

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

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

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 55

“An Act to Move the Headquarters for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife”

Presented by Representative BRIDGEO of Augusta.

Cosponsored by Senator POULIOT of Kennebec and Representative LaROCHELLE of Augusta.

DATE OF HEARING: March 8, 2023

Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Tim Peabody, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 55**.

In 2020 the Department began working with Representative Bridgeo as City Manager of Augusta with a goal to locate a new IFW headquarters building on the former Statler Tissue Mill site that is referenced in this bill as “Parcel 1”.

The Department worked diligently with the City of Augusta staff for over two years trying to move this project forward at the mill site. Access to the mill site was one of the major obstacles as the current street access (Maple St.) was not acceptable for the increased vehicle traffic from the new office, and there were concerns with the northern Drum Barker Road right of way and the associated railroad crossing.

To alleviate this the Department focused on trying to obtain a parcel of land for access adjacent to the mill property, owned by American Iron and Metal. This property is referenced as “Parcel 2” in section 4(B) of this bill. This site was previously a scrap metal yard and had not been remediated for previous contamination. The owner was in communication with DEP and one consulting estimate for partial remediation was approximately \$600,000 on a property with an updated appraisal value of \$275,000.

The Department presented this project in a Supplemental Budget proposal to the Second session of the 130th Legislature with a site plan, building renderings, and

construction estimates. The proposal was not passed as part of the budget as it was not developed enough to be supported by the full legislature.

The Department continued to work on this site proposal until June of 2022. Unsuccessful negotiations to obtain the American Iron and Metal property in a timely manner caused the Department to look for a more viable location on the East Campus which we have presented to this Committee.

In closing, the Department supports the spirit of the bill, specifically Section 1, to *Provide funding for the consolidation of the MDIFW facilities by relocating to a larger building to be used as headquarters in the City of Augusta.....*but opposes the continued pursuit of the Statler Mill site as our new proposal on the East Campus is better suited for the goals of the Department and funding for the project.

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