

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND
WILDLIFE**

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 547

“An Act to Amend the Hunting Laws as They Pertain to the Training of Dogs”

Presented by Representative FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor.

Cosponsored by Senator MOORE of Washington and Representatives: DAVIS of East Machias,
LANDRY of Farmington, MASON of Lisbon, SHAGOURY of Hallowell, STROUT of Harrington,
Senator: CURRY of Waldo.

DATE OF HEARING: March 24, 2023

Good morning Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Dan Scott Colonel of the Maine Warden Service, at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition of L.D. 547.

This bill would eliminate the portions of Washington and Hancock Counties that are situated south of Route 9, that is currently closed to the training of bear dogs during the statewide bear training season from July 1st to the 4th day preceding the open season on hunting bears.

This law had traditionally been enacted with an agreement in mind, between the landowners, blueberry growers and the dog hunting community to alleviate or minimize conflicts during the peak of blueberry harvesting time in the listed areas. Blueberry growers, like other food crop producers must adhere to very strict guidelines and laws, regarding food safety practices and standards at the federal and state level.

The landowners and growers have concerns of non-employees, dogs, bears, and vehicles within the area and possibly doing damage to crops, roadways, etc., as well as possible conflict with federal and state regulations.

Many of the landowners and blueberry growers allow bear baiting, trapping, and hunting with dogs during the open season on bears, as well as other activities like hunting, fishing, ATV, and snowmobile trails on their land base. There was no biological reason for the closure, but more of a social one in showing support to the private landowners that continue to provide opportunity for outdoor recreational activities.

We have had correspondence with the Maine Blueberry Commission and some of the large landowners in the affected area and support them in the opposition of this bill.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.