

§164. Duties of Chief Judge

The Chief Judge shall be responsible to and under the supervision of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court for the operation of the District Court and shall serve as Chief Judge at the pleasure of the Chief Justice. To this end the Chief Judge shall: [PL 1975, c. 408, §14 (AMD).]

1. Hold court when necessary. Hold court in any division when the Chief Judge determines it necessary by reason of illness, absence or disability of the judge regularly assigned or by reason of an excessive case load in any district;
[PL 2019, c. 475, §43 (AMD).]

1-A. Appoint bail commissioners. Appoint bail commissioners pursuant to Title 15, section 1023, for any district;
[PL 1995, c. 462, Pt. A, §3 (RPR).]

2. Assign judges. Assign judges to hold court in any division where, in the judgment of the Chief Judge, they are needed;
[PL 1993, c. 675, Pt. B, §6 (AMD).]

3. Days and hours for holding court. Fix the days and hours for holding court in each division;
[PL 1991, c. 824, Pt. A, §2 (AMD).]

4. Vacations. Determine the times for the taking of vacations by all district judges;

5. Assign judges.
[PL 1993, c. 675, Pt. B, §7 (RP).]

6. Records and reports. Prescribe, subject to the approval of the Chief Justice or the Chief Justice's delegate, the records to be kept and destroyed and the reports to be made by each district judge;
[PL 2019, c. 475, §44 (AMD).]

7. Statistics. Collect such statistics and other information pertaining to the business of the District Court as are requested by the Chief Justice or the Chief Justice's delegate;
[PL 2019, c. 475, §44 (AMD).]

8. Budget. Utilizing such assistance from the Administrative Office of the Courts as the Chief Judge may request, prepare and submit a proposed annual budget for the District Court to the Chief Justice or the Chief Justice's delegate;
[PL 2019, c. 475, §45 (AMD).]

9. Report. Render to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court an annual report on the state of business in the District Court and on the conferences held pursuant to subsection 11;

10. Courtroom facilities. Make necessary arrangements for proper courtroom facilities for all branches of the District Court pursuant to section 162; establish headquarters with appropriate facilities for the Chief Judge; and establish quarters and facilities for all District Court judges;
[PL 1993, c. 675, Pt. B, §8 (AMD).]

11. Conference of judges. Convene at least once annually at such place as the Chief Judge considers appropriate, a conference of District Court Judges to consider and take action upon or make recommendations with respect to current problems in the operation of the District Court. The expenses of District Court Judges attending this conference are an expense of the District Court;
[PL 2019, c. 475, §46 (AMD).]

12. Violations bureau. Notwithstanding any other statute or law, establish the violations bureau.

A. The violations bureau has jurisdiction over all traffic infractions committed in this State. Unless otherwise ordered by a court, trial of a traffic infraction must be in the division in which the alleged infraction was committed. [PL 1991, c. 549, §3 (RPR); PL 1991, c. 549, §17 (AFF).]

B. The Chief Judge by order, which may from time to time be amended, shall designate the amount of fines imposed for traffic infractions. [PL 1991, c. 549, §3 (RPR); PL 1991, c. 549, §17 (AFF).]

C. The Maine Rules of Civil Procedure applies in all traffic infraction proceedings. [PL 1991, c. 549, §3 (RPR); PL 1991, c. 549, §17 (AFF).]

D. The clerk of each division has the authority to accept pleadings and fines on behalf of the violations bureau; [PL 1991, c. 549, §3 (RPR); PL 1991, c. 549, §17 (AFF).]

E. [PL 1991, c. 549, §3 (RP); PL 1991, c. 549, §17 (AFF).]
[PL 1991, c. 549, §3 (RPR); PL 1991, c. 549, §17 (AFF).]

13. Additional duties. Perform such additional duties as may be assigned by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court;
[PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §2 (AMD).]

14. Powers reserved to the Supreme Judicial Court.
[PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §3 (RP).]

15. Fisheries and wildlife bureau. Establish in each division a fisheries and wildlife bureau. The Chief Judge shall appoint a clerk of the District Court in each division as violations clerk for the fisheries and wildlife bureau in that division.

The violations clerk shall accept written appearances, waivers of trial, pleas of guilty and payments of fines and costs in fisheries and wildlife offense cases, subject to the limitations prescribed in this subsection. The violations clerk serves under the direction and control of the judge of the court for which the violations clerk is appointed.

A. A fisheries and wildlife offense means any violation of any provision of Title 12, Part 13; any provision of law enumerated in Title 12, section 10353; or any rule adopted by the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife pursuant to these provisions. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. B, §1 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. The Chief Judge shall by order, which may from time to time be amended, suspended or repealed, designate the fisheries and wildlife offenses within the authority of the violations clerk, except that such offenses may not include any offense for which a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment is provided by law. The court shall establish schedules, within the limits prescribed by law, of the amount of fines to be imposed for such offenses. The order of the court establishing the schedules must be prominently posted in the place where the fines are paid. Fines and costs must be paid to, receipted by and accounted for by the violations clerk in accordance with these provisions. [PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §4 (AMD).]

