities.

The objective of the Fish Propagation Program is to meet regional stocking allocation requests while ensuring fish culture facilities are compliant with Wastewater Discharge Permits.

The performance of the Fish Propagation Program is measured by requirements outlined in MDEP Wastewater Discharge Licenses and written stocking allocation requests prepared annually.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Sport Shooting and Shooting Range Access and Enhancement

The Sport Shooting and Shooting Range Access and Enhancement Program surveys and assesses needs, supports public education and outreach, public participation, provides technical assistance, and coordinates training to support partnering clubs and organizations.

The goal of the Sport Shooting and Shooting Range Access and Enhancement Program is to provide for a safe, family friendly and environmentally responsible access to shooting range facilities across the State of Maine, while also providing increased opportunity for experiential learning, training, and participation in shooting sports.

The objective of the Sport Shooting and Shooting Range Access and Enhancement Program is to maintain or increase public access to safe and user-friendly shooting facilities and provide quality educational opportunities to increase the safe and responsible use of firearms and increase hunter satisfaction.

The performance of the Sport Shooting and Shooting Range Access and Enhancement Program is measured by using user surveys and metrics established by the Bureau of Resource Management.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks

The Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks Program supports risk assessments by agencies of jurisdiction, supports and directs collaborative research, supports and directs field sampling, supports development of action plans by agencies of jurisdictions, assists with public education and outreach initiatives.

The goal of the Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks Program is to reduce health risks to hunters and anglers associated with the consumption of fish and wildlife.

The objective of the Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks Program is to direct and facilitate research to assess and understand, mercury and PFAS assimilation in fish and wildlife and coordinate with Maine CDC in the development of consumption advisories and approaches to assessing mercury and PFAS in fish and wildlife.

The performance of the Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks Program is measured by research and field sampling results.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Wild Animal-Related Human Health Risks

The Wild Animal-Related Human Health Risks Program supports risk assessments by agency of jurisdiction, assesses need for wildlife management initiatives, supports the development of action plans by agency of jurisdiction, initiates wildlife management action as appropriate, assists with public education and outreach initiatives.

The goal of the Wild Animal-Related Human Health Risks Program is to reduce the human health risks associated with wildlife.

The objective of the Wild Animal-Related Human Health Risks Program is by 2025, to reduce the 2005-2015 average wild animal related diseases in humans incidents.

The Wild Animal-Related Human Health Risks Program is measured by utilizing public health records.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Public Access to Public Waters

The Public Access to Public Waters Program collects and assesses public access information, develops action plans, identifies and assesses site locations, assists with public education and outreach and public involvement, manages site planning, site acquisition, site development and site maintenance.

The goal of the Public Access to Public Waters Program is to assure that public waters are accessible to anglers and hunters.

The objective of the Public Access to Public Waters Program is to increase the number of public access sites owned and operated by the Department.

The performance of the Public Access to Public Waters Program is measured by the number of access sites owned or controlled for public access to public waters.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Program: Acquisition and Management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

The Acquisition and Management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Program assesses public access needs, habitat needs, conducts strategic conservation planning, engages partners, conducts public outreach, identifies opportunities for site locations, conducts site planning and prioritization, manages site acquisition, works on access development, manages habitats and conducts site maintenance.

The goal of the Acquisition and Management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Program is to assure the availability of public lands providing high quality wildlife habitat and associated recreational opportunities.

The objective of the Acquisition and Management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Program is to maintain and expand access to high-quality fish and wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

The performance of the Acquisition and Management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Program is measured by the number of acres of wildlife management areas owned by the Department.

During this report period the goals and objectives for this program have been met.

Progress and Accomplishments

Wildlife Management

Comprehensive wildlife management and conservation planning was initiated in the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) in 1968 and has been continually refined and expanded over time. In 1989, MDIFW began using a formal public participation process to develop management goals and objectives for each species or group of species. This process included convening a Public Working Group to represent public desires for the management of each species, and to develop much of the content contained within the plans. At the same time, the Department implemented a new management system approach to document how the Department would meet the goals and objectives that were derived by the Public Working Group.

Long range management plans have been developed for most major species and are used to guide program initiatives for these species. These plans cover most wildlife game species, which include numerous waterfowl species, and 12 sport fish species, as well as recovery programs for 12 threatened and endangered species.

More recent planning efforts have focused on the development and implementation of new species and species group management plans (e.g., 2017 Big Game Management Plan, 2020 Furbearer Management Plan, 2021 15-year Strategic Fisheries Management Plan, etc.). A strong commitment to public engagement and public input has supported recent planning efforts. This investment included public participation in technical committees, public steering committees, the opportunity for the public to comment on draft plans, as well as formal scientific survey

of public attitudes and opinions to guide planning efforts. Recent plans have also strived to clearly define management actions so they can be readily implemented in work plans and tracked to achieve accountability in meeting planning goals and objectives. To view these current management plans, see Appendices.

Over the next few years, the Department will collaborate with key conservation stakeholders and members of the public on updates to the State Wildlife Action Plan. This plan is focused on the long-term conservation of state fish, wildlife, and plants that have been designated Species of Greatest Conservation Need; they represent species that are most vulnerable to known threats such as habitat loss, pollution, invasive species, disease, climate change, and other stressors. Most of these species are not pursued by hunters and anglers and identified management actions are not eligible for traditional federal funding sources (DJ/PR) used to fund sportfish and wild game management programs. An approved State Wildlife Action Plan (due to US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2025) enables Maine to access congressionally apportioned State Wildlife Grants directed specifically to survey, research, and manage Maine's most vulnerable fish and wildlife species and habitats. Maine's current 2015-2025 State Action Plan is available at maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/wildlife-action-plan/index.html

The Department continues efforts to better understand factors influencing our big game species populations, habitats and management and includes projects such as, monitoring deer to better understand winter mortality rates, implementation of an adaptive hunting unit, field work within WMDs to investigate increased hunting effort and harvest impacts of survival and reproductive success, development of increased public education and awareness of living with black bears, and understanding the use and applicability of a self-registration system for our wild turkeys. To get more information about research and management activities involving our game species, see **Appendix F**.

