

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

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

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1062

**“AN ACT TO ALLOW A LANDOWNER OR MAINTAINER OF TRAILS TO
LETHALLY REMOVE NUISANCE BEAVER”**

PRESENTED BY: Senator Moore of Washington

CO-SPONSORED BY: Representative Davis of East Machias

DATE OF HEARING: April 24th, 2023

Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 1062**.

This bill allows a landowner, a person on behalf of a landowner or a person who maintains a trail as part of a club or organization that maintains trails to take or kill nuisance beaver.

In 2021, 12 MSRA §12404 was amended to allow the Department to give a landowner or landowner’s representative permission to take or kill beaver causing damage. In response to those changes, the Department amended our Wildlife Conflict policy to streamline and standardize the issuance of depredation permits for landowners that have conflict with beavers. This bill proposes to remove the requirement for a landowner, a person on behalf of the landowner, or a person who maintains a trail as part of a club or organization to receive Department permission prior to taking or killing a beaver.

Measures to protect beavers have been in place for a long time because of the positive habitat benefits they provide for hundreds of species in Maine. Beaver continue to be one of the most sought-after furbearers targeted during the trapping season. The Department’s current Wildlife Conflict policy utilizes a step-down approach for dealing with animals causing conflict. The removal of the offending animal is not always the

most cost-effective or best long-term solution for landowners. In certain situations, site modification or exclusion measures can be employed to provide long-term relief for a landowner facing a conflict with beavers, while allowing beavers to maintain quality wetland habitat and provide opportunities for Maine's trapping community.

We recognize the intent of the bill is to remove constraints to protect property, but we believe that the recent changes to this section allow flexibility for landowners while also maintaining some oversight to ensure lethal removal of beaver is the most appropriate course of action. Additionally, the Department, through our regional wildlife staff, district game wardens, and landowner relations program, has invested staff time and resources into working with landowners to help resolve conflicts with beavers, while maintaining quality habitat and harvest opportunities.

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