

To: The Department of Inland and Wildlife Advisory Council
From: David Trahan, Executive Director, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine
Subject: Proposed Rule Change on Youth Day Doe Hunting
Date: May 7, 2012

On behalf of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, I strongly urge the Advisory Council to reject the Rulemaking Proposal before you to allow youth hunters to take an antlerless deer on Youth Hunting Day in Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) where no antlerless deer permits are issued.

This rule change has no biological merit, and it runs counter to Department efforts to restore deer populations in the northern half of the state. Between 2009 and 2011, the Department banned doe hunting on Youth Day and during the Regular Archery season on deer in all WMDs that are restricted to bucks-only regulations, in order to minimize doe mortality to the greatest extent possible. This wildlife management strategy has the support of the Department's wildlife biologists, and it is consistent with recommendations of the Northern and Eastern Maine Deer Task Force, and the Department's "Game Plan For Deer". The Sportsman's Alliance has enthusiastically supported these doe harvest restrictions (see attached position statement from February 2012), believing that prudent stewardship of the deer resource now is the best path toward affording sustainable youth hunting opportunities in the future.

Following the devastating winters of 2008 and 2009, deer populations in much of the northern half of Maine remain in perilous condition. Although recent winters have been more moderate, deer populations are far from healthy, and far from being abundant enough to sustain a doe harvest. In their assessment of deer population status during March 2012, Department wildlife biologists recommended a doe harvest quota of zero, and hence called for bucks-only hunting in WMDs 1 through 11, 14, 18, 19, and 27. In these districts, the zero doe harvest prescription would preclude antlerless deer take during Youth Day and the Regular Archery season. We are only in the beginning stages of a possible deer recovery in eastern and northern Maine. The Department (and concerned sportsmen) is in the process of employing several diverse strategies aimed at improving deer survival. Introducing a doe harvest in these WMDs now will only slow down or prevent deer recovery efforts.

SAM urges the Advisory Council to adopt the recommendations of our wildlife professionals by rejecting this rule change.