Management of small game, such as snowshoe hare, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and waterfowl, is generally limited to regulating season and daily bag limits within the framework of Maine's Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Laws, focusing on the maintenance of sustainable harvest levels. Ultimately, long-term population trends are being driven by the reversion of agricultural land to forest and by forest management practices and significant year-to-year natural fluctuations in the abundance of these species occur in response to weather conditions which affect survival and reproductive success. Nonetheless, Department staff continue to monitor small game species populations, protect and enhance habitat, and study the factors impacting populations. See **Appendix F** to find out more about these and other Department efforts managing small game species.

Furbearer populations are similarly affected by land use and the associated habitat qualities. Management is focused on six key goals, including maintaining healthy and abundant populations, maintaining a sustainable harvest, maintaining trapper interest and opportunities, increasing public awareness and understanding of furbearers, minimizing conflicts and conservation of other species. Fluctuating fur prices can have a significant impact on trapping effort and the abundance of individual species. In recent years, fur prices have been relatively low and species such as the raccoon and beaver have reached nuisance levels in many areas. The Department has started collecting additional biological information from some of our harvest furbearer species to better understand population demographics, distribution and abundance. Cooperative efforts, involving human-wildlife conflict management have been initiated to reduce the impact of beaver on private landowners. At the same time, programs designed to support the recovery of threatened or endangered species are working well to stabilize

factors that adversely affect and promote their recovery. For more information about our furbearer species, see **Appendix G**.

The Department manages a multitude of wildlife species that are not hunted or trapped, many of which are species of greatest conservation need. Department staff are heavily involved in a variety of projects to better understand factors that influence the management of these species as well. Examples of these projects include Community Science projects like the Maine Bird Atlas and Maine Amphibian and Reptile Atlas, surveys to understand the distribution of rare invertebrates, tracking bird migration with an automated telemetry antenna network, monitoring nesting biology of rare terns and plovers, and restoration of state-listed New England cottontails and peregrine falcons. To read more about the research and management activities involving our non-game and endangered wildlife species, see **Appendix F**.

Fisheries and Hatcheries Management

The recently developed 2021-2035 Fisheries Strategic Management Plan represents a culmination of several years of planning, coordination, and public engagement. The plan's goals and overall content were developed based on input received through a comprehensive angler survey, expertise and experience of Division staff, input from technical subcommittees, and a public review of the fully drafted plan. In addition, all work completed throughout this planning process was periodically reviewed and guided by a steering committee comprised of a diverse group of public stakeholders. For more information see **Appendix H**.

This plan will be in effect for 15 years (2021–2035) and will be integrated into the Division's work programs to support attainment of plan goals. These goals were developed based on the current status of sport fisheries and associated conservation and management needs and therefore may need to be revised and updated within the 15-year planning period in response to unanticipated changes or threats.

The plan is divided into three volumes, each reflecting a different goal of this new planning process and was written to be less technical and more palatable for public consumption to encourage increased understanding and awareness.

Volume I: Managing Maine's Inland Fisheries into the Future: Provides information about the strategic planning process and goals for the Division and hatchery operations. A reader can also find goals and strategies for featured sport fish including Arctic charr, baitfish and rainbow smelt, black bass, brook trout, lake whitefish, landlocked Atlantic salmon, nonnative trout (rainbow, brown trout, and splake), and togue.

Volume II: Fisheries and Hatcheries Division Structure and Operation: Provides information on the organization and operation of the Division, conservation and management of native fish, non-native species status and prevention strategies, data collection and analysis, the fishing regulation setting process, and more.

Volume III: Species Assessments: Provides life history, management, and current status and distribution of featured sport fish.

Regional Fisheries work plans are developed annually to reflect a balance of local fishery management concerns and statewide priorities; the later highlighted in more detail within the Strategic Fisheries Management Plan. Fisheries policies and standard operating procedures are being updated and developed to create consistency in

work programs and to support succession planning associated with anticipated retirements. The new Strategic Fisheries Plan is in the early stages of implementation, including development of a system to track accomplished actions and delegate new actions.

In 2014, the Department within [Title 12 MRSA §12461](#) was required to establish the State Heritage Fish Waters List which identified waters throughout Maine containing self-sustaining populations of brook trout and Arctic Char which had not been stocked in at least 25 years. The Legislature accepted this list which totaled 550 waters and applied the following restrictions; 1) The Commissioner may not stock or issue a permit to stock fish in a lake or pond listed as a State Heritage Fish water; 2) A person may not use live fish as bait or possess live fish to be used as bait on a lake or pond listed as a State Heritage Fish water. A tracking database and nomination form was more recently developed to support a consistent process of designating State Heritage Fish Waters. With completion of rulemaking for the 2023 fishing law book, there are currently 582 State Heritage Fish Waters.

Another important component of the Department's fisheries management program involves the culture and stocking of over 1 million trout, salmon, and togue annually in over 700 waters. These fish supplement natural reproduction and are vital to sustaining the availability of these sport fish to the angler. In order to improve the program, new strains of brook trout, brown trout, and lake trout have been developed. The development of these brood stocks, coupled with continuously improved stocking techniques, should continue to increase the survival of stocked fish.

Antiquated and deteriorating fish culture infrastructure has necessitated several expensive capital infrastructure replacement projects, including wholesale replacement of water intake lines at Grand Lake Steam and Casco, and a partial replacement at Embden. 19.6 million dollars were recently secured under the America Rescue Plan to replace very antiquated and dilapidated fish rearing facilities at New Gloucester with a new modern tank farm, add a tank line section to Grand Lake Stream to manage biosecurity threats, and develop design plans to improve hatchery effluent treatment systems to meet MDEP's Wastewater Discharge Licenses. In addition, infrastructure needs at other fish culture facilities are being assessed, prioritized, and constructed or replaced as funding allows. The opportunity to locate a site for a new potential fish culture facility is being explored by an outside partner. For more information regarding the Fisheries Strategic Plan, see **Appendix H**.

Sport Shooting and Shooting Range Access and Enhancement

Within the State of Maine there continues to be an unmet need for safe, user-friendly, and accessible places for the public to develop and improve skills in the safe use and responsible handling of firearms and archery equipment. Rod and gun club ranges and other ranges are currently facing many challenges to their continued existence in urban and suburban communities. Range managers must address these factors or face the possibility of losing the ability to continue operations.