C. Any person charged with any fisheries and wildlife offense within the authority of the violations clerk may file an appearance in person or by mail before the violations clerk and enter a plea admitting the infraction charged and waiver of trial and pay the fine established for the infraction charged and costs. Any person entering a plea admitting the infraction charged must be informed of that person's rights, including the right to stand trial, that that person's signature to a plea admitting the infraction charged will have the same effect as a judgment of the court and that the record of adjudication will be sent to the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. [PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §4 (AMD).]

D. Any person who has been found guilty of or who has signed a plea of guilty to, or who has been found to have committed or who has signed a plea admitting or admitting with an explanation, one or more previous fisheries and wildlife offenses subject to this subsection within a 12-month period may not appear before the violations clerk unless the court, by order, permits that appearance. Each waiver of hearing filed under this subsection must recite on the oath or affirmation of the offender

whether or not the offender has been previously found guilty of, or to have committed, or has previously signed a plea of guilty to, admitting or admitting with an explanation to, one or more fisheries and wildlife offenses within a 12-month period. Any person swearing falsely to such a statement, upon conviction, is subject to a fine of not more than \$50. [PL 1995, c. 462, Pt. A, §4 (AMD).]

E. The Chief Judge, following notification to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court or the Chief Justice's delegate, may authorize forms and procedures the Chief Judge considers appropriate to carry out this subsection; [PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §4 (AMD).]
[PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. B, §1 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

16. Development and implementation of administrative concepts. Carry on a continuous survey and study of the organization, operation, condition of business, practice and procedure of the District Court and make recommendations to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court concerning the number of judges and other personnel required for the efficient administration of justice and examine, with the advice of the judges of the District Court, the status of dockets of the various District Courts to determine whether the business of the court is being carried out in an efficient manner. From such an examination, the Chief Judge shall annually make recommendations to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court for guidelines and policies for the scheduling and trial of matters before the District Court. In providing recommendations, the Chief Judge shall give due and appropriate regard to the recommendations of the judges and other personnel of the District Court and shall provide a mechanism whereby their individual recommendations and comments may be brought to the attention of the Chief Justice. The Chief Judge, in advising as to the appropriateness of the methods or the systems for scheduling trials and the management of matters before the District Court, shall take into consideration systems and methods operational in the Superior Court. The final decision as to the management of personnel and the implementation of guidelines, policies and procedures for the scheduling of trials and management of matters before the District Court must be made by the Chief Justice only after consultation with the Chief Judge;
[PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §5 (AMD).]

17. Marine resources bureau. Establish in each division a marine resources bureau. The Chief Judge shall appoint a clerk of the District Court in each division as violations clerk for the marine resources bureau in that division.

The violations clerk shall accept written appearances, waivers of trial, pleas of guilty and payments of fines and costs in marine resources offense cases, subject to the limitations prescribed in this subsection. The violations clerk serves under the direction and control of the judge of the court for which the violations clerk is appointed.

A. A marine resources offense means any violation of any provision of Title 12, chapters 601 to 627 and chapters 935, 937 and 939, or any rules adopted by the Commissioner of Marine Resources pursuant to those chapters. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. B, §2 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. The Chief Judge shall by order, which may from time to time be amended, suspended or repealed, designate the marine resources offenses within the authority of the violations clerk, except that the offenses may not include any offense for which a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment is provided by law. The court shall establish schedules, within the limits prescribed by law, of the amount of fines to be imposed for the offenses. The order of the court establishing the schedules must be prominently posted in the place where the fines are paid. Fines and costs must be paid to, receipted by and accounted for by the violations clerk in accordance with these provisions. [PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §6 (AMD).]

C. Any person charged with any marine resources offense within the authority of the violations clerk may file an appearance in person or by mail before the violations clerk. Any person may enter a plea admitting the violation charged and waiver of trial and pay the fine, and costs, established

for the violation charged. Any person entering a plea admitting the infraction charged must be informed of that person's rights, including the right to stand trial, that that person's signature to a plea admitting the violation charged will have the same effect as a judgment of the court and that the record of adjudication will be sent to the Commissioner of Marine Resources. [PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §6 (AMD).]

D. Any person who has been found guilty of or who has signed a plea of guilty to, or who has been found to have committed or who has signed a plea admitting or admitting with an explanation, one or more previous marine resources offenses subject to this subsection within a 12-month period may not appear before the violations clerk unless the court, by order, permits that appearance. Each waiver of hearing filed under this subsection must recite on the oath or affirmation of the offender whether or not the offender has been previously found guilty of or to have committed or has previously signed a plea of guilty to, admitting or admitting with an explanation to, one or more marine resources offenses within a 12-month period. Any person swearing falsely to such a statement is, upon conviction, subject to a fine of not more than \$50. [PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §6 (AMD).]

E. The Chief Judge, following notification to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court or the Chief Justice's delegate, may authorize such forms and procedures as the Chief Judge considers appropriate to carry out this subsection; [PL 2021, c. 723, §3 (AMD).]

