



# Moosehead Area Moose Hunting Season Working Group

Meeting #1



# Meeting Objectives

- Working group member introductions
- Shared understanding of the working group's role and responsibilities and the project structure and timeline
- Shared understanding of the context of the current discussion regarding moose hunting in the Moosehead area
- Expression of general sentiments, concerns, and questions regarding the prospect of opening portions of WMDs 8, 9, 14, and 17 to moose hunting during the September season

# Agenda



- 1:00-1:30 Welcome, introductions, member responsibilities, meeting norms, group goals & process
- 1:30-2:00 Background presentation on moose hunting season framework, Moose Management Plan, and prior public consultation efforts
- 2:00-2:30 Review of the 2026 moose hunting season rulemaking process and public comments received
- 2:30-3:30 Facilitated Discussion
- 3:30-3:45 Public Comments
- 3:45-4:00 Wrap-up and Next Steps

## Working Group's Purpose



MDIFW has created this group to gather information and perspectives on whether portions of Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) 8, 9, 14, and 17 could be opened to moose hunting in late September while minimizing conflicts with the Moosehead region's tourism industry and other recreational users.

# Group Format



Participants represent a range of perspectives related to moose hunting seasons in the Moosehead region, including:

- Large landowners
- Moose viewing guides
- Hospitality and tourism interests
- Municipal representatives
- Hunters

# Group Membership



1. Drew Wopat, Weyerhaeuser
2. Dennis Goulet, American Forest Management
3. Mike Roy, Town of Greenville
4. Richard Petrie, Town of Jackman
5. Aiden McIver, S & L Guide Service
6. Jeremy Hargreaves, Northeast Whitewater
7. Kristin Peet (or Steve Tatko), Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)
8. John Willard, The Birches Resort
9. Chris Richards, Maine Professional Guides Association
10. Justin Burritt, Northern Pride Lodge
11. Joe Kruze, Lake Parlin Lodge
12. Tennie Coleman, Maine Warden Service
13. Kevin Pelkey, Maine Warden Service



## MDIFW Staff & Advisory Council Members

- Eric Ward, Chair of MDIFW Advisory Council
- Nate Webb, Wildlife Director
- Bob Cordes, Deputy Wildlife Director
- Jen Vashon, Game Research and Management Section Supervisor
- Doug Kane, Regional Wildlife Biologist
- Scott McLellan, Asst. Regional Wildlife Biologist
- Lee Kantar, State Moose Biologist

# Introductions



Please share:

- Name
- Your organization and role



# Working Group Meeting Norms

- Engage in dialogue rather than debate
- Treat others with respect
- Be concise and aim to add, not echo
- Avoid interrupting and side conversations
- Listen with curiosity and an openness to learning and understanding
- Focus on issues and interests, not on positions or personalities
- When in doubt, ask for clarification
- Adopt a creative problem-solving orientation

# Working Group Goals & Process



- Inform MDIFW's evaluation of the potential for a late September moose hunting season in portions of the Moosehead region
- Engage in 2-3 facilitated discussions focused on balancing hunting opportunity with the needs of local communities, businesses, recreational users, and visitors
- Serve as the voice of your organization and constituency



## Background Info

- In January 2026, MDIFW proposed expanding the September moose hunting season to all remaining WMDs not currently open during that season, with no increase in permit numbers.
- Following public comment on the proposal, the Department chose not to move forward with opening WMDs 8, 9, 14, and 17 to September moose hunting **at that time**.
- The Department committed to conducting additional public consultation to determine whether opening a portion of this area was an acceptable compromise.



# Moose Management Plan 2017-2027

## Moose Management Goals

- Maintain a healthy, sustainable moose population while providing hunting and viewing opportunities
- Continue researching the relationships between moose, parasites, habitat condition, climate, and management
- Ensure public satisfaction with Maine's moose population and increase the public's understanding of moose biology, ecology, and management



# Moose Management Plan 2017-2027

## Moose Management Strategies (September Season)

- Expand the September season to additional WMDs by *splitting the annual permit allocation of antlered moose* to increase ability to call bulls and minimize conflicts between hunters (New; High Priority):
  - Open a September hunting season in WMDs 10, 11, 18, 27, and 28.
  - Engage stakeholders to gauge impact/feasibility of opening a Sept season in other WMDs 7-9, 12-14, 17.



# Considerations for a September Hunting Season

- Conflicts between hunters and other recreationalists
- Economic opportunity for area businesses
- Public and Hunter Safety
- Quality of hunting experience
- Harvest sustainability



## Central Question

Could opening portions of the Moosehead area to September moose hunting increase hunting opportunity and reduce hunter congestion and user conflicts by redistributing hunters across multiple weeks?

# Discussion Prompt #1



How would an extension of the moose hunting season into September impact your business/organization/constituency?

## Discussion Prompt #2



How might a September season affect the visitor experience and the local economy during peak fall tourism (September-November)?

## Discussion Prompt #3



What do you consider non-negotiable from the perspective of your business/organization/constituency?

# Next Steps



Please **mark your calendars** for Working Group Meetings #2 and #3:

- June 8, 1:00-4:00 pm
- June 25, 1:00-4:00 pm (if needed)

For next time, consider:

**What creative solutions or compromise approaches could help balance expanded hunting access with the interests of hunters, businesses, tourism operators, recreational users, and local residents?**