This program has been in place since 2012 and has increased public access to shooting facilities across Maine. To date, this program has helped fund 36 separate projects for 19 different clubs or municipalities to increase safety, reduce the environmental effects of both lead and noise, and increase public access. We have engaged with 29 private ranges and developed a range locator map to direct Maine's public to an appropriate facility meeting their needs, as well as improved the Department webpages to better guide new shooters in the use of public and private shooting facilities.

The Departmental owned and managed range in Augusta, known as “The Summerhaven Shooting Facility”, was modernized in 2018 and boasts a state-of-the-art concrete baffle system designed to redirect noise and contain projectiles. This facility is free for the public to use when a certified range safety officer is present, which averages about 260 days each year, accommodating over 2,700 users annually. Additionally, we have delivered 45 “next-step” workshops at this facility providing participants of all experience levels, a hands-on experiential learning environment, resulting in a user that has a greater understanding, comfort and confidence in the safe and responsible use of firearms and archery equipment.

Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks

The Department has been participating in interagency meetings and actively participating in new initiatives to understand the effects of per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the environment and its presence in fish and wildlife that are consumed by the public. Research is being directed to assess and understand PFAS assimilation in fish and wildlife. The MDIFW is also coordinating with Maine CDC in the development of consumption advisories, as well as approaches to assessing presence in fish and wildlife resources. This work is being funded with special dedicated general funds to reduce the threat of PFAS to persons who consume fish and wildlife. The Maine Center for Disease Control, the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife work to develop appropriate fish and wildlife consumption advisories and this information is transferred to the media and appropriate target groups through a coordinated network of agency public communication specialists.

Wild Animal Related Human Health Risks

The Department has been participating in interagency initiatives to reduce the threat to human health from Rabies and Lyme disease. The inter-agency Rabies Work Group is chaired by the State Epidemiologist and includes representatives from many state agencies and municipal authorities. The committee has established protocols and procedures regarding the response to rabies epidemics and identified areas which need to be addressed and resolved. The Department has also been coordinating the pre-exposure immunization of Department staff and other high-risk groups such as ADC cooperators, trappers, and municipal animal control officers. The Department has cooperated with the Maine Medical Center to explore ways of minimizing the impact of Lyme Disease by controlling the deer population. The Department has also been disseminating information regarding the disease and preventative measures.

Wildlife motor vehicle collisions moose and deer motor vehicle collision records are compiled for both population trend assessment and accident prevention planning. Department staff work with regional DOT staff to identify high risk areas and take appropriate actions. Areas with high deer populations due to firearm discharge ordinances are being identified and proposals developed for special hunting seasons. Expanded archery opportunities and bonus antlerless deer permits now exist in many of these communities to help control the deer population.

Public Access to Public Waters

Public waters with important fisheries values that have no legal public access, likely to lose existing public access, or with inadequate public access are identified and prioritized. Opportunities to obtain public access to these waters are aggressively explored. Candidate sites are assessed, and appropriate sites acquired. Since 2018, 14 new water access properties were acquired (see full list below), and one other is pending at the time of this report. Over the same period six new water access facilities were constructed, and 7 were reconstructed. Additional

projects include a parking lot expansion project (St. John River, Grand Isle 2021) and a significant storm repair at another (Mere Point, Brunswick 2023). MDIFW currently owns and operates 174 water access facilities. Specific projects are listed below:

Water Access Acquisitions

- Mattawamkeag River (Haynesville) 2022
- Allen Pond (Greene) 2022
- Saco River (Cornish) 2022
- Joy Bay (Gouldsboro) 2022
- Songo Pond (Albany TWP/Bethel) 2021
- Salt Pond (Blue Hill) 2021
- Nadeau Pond (Fort Fairfield) 2020
- Mercer Bog (Mercer) 2020
- Bald Mountain Pond (Bald Mountain TWP) 2020
- Hancock Pond (Bucksport) 2020
- Penobscot River (Verona Island) 2019
- St. John River (St. Francis) 2019
- Annabessacook Lake (Winthrop) 2019
- Monson Pond (Fort Fairfield) 2018

Water Access New Construction

- Annabessacook Lake (Winthrop) 2022
- Togus Pond (Augusta) 2021
- Hancock Pond (Embden) 2021
- Sandy Pond (Embden) 2020
- Beech Pond (Palermo) 2018
- Lily Pond (New Gloucester) 2018

Water Access Reconstructions

- Long Pond (Jefferson) 2023
- Onawa Lake (Elliotsville TWP) 2021
- Pemaquid Pond (Nobelboro) 2019
- Damariscotta Lake (Jefferson) 2019
- Square Pond (Acton) 2018
- Mousam Lake (Shapleigh) 2018
- Schoodic Lake (Lake View PLT) 2018

Acquisition and Management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

The Department currently owns approximately 130,000 acres of upland, inland wetland, coastal salt marsh, riparian strips along major rivers, and over 250 coastal islands. Since 2015, MDIFW acquired 19,222 acres of land to add to its Wildlife Management Area system. These lands provide habitat management opportunities for Maine's common species, protections for rare species and habitats and increased public access opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife watching and more. Additionally, since 2015, MDIFW worked with partner organizations to facilitate the funding and conservation of an additional 40,063 acres of important wildlife habitat across the state through the acquisition of conservation easements. Recent acquisitions have been made possible through the Land for Maine's Future Fund, National Wetlands Conservation Act Funds, Federal Coastal Wetlands Grants, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants, Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration, Outdoor Heritage Fund, Duck Stamps, and contributions from partnering organizations.

Conservation of deer habitat has been a long-standing legislative priority in Maine, and many years of effort to improve deer populations in northern, eastern and western Maine culminated into the passage of Public Law 2021 Chapter 409 (L.D. 404) "An Act to Preserve Deer Habitat" which was passed by the 130th Maine State Legislature. Public Law 2021 Chapter 409 provided preferential consideration by the Land for Maine's Future Program for projects that conserve deer habitat in northern, eastern, and western Maine and are managed by MDIFW. In 2023, MDIFW closed on the first four land acquisition projects focused on deer habitat conservation and management. These parcels together totaled 9,350 acres and included the 6,300-acre Molunkus Stream Wildlife Management Area property, the largest single acquisition completed by the Department to date.

