

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND NINETEEN

H.P. 28 - L.D. 27

An Act To Allow the Use of a Crossbow for a Limited Duration during the Archery Season on Deer and the Fall Season on Wild Turkey**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §10953, sub-§1, as amended by PL 2017, c. 85, §1, is further amended to read:

1. Species and seasons. A person may:

A. Hunt bear with a crossbow during the open season on bear as provided in section 11251;

B. Hunt wild turkey with a crossbow ~~in areas open to wild turkey hunting as established by rule in during the spring open season on hunting wild turkey established by the commissioner in accordance with rules adopted pursuant to section 11701, except that a person may not hunt wild turkey with a crossbow from October 1st until the first day of the open season established by the commissioner in the following year;~~

C. Hunt moose with a crossbow in areas of the State open to moose hunting during the open season on moose established by rule in section 11552, subsections 1 and 2 and according to the rules pertaining to moose hunting permits adopted by the commissioner for the protection of the moose resource under section 11551 and in accordance with the provisions of section 11601; ~~and~~

D. Hunt deer with a crossbow during the open firearm season on deer as provided in section 11401;

E. Notwithstanding the restriction in section 11403 to hunting with bow and arrow only, hunt deer with a crossbow during the 2020, 2021 and 2022 open archery season on deer established by the commissioner in accordance with rules adopted pursuant to section 11403. A person may not take an antlerless deer with a crossbow under this paragraph during an open archery season on deer unless that person possesses an antlerless deer permit in accordance with section 11152.

This paragraph is repealed January 1, 2023; and

F. Notwithstanding the prohibition on hunting wild turkey with a crossbow during the fall open season on hunting wild turkey in section 11701 and also notwithstanding paragraph B, hunt wild turkey with a crossbow during the 2020, 2021 and 2022 fall open season on hunting wild turkey established by the commissioner in accordance with rules adopted pursuant to section 11701.

This paragraph is repealed January 1, 2023.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §11701, first ¶, as amended by PL 2017, c. 85, §3, is further amended to read:

The commissioner may establish open seasons for hunting wild turkeys, designate areas that are open to the taking of wild turkeys in any part of the State, prescribe the form and regulate the number of permits to be issued, determine the number and sex of the birds to be harvested, establish bag limits, establish permit eligibility requirements, establish legal hunting times, specify the types of weapons to be used during any open wild turkey hunting season and make any other rules that the commissioner considers necessary for the protection of the wild turkey resource. The rules must permit the use of a crossbow during an open season for hunting wild turkey, except that a person may not hunt wild turkey with a crossbow ~~from October 1st until the first day of the open season established by the commissioner in the following year~~ during the fall open season on hunting wild turkey established by the commissioner.

Sec. 3. Report. By January 15, 2022, the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over inland fisheries and wildlife matters detailing the impact on the deer population from the use of a crossbow in accordance with the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 12, section 10953, subsection 1, paragraph E and the impact on the turkey population from the use of a crossbow in accordance with Title 12, section 10953, subsection 1, paragraph F. The report must include whether the commissioner allowed the use of a crossbow in any area where a special archery hunting season on deer was established by the commissioner pursuant to Title 12, section 11402, subsection 4 during the 2020, 2021 or 2022 season. The report must detail any issues or conflicts that arose from the use of a crossbow during the regular archery deer hunting season, any special archery hunting season and the fall open season on hunting wild turkey. Lastly, the report must specify if the use of a crossbow should continue to be permitted during the regular archery deer hunting season, any special archery hunting season and the fall open season on hunting wild turkey. The committee may report out a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 130th Legislature based on the report.