

MOOSEHEAD AREA MOOSE HUNTING SEASON WORKING GROUP

Meeting #1

NOTES

Date/Time: Wednesday, May 27, 1:00-4:00 pm

Location: Greenville Town Office, 10 Minden Street, Greenville

Participants

- Devin Fogarty, Weyerhaeuser
- Dennis Goulet, American Forest Management
- Mike Roy, Town of Greenville
- Richard Petrie, Town of Jackman
- Aiden McIver, S & L Guide Service
- Jeremy Hargreaves, Northeast Whitewater
- Kristin Peet, Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)
- Chris Richards, Maine Professional Guides Association
- Justin Burritt, Northern Pride Lodge
- Joe Kruze, Lake Parlin Lodge
- Tennie Coleman, Maine Warden Service
- Kevin Pelkey, Maine Warden Service

Other MDIFW Attendees

- Eric Ward, Chair, MDIFW Advisory Council
- Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director
- Bob Cordes, Deputy Wildlife Division 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 (via Teams)

Facilitator

Mary Budd, Starboard Leadership Consulting

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Opening

The meeting opened with a brief welcome and introductions of working group members and MDIFW staff in attendance. Mary presented the working group's purpose, the responsibilities of group members, meeting norms, and the group's goals and anticipated process as follows:

Meeting Norms

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

Group Goals and 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

To frame the group's discussion and promote shared understanding, Nate presented a summary of information concerning moose hunting in Maine and specifically in the Moosehead area.

Summary of Recent MDIFW Decisions

- In January 2026, MDIFW proposed expanding the September moose hunting season to all Wildlife Management Divisions (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 would be an acceptable compromise.

Moose Management Plan

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 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 September 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

Preliminary Comments

- Would a September season increase the risk of meat spoilage because of the warmer weather? Education/appropriate hunter preparation would be necessary to prevent.
- The Department has discussed other weeks later in the fall but decided against for various reasons, e.g., large bulls drop their antlers in late November and there would be increased risk of heavy snow trapping hunters in late fall
- Decision-makers should weigh heavily the pros and cons for landowners since all use is dependent on their allowance
- Earlier discussion on this topic was limited by the confines of the rule-making process; in that context, the Department could just listen to public input and not actively engage in developing alternative approaches

Facilitated Discussion

The facilitator presented the central question to be resolved through the working group’s process as follows:

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?

As a first step in resolving this question, participants actively engaged in discussion in response to three prompts. Following is a summary of participants' remarks.

Question 1 and 2: How would an extension of the moose hunting season into September impact your business/organization/constituency?

- For Northeast Whitewater, 25% of total sales happen in the three weeks we're discussing; a September season would negatively impact the moose-viewing industry
- Jackman outfitters, lodges, and the town at large would welcome a September season, anticipating a positive impact
- Lodge owners in WMD 8 and 9 have six days for 100% of moose hunting revenue and want another week
- Landowners are primarily concerned with maintaining land as working forest and maintaining openness to traditional public uses.
- September is fairly dry so if we could move 50% of moose permits to drier conditions in September, it would likely result in less road wear, which landowners would welcome
- There would be little objection to a September season in WMD 17, but need to consider the connection to WMD 14, which is solidly within the Moosehead Region
- Rockwood has a robust foliage/moose-viewing season, which would be negatively impacted by September moose hunting
- Many commercial entities have licenses that permit use of private roads but they want to preserve good relations with landowners
- Apart from those using outfitting services, etc., many camp owners and individual hunters would appreciate a September moose season

Question 2: How might a September season affect the visitor experience and the local economy during peak fall tourism (September-November)?

- A September season would increase hunting opportunities but the overall economic impact would be negative because of the decrease in moose-viewing opportunities
- The Moosehead Lake region has been marketing its tourism opportunities with the existing seasons for so long that a shift would be difficult and create confusion among consumers
- Jackman guide reports never having experienced conflict between hunters and moose-viewers
- Greenville guides believe it is disrespectful of viewers to intrude on hunters
- September season would increase vehicle traffic in weeks prior because of scouting activities and that's a time when fishing, bear-hunting, etc. converge
- In WMD 9, a September season would help with congestion and there is sufficient space for guiding and hunting to co-exist
- A September season would offer hunters an improved experience with less congestion and new opportunities

Question 3: What do you consider non-negotiable from the perspective of your business/organization/constituency?

- Do not open the whole region
- Some not in favor of moving the October season up a week

Other Comments

- WMD 9 offers a limited zone for moose hunting
- Changing WMD boundaries is possible but complicated
 - Would create confusion for users
 - Could be enforced
 - Would have to be based on hard geographic features
 - Could be communicated with permits and through hunter education
- Would there be a negative impact on the moose population? The perception is that the population has decreased since the Department has increased the number of tags. It's easiest to call moose during the September week, so people coming to WMD 9 (and 5-8) will see fewer moose. [Per Nate, the population is healthy in other districts where the September week is open.]

Public Comments

- Rockwood attracts lots of visitors in September, including moose viewers, wildlife photographers, and other non-hunters
- Moose viewing is optimal in fall foliage
- Lodge owners in WMD 17 would love a September hunt; separate 17 and 14
- The working group is missing representation from Bingham and the Forks
- The working group is missing representation from the hospitality industry
- An economic study should be conducted to collect firm data
- Greenville inn, restaurant and spa would be negatively impacted
- Don't be overly concerned with some people's aversion to hunting; seek to educate and collaborate and trust the Department's guidance
- The Forks would like to see zones split in WMD 8 and 9; need to define and carve out the Moosehead Region as a no-hunting zone
- The Maine Forest Service anticipates the September season would have a positive impact on water in the region

Wrap-up & Next Steps

Nate confirmed that meeting notes would be available to the public on MDIFW's website, and he will try as well to provide an electronic version of the map illustrating WMDs 8, 9, 14, and 17.

Attendees were reminded of the next meetings of the working group, June 8, 1:00-4:00 pm, and June 25, 1:00-4:00 pm (if needed), which will be held at the same location, 10 Minden Street, Greenville.

The working group was asked to consider in advance of the next meeting creative solutions or compromise approaches that could help balance expanded hunting access with the interests of hunters, businesses, tourism operators, recreational users, and local residents; and to come to that meeting with specific suggestions.