In 2024, MDIFW will have completed an updated strategic land conservation plan to identify current and future land acquisition priorities. The acquisition and management of land is one of the most significant activities undertaken by the Department as it secures high quality habitats for Maine's fish and wildlife and people in perpetuity.

Alternate Delivery of Service and Efficiency Efforts

Efficiencies Implemented by Bureau of Resource Management include:

- Online publishing of information - trapping, management reports, lynx information, updated webpage content for human-wildlife conflict, species information, community science projects, sport shooting and shooting ranges.
- Statewide plan (Maine Wildlife Action Plan) with extensive public input that prioritizes species management activities for all Maine fish and wildlife.
- Development of several online tools for anglers to support increased reliance of digital solutions for information needs, while reducing printed material and associated costs.
- Environmental permitting streamlined by putting all environmental data on the web - allowing towns, consultants, applicants to search the area of their project to determine whether there are fish and wildlife issues.
- Reorganization of the Resource Assessment Section within the Wildlife Division to create a Nongame Endangered Wildlife Section and a Game Research and Management Section to better address the administration of these programs including the oversight of the federal grants and development of laws, rules and policies in these sections.
- Development of a Habitat Conservation Section under the Bureau of Resource Management that will coordinate the Land Acquisition, Environmental Review, Data Analysis and Mapping, and Beginning with

Habitat programs to conserve habitat more effectively within Maine. The Beginning with Habitat Program was expanded to incorporate climate change work and Private Lands Assistance.

- Removal of the requirement to obtain a baitfish harvest permit from the Department to harvest baitfish in waters closed to fishing during part of the fishing season.
- Development of online lotteries for moose and antlerless deer permits, thereby eliminating one data entry position due to less paper data entry.
- Continued investments in round tank systems at fish culture facilities to make fish rearing more efficient - less energy, less water, less effluent issues.
- Development of a web-based registration system for the reporting of big game harvest and implementation of this across the state at private certified registration stations.
- Development of a “real-time” dashboard that displays the current big game registration harvest by WMD for both staff and public inquiry.
- Development of several online fishing regulation tools; these digital tools provide the public with the opportunity to sort for different water bodies and to improve understanding of fishing laws without having to engage with agency staff.
- In combination with warden service, initiation of the Wildlife Conflict Agent (WCA) program to help provide information on the prevention and management of human-wildlife conflicts.
- Developed an internal web-based reporting system to document calls for service regarding human-wildlife conflicts.
- Increased efforts through the Beginning With Habitat Program and private lands assistance to increase the amount of privately owned land managed for the benefit of the fisheries and wildlife resources of the state.
- Continued work on a self-funded lands management program with the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service to better manage IF&W lands for habitat and public use - funded with sales of wood products from MDIFW lands. The Department added two full-time forester positions in 2023 to assist in the management of MDIFW lands.

Emerging Issues

Several emerging issues have warranted the creation of new positions to support needed capacity in new or developing disciplines. Some of these emerging areas include wind power, solar power, climate change, fish and wildlife consumption human health risks (e.g., PFAS), and Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) threats. The Department continues to struggle to obtain sufficient funding to support the expectations of Maine’s public that benefits from the conservation of fish and wildlife. In response to the strong demand for wildlife related activities and particularly because of the significant economic contribution of those activities to the state’s economy, Maine needs to provide greater financial support for wildlife programs. We need a commitment to an investment from a broad-based revenue source in our fish and wildlife industry, to keep it strong and competitive with other states through marketing and exemplary programs, and to provide continued public understanding, appreciation, and access to fish and wildlife for future generations.

Aquatic Invasive Species Threats

AIS is identified as one of the leading threats to conserving our native fish and aquatic wildlife in both the new Strategic Fisheries Management Plan and the State Wildlife Action Plan. Invasive aquatic fish and wildlife threats adversely impact the ecology of our waters creating less favorable conditions for our native fish and wildlife and

may even cause their extirpation. Some AIS threats that are either present or close to Maine include zebra mussels, spiny water fleas, black bass, mudpuppies, muskellunge, northern pike, as well as a variety of fish diseases and parasites. The need for dedicated capacity and a comprehensive focus on AIS threats was identified in the Fisheries Plan and a dedicated position was created to coordinate this growing area of concern. The position was just recently filled and will provide the following role:

- Serve as the point of contact on behalf of the Bureau of Resource Management in the coordination, collaboration, and response to invasive threats with a focus on fish and wildlife.
- Plan, coordinate, and implement statewide planning to manage existing and new threats.
- Coordinate the development of outreach to create public awareness and encourage responsible actions by the public.
- Coordinate development of surveillance monitoring programs and track statewide occurrences.
- Develop proactive awareness and response to regional threats not yet present in Maine.
- Prioritize and develop strategies to prevent spread and remediate existing instate threats.
- Manage the Fisheries Division Chemical Reclamation Program (staff certifications, training, equipment, permitting, planning, design, outreach, and coordination of reclamation projects).
- Coordinate with state and federal agencies, including the Department of Environmental Protection's Invasive Plant Program, to efficiently utilize and share available resources.

Recreational Shooting Ranges

The Department owns and manages a public shooting facility known as the "Fryeburg Shooting Range", located on the Major Gregory Sanborn (Brownfield Bog) Wildlife Management Area, in Fryeburg. Over the last several decades there has been an increase in ownership of firearms and participation in shooting sports activities, which has resulted in an increased demand for publicly available shooting facilities. Given this increased demand and use of state-owned ranges, it is important that the Fryeburg Shooting Facility is modernized, and the current infrastructure is upgraded to ensure the continued safe-use, security, environmental stewardship and educational opportunities for Maine's citizens and visitors.

Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

The State of Maine's continued investigation of and response to PFAS chemicals requires considerable time and resources. In addition to assessing PFAS exposure in wildlife and subsequent public health risk to hunters through game meat consumption, there is a growing interest in understanding the implications of PFAS on wildlife health. Multiple collaborations with academic partners at the University of Maine are being developed to assess PFAS exposure pathways in game species, exposure and health impacts in wood turtles, and the impact of PFAS on hunter behavior. Additionally, a need exists to review and develop wildlife disease surveillance and response plans, to ensure that MDIFW is in line with best practices for wildlife disease assessment and management. Updated plans for diseases such as chronic wasting disease, highly pathogenic avian influenza, *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*, and rabbit hemorrhagic disease would be beneficial.

