

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

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1241

“An Act to Allow Sunday Hunting with a Bow and Arrow or Crossbow”

Presented by Representative WARREN of Scarborough.

Cosponsored by Senator BLACK of Franklin and Representatives: CLOUTIER of Lewiston, DANA of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor, JAUCH of Topsham, MASON of Lisbon, ROEDER of Bangor, WHITE of Waterville, Senator: President JACKSON of Aroostook.

DATE OF HEARING: April 10, 2023

Good morning Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Judy Camuso, Commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 1241**.

This bill allows a person who has an archery license to purchase a Sunday hunting permit for \$31 to hunt with a bow and arrow or, if the person has a valid crossbow permit, a crossbow. This bill distributes the revenue from the sale of the Sunday hunting permit to benefit the Land for Maine’s Future Fund and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Bureau of Warden Service and for the support of youth hunter education and experiential programs. The bill also amends the laws to allow a person to be in possession of a bow and arrow or crossbow on a Sunday if that person possesses a valid Sunday hunting permit.

While the focus of this bill would expand opportunity for youth deer hunters it allows hunting on Sunday. We would like to offer background information on recent work and the outcome of a survey on Sunday hunting in Maine for those here that were not a part of the discussion the last few years.

During the first regular session of the 130th Legislature (2021) two bills were introduced to the IFW Committee, LDs 1212 and 1033. LD 1212 proposed to allow Sunday hunting in the Northern portion of the state while LD 1033 proposed to allow Sunday hunting on private property with written permission of the landowner. The topic of Sunday hunting has been a heated social debate for years and in fact some type of Sunday hunting bill has been proposed nearly every Legislative session.

The Department testified in opposition to both bills maintaining concern that some landowners may close their property to hunting and other recreational activities if any form of Sunday hunting were made legal. While the agency realizes there could be potential for economic growth and additional

opportunity to hunters, at the same time, we recognize that many landowners prefer to have Sunday as a day that they can enjoy their land and allow others an opportunity to recreate.

The Department is sensitive to the concerns of private landowners. Maine is more than 90% privately owned, without the support and generosity of our private landowners, our outdoor recreational opportunities and the ability for the Department to manage wildlife populations would be severely limited. Our staff, particularly our Landowner Relations Program are committed and focused on the needs of landowners, and we are proud of the relationship we have built with many of the landowners in Maine.

Instead of passing the bills as written, the Legislature passed LD 1033 as a Resolve and directed the Department to establish a stakeholder group with broad representation in interest and geographics to examine Sunday hunting in Maine. The group was also asked to develop and complete a survey relating to Sunday hunting, if the department received adequate outside funding to pay for the survey. It then directed the department to report the findings and recommendations of the stakeholder group to this Committee. The committee was authorized to report out a bill related to Sunday hunting during the 130th Legislative session.

The stakeholder group was formed, a neutral person was hired to facilitate the 2 in-person meetings and 4 ZOOM meetings that were held from early September through December 2021. Members of the public were able to listen in and provide comment at the end of the meetings Responsive Management, a private research firm was contracted to develop a survey with the stakeholder group. Group members provided direct feedback on the issues discussed and helped develop the questions for the survey.

The survey was conducted by Responsive Management during late December 2021. The following statistics were notable outcomes of some of the survey questions:

The key question in the survey, support for or opposition to allowing Sunday hunting in Maine, was asked early in the questionnaire before additional information was provided over the course of the survey.

- About a third of the general population (34%) support Sunday hunting, while a majority (54%) oppose.
- Over two thirds of hunters (69%) support, compared to 23% who oppose.
- A third of North/East and Central Region landowners (33% each) support Sunday hunting, while 62% and 61%, respectively, oppose. Opposition is very high among South Region landowners, with only 13% who support and most (81%) who oppose.

Landowners were asked, if Sunday hunting were allowed, if they would be more likely to allow hunting access, more likely to restrict access, or more likely to allow the same level of access. Of particular interest are those who currently allow hunting access but would be more restrictive.

- Looking at the landowner sample, 44% of those in the sample who do not currently post their land say they would be more likely to restrict access to hunting on their land if Sunday hunting were allowed.

The permit as described in this bill is considered license revenue under 50 CFR 80, and must be in the control of IFW and used only for administration of IFW. Transfer of revenue from these permits to Land for Maine's Future would be a diversion of license revenue.

Relevant federal citations are below.

50 CFR [§ 80.10 Who is eligible to receive the benefits of the Acts?](#)

States acting through their fish and wildlife agencies are eligible for benefits of the Acts only if they pass and maintain legislation that:

- (a) Assents to the provisions of the Acts;
- (b) Ensures the conservation of fish and wildlife; and
- (c) Requires that revenue from hunting and fishing licenses be:
 - (1) Controlled only by the State fish and wildlife agency; and
 - (2) Used only for administration of the State fish and wildlife agency, which includes only the functions required to manage the agency and the fish- and wildlife-related resources for which the agency has authority under State law.

[§ 80.20 What does revenue from hunting and fishing licenses include?](#)

Hunting and fishing license revenue includes:

- (a) All proceeds from State-issued general or special hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, access and use fees, and other State charges to hunt or fish for recreational purposes. Revenue from licenses sold by vendors is net income to the State after deducting reasonable sales fees or similar amounts retained by vendors.

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