[PL 2021, c. 723, §3 (AMD).]

18. Forest service bureau. Establish in each division a forest service bureau. The Chief Judge shall appoint the clerk of the District Court in each division as violations clerk for the forest service bureau.

The violations clerk shall accept written appearances, waivers of trial, pleas of guilty and payments of fines and costs in forest service offense cases, subject to the limitations prescribed in this subsection. The violations clerk serves under the direction and control of the judge of the court for which that clerk is appointed.

A. For purposes of this subsection, a forest service offense means any violation of Title 12, chapters 801, 805, 807, 809, 935, 937 and 939 and section 10203, subsection 6 and sections 10651, 10653 and 11221 or any rules adopted by the Director of the Maine Forest Service pursuant to those chapters. [PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. B, §3 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF).]

B. The Chief Judge shall by order, which may from time to time be amended, suspended or repealed, designate the forest service offenses within the authority of the violations clerk, except that the offenses may not include any offense for which a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment is provided by law. The court shall establish schedules, within the limits prescribed by law, of the amount of fines to be imposed for the offenses. The order of the court establishing the schedules must be prominently posted in the place where the fines are paid. Fines and costs must be paid to, receipted by and accounted for by the violations clerk in accordance with these provisions. [PL 1991, c. 635 (NEW).]

C. A person charged with a forest service offense within the authority of the violations clerk may file an appearance in person or by mail before the violations clerk. A person may enter a plea admitting the violation charged and a waiver of trial and pay the fine and costs established for the violation charged. A person entering a plea admitting the violation charged must be informed of the person's rights, including the right to stand trial, that the person's signature to a plea admitting the violation charged has the same effect as a judgment of the court and that the record of adjudication will be sent to the Director of the Maine Forest Service. [PL 1991, c. 635 (NEW).]

D. A person who, within a 12-month period, has been found guilty of, has signed a plea of guilty to, has been found to have committed or has signed a plea admitting, or admitting with an explanation, one or more previous forest service offenses subject to this subsection may not appear

before the violations clerk unless the court, by order, permits that appearance. Each waiver of hearing filed under this subsection must recite on the oath or affirmation of the offender whether the offender was previously found guilty of or committed or previously signed a plea of guilty to or signed a plea admitting, or admitting with an explanation, one or more forest service offenses within a 12-month period. A person swearing falsely to such a statement is subject, upon conviction, to a fine of not more than \$50. [PL 1991, c. 635 (NEW).]

E. The Chief Judge, following notification to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court or the Chief Justice's delegate, may authorize forms and procedures as the Chief Judge considers appropriate to carry out this subsection; and [PL 2021, c. 723, §4 (AMD).]

[PL 2021, c. 723, §4 (AMD).]

19. Annual training; domestic violence and child abuse issues. Establish annual training and education designed to inform District Court Judges on domestic violence and child abuse, neglect and maltreatment issues.

[PL 2021, c. 723, §5 (NEW).]

Powers not enumerated in this section but necessary or desirable for the proper administration of the courts may, from time to time, be promulgated and assigned, by rule of the Supreme Judicial Court. [PL 1993, c. 680, Pt. A, §7 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1969, c. 299 (AMD). PL 1973, c. 625, §9 (AMD). PL 1975, c. 408, §§14-19 (AMD). PL 1975, c. 430, §§4,5 (AMD). PL 1975, c. 623, §§3-C (AMD). PL 1975, c. 731, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 1975, c. 770, §12 (AMD). PL 1977, c. 392 (AMD). PL 1977, c. 544, §§7-10 (AMD). PL 1977, c. 696, §§22,23 (AMD). PL 1979, c. 541, §§A11,A12 (AMD). PL 1981, c. 414, §1 (AMD). PL 1983, c. 107 (AMD). PL 1983, c. 548, §2 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 481, §A4 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 506, §B2 (AMD). PL 1987, c. 758, §2 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 875, §E4 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 891, §A7 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 91 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 549, §3 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 549, §17 (AFF). PL 1991, c. 635 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 824, §A2 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 675, §§B5-8 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 680, §§A1-7 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 462, §§A3,4 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 414, §§B1-3 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). PL 2019, c. 475, §§43-46 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 723, §§3-5 (AMD).

The State of Maine claims a copyright in its codified statutes. If you intend to republish this material, we require that you include the following disclaimer in your publication:

All copyrights and other rights to statutory text are reserved by the State of Maine. The text included in this publication reflects changes made through the First Regular and First Special Session of the 131st Maine Legislature and is current through November 1, 2023. The text is subject to change without notice. It is a version that has not been officially certified by the Secretary of State. Refer to the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated and supplements for certified text.

The Office of the Revisor of Statutes also requests that you send us one copy of any statutory publication you may produce. Our goal is not to restrict publishing activity, but to keep track of who is publishing what, to identify any needless duplication and to preserve the State's copyright rights.

PLEASE NOTE: The Revisor's Office cannot perform research for or provide legal advice or interpretation of Maine law to the public. If you need legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.