Environmental Review

MDIFW's Environmental Review Program evaluates development proposals of statewide significance and identifies important wildlife, fisheries, and critical habitat resources that may be affected. We work with applicants, environmental consultants, conservation organizations, resource and regulatory agencies, on projects such as residential and commercial development, transportation infrastructure, aquaculture, hydropower, electrical transmission, solar energy, land-based and offshore wind energy, and more. MDIFW supports the development of renewable energy projects by identifying important natural resources, as well as methods to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts to them. MDIFW serves in an advisory capacity, providing recommendations pursuant to the environmental permitting programs of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, the Maine Land Use Planning Commission, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and municipal regulatory programs. MDIFW's Environmental Review Program has developed guidance documents for renewable energy projects to proactively inform consultants and applicants on important natural resources and recommended strategies in project siting, design, and operation. In 2023, MDIFW developed an Environmental Review Resource Map Tool to provide public access to information on resources including Rare, Threatened, and Endangered species and habitats, Essential and Significant Wildlife Habitats, and other important resources relevant to environmental consultations.

Climate

MDIFW continues to participate in the update and implementation of Maine Won't Wait, the Governor's Climate Action Plan, originally completed in 2020. Over the coming year, MDIFW will participate in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Natural and Working Lands Subcommittee to update climate science and address identified action items including increasing carbon storage and increasing the total acreage of conserved lands in the state to 30%.

Intra-Agency Program Coordination

| Program | Program Coordination | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | Warden Service | Resource Mgmt. | Info. & Educ. | Commissioner's Office |
| Fish and Wildlife Management & Enforcement | X | X | X | X |
| Hunting Safety | X | X | X | X |
| Recreational Vehicle Safety & Enforcement | X | | X | X |
| Search and Rescue | X | | X | X |
| Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks | | X | X | X |
| Wild Animal Related Human Health Risks | X | X | X | X |
| Public Access to Private Lands | X | X | X | X |
| Public Access to Public Waters | | X | X | X |
| Habitat Acquisition and Management | | X | X | X |
| Department Operations | X | X | X | X |

State Agency Program Coordination

| Program | Program Coordination | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| | DEP | ACF | DMR | DOT | DHHS | MEMA |
| Fish and Wildlife Management & Enforcement | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Hunting Safety | | X | | | | |
| Recreational Vehicle Safety & Enforcement | | X | | X | | |
| Search and Rescue | | X | X | | | |
| Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks | | X | | | X | |
| Wild Animal Related Human Health Risks | | X | | | X | |
| Public Access to Private Lands | | X | | | | |
| Public Access to Public Waters | X | X | X | | | |
| Habitat Acquisition and Management | | X | | | | |

Key

DEP – Department of Environmental Protection

ACF – Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

DMR – Department of Marine Resources

DOT – Department of Transportation

DHHS – Department of Health and Human Services

MEMA – Maine Emergency Management Agency (bureau of the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management)

Federal Agency Program Coordination

| Program | Program Coordination | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|-----|-------|------|-------|------|-----|-----|
| | USCG | DOD | USFWS | NOAA | APHIS | NRCS | DHS | NPS |
| Fish and Wildlife Mgt. & Enforcement | | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Hunting Safety | | | X | | | | | |
| Rec. Vehicle Safety & Enforcement | X | | | | | | | |
| Search and Rescue | X | | | | | | X | |
| Fish and Wildlife Consumption Health Risks | | | X | | | | | |
| Wild Animal Related Human Health Risks | | | X | | X | | | |
| Public Access to Private Lands | | | X | | | | | |
| Public Access to Public Waters | | | X | | | | | |
| Habitat Acquisition and Management | | | X | | X | | | |

Key

USCG – United States Coast Guard

DOD – United States Department of Defense

USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

APHIS – United States Department of Agriculture (Animal and Plant Inspection Service)

NRCS – United States Department of Agriculture (Natural Resources Conservation Service)

DHS – Department of Homeland Security

NPS – National Park Service

Agenda of Proposed Regulations

The following section provides a list of every rule chapter the Department currently has and that may also have amendments for any given year. For each rule chapter, an explanation of statutory authority, purpose, parties that may be impacted, and anticipated schedule are provided.

DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE (09-137)

OCTOBER 1, 2023 – SEPTEMBER 31, 2024

AGENCY UMBRELLA-UNIT NUMBER: 09-137

AGENCY NAME: DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

AGENCY CONTACT: Becky Orff, Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, Commissioner’s Office, #41 State House Station, 353 Water Street, Augusta, ME 04333-0041; telephone: 207-287-5202.

INTENT: It is the intent of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to adopt and amend reasonable regulations as necessary to ensure that all species of inland fish and wildlife are perpetuated to be used now and for the foreseeable future; and also to repeal regulations that are deemed no longer necessary for the protection, enhancement and continued use of these resources.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA, Section 10104, subsection 1 states: “The Commissioner may, with the advice and consent of the Advisory Council and in conformity with the Administrative Procedures Act, Title 5, Part 18, and except as otherwise provided, adopt, amend and repeal reasonable regulations, including emergency rules, necessary for the proper administration, implementation, enforcement and interpretation of any provision of law that the commissioner is charged with the duty of administering. These rules duly adopted have the full force and effect of law and are effective upon filing with the Secretary of State unless a later date is required by statute or specified in the rule.” The provisions of the law that the Commissioner is charged with the duty of administering are Part 13 of Title 12 MRSA Chapters 901 to 941.

PURPOSE OF THE REGULATIONS: The purpose of any proposed regulation regarding fish and wildlife is to provide for the fullest level of use of the resource without adversely affecting species distribution and abundance. In order to have an organized and systematic way of accomplishing this goal, Species Management Plans were developed, and updated at five-year intervals, for all major fish and wildlife species or species groups. All proposed regulation changes will be based on the adopted goals and objectives for a particular species or species group. Species management goals and objectives are developed with input from representatives of the public from various geographic areas of the state, biological staff and members of Warden Service, and are presented to the Commissioner and the Advisory Council for adoption. Regulations regarding recreational vehicle use are adopted to provide for the use, to the fullest extent possible, of such vehicles (watercraft, airmobiles, snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles), without adversely affecting the resource and the safety and welfare of persons and property; and administrative regulations are promulgated for the purpose of setting forth reasonable criteria for the proper licensing, registering and tagging, and training requirements specified by law for the safety and welfare of the resource and citizens of the State.

POTENTIALLY BENEFITED PARTIES:

General public - residents and non-residents
The hunting, fishing, and trapping public
Sporting camp operators and others offering meals and lodging
Sportsmen's organizations
The boating and recreational vehicle owners and dealers
Private property owners
Commercial forest landowners
Landowners and land users

EMERGENCY RULES ADOPTED SINCE LAST AGENDA:

The Department did not adopt any emergency rules since the last agenda.

EXPECTED 2023-2024 RULE-MAKING ACTIVITY:

EMERGENCY RULES: As necessary.

CHAPTER 1 -- OPEN WATER AND ICE FISHING REGULATIONS:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12452

PURPOSE: To provide for season dates, daily bag and possession limits, size limits, etc. for open water and ice fishing.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Fishing regulations are promulgated and published on an annual basis January 1 – Dec. 31: Ice Fishing and Open Water: July (or as necessary).

CHAPTER 1-A – STATE HERITAGE FISH WATERS:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12461

PURPOSE: To maintain a list of waters identified as eastern brook trout waters and arctic charr waters that have never been stocked or not stocked for at least 25 years according to any reliable records and provide special protections to those waters in an effort to preserve those fish species.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: In conjunction with Chapter 1 Ice Fishing and Open Water Regulations: July (or as necessary).

CHAPTER 2 -- RULES PERTAINING TO FISHING DERBIES AND TOURNAMENTS:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12504, 12505

PURPOSE: Establish application procedures, restrictions, and requirements for fishing derbies and tournaments.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 2 -- RULES PERTAINING TO FISHERY MANAGEMENT AND FISH CULTURE:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12751, 12754

PURPOSE: Designate waters for use in fish culture and scientific research; establish rules for the taking of alewives, eels, suckers and yellow perch and regulations pertaining to commercially grown or imported fish.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Throughout the year as necessary.

CHAPTER 3 – PUBLIC INTERACTION AND CONFLICTS WITH WILDLIFE (FEEDING OF DEER)

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Section 10105, sub-§14

PURPOSE: To regulate the feeding of deer, bear, moose and wild turkey in order to minimize potential public safety hazards or detrimental effects on specific species as well as minimize the risk of chronic wasting disease.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 4 -- FALCONRY:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS Section 11159.

PURPOSE: General provisions to practice falconry in Maine.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 5 -- REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO THE USE OF STATE-OWNED WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12701

PURPOSE: Establish regulations regarding hunting, fishing, trapping or other public uses of any wildlife management area, sanctuary, or Department owned or maintained sites provided public access to inland or coastal waters.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 5.03 – SHOOTING RANGES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS Section 10104, 12701

PURPOSE: Establishing rules for Department owned shooting ranges to set clear expectation of behavior for the public and provide a mechanism for law enforcement to deal with users that display disrespectful or potentially dangerous behavior at ranges.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary

CHAPTER 5.04 – STATE-OWNED BOAT LAUNCH FACILITY SITES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS Section 10104, 12701

PURPOSE: To provide the Department and public clear guidance on how water access facilities can be utilized.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 6 – EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC COLLECTION PERMIT RULES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12704

PURPOSE: To establish an application process for permitting the collection of fish and or wildlife for scientific purposes as well as reporting requirements, restrictions, etc.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary

CHAPTER 7 -- RULES FOR IMPORTATION, POSSESSION, PROPAGATION, REHABILITATION AND EXHIBITION OF WILDLIFE:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12152.

PURPOSE: To ensure that all wildlife possessed under the following permits receive humane treatment and property husbandry and security and to safeguard the interests of the wildlife and citizens of the State. Wildlife

Exhibit Regulations: Food and water requirements; health conditions, safety, comfort, sanitation, etc.

Propagator's permit: Possession, care and use.

Wildlife Rehabilitation: Food and shelter requirements, disposition of rehabilitated animals, inspections, etc.

Wildlife Importation: Permitting standards, criteria, application process.

General Possession: Wolf hybrids in captivity.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary

CHAPTER 8 -- ENDANGERED SPECIES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12802

PURPOSE: Qualifications for consideration for listing species as endangered or threatened; review of listed species; designation of habitat as essential for those species designation criteria, protection guidelines, etc.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Every 4 years or as necessary. Last filing was with 131st Legislature (2023). Next filing required in 2027.

CHAPTER 9 -- GENERAL SNOWMOBILE AND ATV (ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES) REGULATIONS:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104

PURPOSE: Establish display requirements for registration numbers and stickers, and content of snowmobile registration.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary

CHAPTER 10 -- SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE HABITAT:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12804

PURPOSE: Definitions of significant wildlife habitat as described in Title 38

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 11 -- PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF SPECTATORS AT SNOWMOBILE RACES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 13112

PURPOSE: Permitting of snowmobiles to be operated at a prearranged racing meet whose sponsor has obtained a permit to hold such a meet from the commissioner.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 12 -- ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE PLATES AND RENEWAL STICKERS:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 13156

PURPOSE: Registration, safety, etc.; registration agents.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 13 -- WATERCRAFT RULES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 13051

PURPOSE: Establish, registration procedures; accident reporting requirements; safety equipment on motorboats and other watercraft; water-skiing restrictions and operation rules between watercraft on internal waters.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 13.08 -- WATERCRAFT RULES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Horsepower limitations on various bodies of water are governed by 12 MRSA, Section 13051, subsection 5

PURPOSE: Establish horsepower limitations to ensure the safety of persons and property (may be adopted only as a result of a petition from 25 citizens or the municipal officers of the towns/county commissioners of unorganized townships in which the waters are located).

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Considered throughout the year as petitions are received- effective date to coincide with publication of the open water fishing regulations, if possible.

CHAPTER 14 -- COMMERCIAL WHITEWATER RAFTING:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12909, 12910, 12913

PURPOSE: Establish regulations for whitewater personnel requirements; safety equipment requirements; craft specifications; allocations and order of launch.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 15 – INTERSTATE WILDLIFE VIOLATIONS COMPACT:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA §10103(2).

PURPOSE: The commissioner is authorized to enter into an interstate wildlife violator compact to promote compliance with the laws, regulations and rules that relate to the management of wildlife resources in the respective member states and may adopt rules necessary to implement certain provisions of the compact. Pursuant to this rule, the commissioner exercises this statutory authority and enters into the Wildlife Violators Compact on behalf of the State of Maine with any and all states legally joining therein in accordance with its terms.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 16 – HUNTING

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA §10104, VARIOUS.

PURPOSE: To ensure proper management of Maine’s wildlife species through set season dates, bag limits and methods of harvest.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Throughout the year as necessary.

CHAPTER 16.07 – DEER HUNTING (ANTLERLESS DEER PERMIT ALLOCATIONS)

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS §10104, 11152

PURPOSE: Antlerless deer permit numbers are adjusted by MDIFW on an annual basis by department biologists who consider deer harvest levels, biological metrics and indices, and estimates of winter severity when evaluating the status of the deer population within each wildlife management district (WMD). Antlerless deer permit recommendations are based on removal rates of adult does that will stabilize, increase, or decrease deer densities.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: May-June

CHAPTER 16.08 - MOOSE HUNTING (PERMIT ALLOCATIONS)

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS §11551, 11552

PURPOSE: Moose permit areas and numbers are adjusted on an annual basis in response to moose population estimates and population goals in each Wildlife Management District (WMD).

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: April

CHAPTER 16.11 – MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS §10104, 11855

PURPOSE: To implement the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act which establishes the general guidelines within which the States are permitted to regulate the hunting of migratory game birds.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: February

CHAPTER 17 – TRAPPING

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA §10104,12251.

PURPOSE: To ensure proper management of Maine’s wildlife species through set season dates, bag limits and methods of harvest.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Throughout the year as necessary.

CHAPTER 17.06 – BEAVER TRAPPING

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA §10104,12251.

PURPOSE: To make annual adjustments to the areas where beaver trapping is opened or prohibited to manage beavers and beaver conflicts on a local scale.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: May.

CHAPTER 18 -- STATE GAME FARM (MAINE WILDLIFE PARK):

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104

PURPOSE: Establish restrictions on the use of the area designated as "state game farm", also known as "The Maine Wildlife Park".

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 19 -- OPERATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES ON PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Section 10104 and 22 MRSA Section 2649

PURPOSE: Restrict motor vehicles on the ice on public water supplies.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As petitioned.

CHAPTER 20 – TAXIDERMY LICENSE:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12952

PURPOSE: Establish license classifications, eligibility, examinations and restrictions.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 21 – LICENSING AND REGISTRATION AGENTS:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 10801

PURPOSE: Appointment of agents, application form and issuance, selection and operation standards, reporting requirements, etc.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 23 – YOUTH CAMP TRIP LEADER PERMITS AND JUNIOR MAINE GUIDE PROGRAM:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12860

PURPOSE: Application procedures, etc.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Throughout the year as necessary.

CHAPTER 24 -- LICENSED GUIDES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104, 12851

PURPOSE: Establish prerequisites for applicants to be examined for guide's licenses; establish classifications; examination process, standards of competency, etc.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Throughout the year as necessary.

CHAPTER 25 -- LEASHED TRACKING DOG PERMIT RULES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 10104

PURPOSE: Eligibility, testing, etc.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Throughout the year as necessary.

CHAPTER 26 – COMMERCIAL WILDLIFE PERMIT FOR AMPHIBIANS OR NONMARINE INVERTIBRATES:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Sections 12159 and 12161

PURPOSE: To regulate the commercial harvest of amphibians and nonmarine invertebrates. Persons interested in collecting these species from the wild for the purposes of export, sale or commercial purposes are required to obtain a permit from the Commissioner.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 27 – ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL AGENT CERTIFICATE:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS Sections 10104, 10053

PURPOSE: Rules for certification and standards of operation for individuals that become permitted under the Commissioner to assist the Department for the control of coyotes and other nuisance wildlife that exceeds normal funding and staffing levels within the Department.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 28 – EDUCATIONAL TRIP LEADER RULES

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS Sections 10104, 12863

PURPOSE: As a result of LD 1474 - An Act To Promote Outdoor Recreational Opportunities for Maine Students, the Department enacted rules to develop an educational trip leader advisory committee, application process and standards for permit revocation, suspension or denial.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 29 – SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRS Sections 10105, 12152

PURPOSE: Establish criteria for determining when a species of fish or wildlife that is not an endangered species or a threatened species is of special concern including a category for species that are rare.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: As necessary.

CHAPTER 25 (09-585) -- MAINE OUTDOOR HERITAGE FUND BOARD:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 12 MRSA Section 10301

PURPOSE: Schedule for grants; strategic plan, etc.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE: Throughout the year as necessary.

MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS: Other regulations necessary for the proper administration, implementation, enforcement and interpretation of 12 MRS, Chapters 901 to 941 - Throughout the year as necessary.

Compliance with Federal and State Health and Safety Laws

The Department has adopted policies regarding compliance with Federal and State health and safety laws. These policies are included in **Appendix B**.

Public Filings

List of reports that are required to be filed by the public with the Department:

Animal Damage Control agents; [Title 12 Section 10105](#); Rules 09-137 Chapter 27; monthly activity reports required, expect up to 174 monthly in 2023 if an agent is active.

Commercial Amphibian Permit; [Title 12 Section 12159](#); Rules 09-137 Chapter 26.06; annual report required, 3 for 2021 and 2022, 1 anticipated in 2023.

Commercial Nonmarine Invertebrate Permit; [Title 12 Section 12161](#); Rules 09-137 Chapter 26.06; annual report required, 3 for 2021 and 2022, 1 anticipated in 2023.

Commercial Whitewater Outfitter's License; [Title 12 Section 12907 and 12913 \(5\)](#); Rules 09-137 Chapter 14.06 (F); annual report required on river use for allocated and unallocated days, 19 Commercial Outfitter's submitted a total of 35 reports for 2022, 35 anticipated in 2023. Safety report required to be filed when accidents resulting in injury, death or property damage to the watercraft or other property in excess of \$1,000.00 occur. Five safety reports were filed in 2022.

Eel, Sucker, Lamprey and Yellow Perch Permits; [Title 12, Section 12152](#); Rules 09-137 Chapter 2; annual harvest report required; 1 for eel pots, 22 for sucker, 0 for lamprey, none for perch for the 2021-2022 reporting period (2022-2023 reporting period pending).

Hide Dealers License; [Title 12, Section 12954](#); annual report required of activity; licenses issued: 52 - 2021, 53 - 2022, 53 anticipated in 2023.

Scientific Collectors Permit; [Title 12, Section 12152](#); Rules 09-137 Chapter 6; annual report required; 2022 Fisheries – 38 Wildlife – 17; 2023 Fisheries – 42 Wildlife – 44.

Smelt & Baitfish Wholesaler; [Title 12, Section 12551](#); annual harvest report required, 197 Baitfish wholesale and 97 smelt wholesale.

Snowshoe Hare Trapping Permit for Beagle Clubs; [Title 12, Section 12261](#); annual report required of trapped cottontail rabbits, 23 permits issued for 2021 and 22 for 2022, 23 anticipated in 2023.

Taxidermist License; [Title 12, Section 12952](#); Rules 09-137 Chapter 20.06, annual report required; 153 for 2021, 164 for 2022, 164 anticipated in 2023.

Wildlife Rehabilitation; [Title 12, section 12152](#); Rules 09-137 Chapter 7.07 annual activity report required; 30 anticipated permits in 2023.

Protection of Personal Information

The Department collects personal information as part of license, registration and lottery applications and law enforcement activities. This information is protected by statute and policy. Social security numbers are protected by Title 1 M.R.S.A. and law enforcement information is protected by Title 5 and Title 16 M.R.S.A. The Department also has a Freedom of Information Policy (see **Appendix I. MDIFW Freedom of Information Policy**) that establishes consistent response criteria for requests for records the Department maintains. This policy and statute make it clear what records or information must be kept confidential and what cannot be released to the public. [Title 12 §10110](#) states that the commissioner shall allow an applicant for a hunting or fishing license to indicate that the applicant's e-mail address is confidential. If a person indicates that the person's e-mail address submitted as part of the application process for a hunting or fishing license is confidential as provided in subsection 1, that information is confidential. The exception to this law is that these emails are not confidential to department personnel or law enforcement officers or for purposes of court proceedings.

Other Information Requested by the MDIFW Legislative Committee

Summary on the Advisory Board for Licensing of Taxidermists

Enabling Legislation and Function

The Department is responsible for the testing and licensing of taxidermists and is required to have an advisory board to oversee this process. The board is established within [Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 23-A](#) and the Department's authority for testing and licensing of taxidermists are found within [Title 12, Section 10155](#). The primary responsibilities and powers of this advisory board includes the responsibility and authority to advise Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, review policies and procedures, and make recommendations to the Legislature or the Governor.

Members of the board must be residents of the State. The board consists of the following 4 members: Two employees of the Department, appointed by the commissioner, one of whom may be a retired employee who has experience in taxidermy; and two licensed taxidermists with expertise in the art of taxidermy, appointed by the Governor. The Bureau of Warden Service has a warden that oversees the taxidermy program and board. The term of office for members of the board is 3 years. The Department provides staff assistance as necessary. The board advises the commissioner regarding investigation of all complaints to the Department related to fraud, deceit, gross negligence, incompetency or misconduct against any licensed taxidermist. The complaint must be in writing, be sworn to by the person making it and filed with the Department. The Board also oversees permitted activities of licenses taxidermists, record keeping, record inspection, competency standards and rules related to taxidermy. The Board assists with the development and conduct of examinations.

All members of the board except state employees are entitled to receive compensation as provided in Title 5, chapter 379. The commissioner has the authority to adopt rules to implement the provisions of this section which are contained within [MDIFW Rule Chapter 20 Taxidermy License](#). The process to become a licensed taxidermist is provided within: [Title 12 Section 12953](#)

Application, Licensing and Revenues

The Department processes approximately 15-20 applicants per year and the following provides a breakdown of the board's annual activities.

2016

Average hours for the clerk of the board: **40.0**

Number of meetings (board meeting or taxidermy testing): **3.0**

Average meeting hours: **10.0**

Board expenses: **\$581.92**

2017

Average hours for the clerk of the board: **50.0**

Number of meetings (board meeting or taxidermy testing): **3.0**

Average meeting hours: **7.0**

Board expenses: **\$571.78**

2018

Average hours for the clerk of the board: **80.0**
Number of meetings (board meeting or taxidermy testing): **5.0**
Average meeting hours: **21.0**
Board expenses: **\$497.00**

2019

Average hours for the clerk of the board: **30.0**
Number of meetings (board meeting or taxidermy testing): **8.0**
Average meeting hours: **27.0**
Board expenses: **\$537.60**

2020

Average hours for the clerk of the board: **30.0**
Number of meetings (board meeting or taxidermy testing): **10.0**
Average meeting hours: **25.0**
Board expenses: **\$457.00**

2021

Average hours for the clerk of the board: **18.0**
Number of meetings (board meeting or taxidermy testing): **8.0**
Average meeting hours: **27.0**
Board expenses: **\$762.40**

2022

Average hours for the clerk of the board: **23.0**
Number of meetings (board meeting or taxidermy testing): **12.0**
Average meeting hours: **30.0**
Board Expenses: **\$782.5**

2023

Average hours for the clerk of the board: **30.0**
Number of meetings (board meeting of taxidermy testing): **9.0**
Average meeting hours: **17.0**
Board expenses: **\$464.56**

Appendices

Appendix A. Constituencies and Agencies engaged by the Department

Appendix B. Organizational Chart

Appendix C. Administrative Policies

Appendix D. 10-Year Program Evaluation Financial Report

Appendix E. MDIFW Strategic Plan

Appendix F. MDIFW Big Game Management Plan

Appendix G. MDIFW Furbearer Management Plan

Appendix H. MDIFW 2021-2035 Statewide Fisheries and Hatcheries Management Plan

Appendix I. MDIFW Freedom of Information Policy