

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

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

IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 1879

**“An Act to Align Laws Governing Crossbow Hunting with Those
Governing Archery Hunting”**

PRESENTED BY: Representative LANDRY of Farmington

DATE OF HEARING: May 8, 2023

Good morning, 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, speaking in support of **L.D. 1879**.

This bill is the final step in a multi-year effort to align crossbows with regular bows and arrows for hunting purposes. This process began in 2019, when the Legislature allowed the use of crossbows during the fall turkey hunting season and the regular archery season on deer for the 2020, 2021, 2022 hunting seasons, and required the Department to report back in January 2022 outlining any conflicts and recommendations to move forward.

That bill was followed by 2020 Public Law Chapter 637, which further clarified some crossbow laws including requirements for junior and apprentice hunters and hunters over the age of 65 and created a separate crossbow education course.

Finally, Public Law 2022 Chapter 599 removed the sunset provision from the 2019 bill, permanently allowed the use of crossbows during the regular archery season on deer and the fall wild turkey season, and aligned antlerless deer permit requirements for those hunting with a crossbow with those for a regular bow and arrow. That law also required the department to determine the statutory changes necessary to remove the remaining distinctions between hunting with a bow and arrow and a crossbow and bring these back to this Committee in 2023.

This is a department bill that will make several changes to the laws surrounding crossbows and regular bows. I will go down through the bill by section.

Sec. 1. & 2. Provide consistency between Title 12 Chapter 220 within the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife’s statute such that a person commits a Class E crime if the person discharges archery equipment within 300 feet of any picnic area, designated camping area, parking area, building, shelter or boat launching site or in violation of park rules or in areas closed to hunting by rule, law or ordinance.

Sec 3. Defines "archery equipment" to mean either a bow or crossbow, and changes references in the hunting laws to "bow and arrow" and "bow and arrow or crossbow" to "archery equipment."

Sec 4. Adds "vertical" limbs within the definition of hand-held bow or bow.

Sec 5. Strikes reference to recurved and compound bows within the definition of "hunting equipment" because archery equipment is now defined to include all types of vertical bows as well as crossbows.

Sec. 6. Within the prohibited act of possession of hunting equipment on Sunday it

Se. 7. This changes the reference of "bows and arrows" to "archery equipment" within the section that explains seizure of fish, wildlife and equipment and libel proceedings.

Sec. 8. This reflects the new definition of archery equipment within the civil trespass caused by a projectile prohibition.

Sec. 9, 10, 12, & 13. Make changes to references to crossbow or bow and arrow to now include archery equipment. This also allows a person beginning January 1, 2024, who has previously held a crossbow permit to be eligible to obtain an archery hunting license which allows them to hunt with either a crossbow or bow and arrow.

Sec. 11. Repeals section 10953 because crossbow use will be allowed anytime bow and arrows are allowed for hunting.

Sec. 14, 15, & 16. This repeals the crossbow permit requirement, fees and the crossbow specific hunter education course, allowing a person to hunt with a crossbow during any open hunting season, except the muzzle-loading only deer season, if that person holds a valid archery license.

Sec. 17. This removes the requirement that a crossbow hunter wear hunter orange clothing during the open firearm season on deer.

Sec. 18. & 20. This adds regular bows to the laws governing loaded weapons in motor vehicles and hunting or shooting from motor vehicles.

Sec. 19. This section will allow the discharge of a crossbow within 100 yards of a building or residential dwelling without the permission of the owner and allows the discharge of a crossbow on a landowner's own land for any purpose, including target practice and hunting. It also provides that a person may not discharge an arrow or bolt from archery equipment when on land of another person and within 100 yards of a building or residential dwelling on that land without the permission of the owner of that building or residential dwelling or cause an arrow or bolt from archery equipment to pass across the land of another person and within 100 yards of a building or residential dwelling on that land without the permission of the owner of that building or residential dwelling.

Sec. 21-24, 26. All refer to the definition of archery equipment to have consistency throughout Title 12.

Sec 25. This moves all the crossbow equipment requirements to the section of law that lists illegal hunting implements.

Sec. 27. This specifies that there is a continual closed season on deer on the Cranberry Isles in Hancock County, except that a person may hunt deer on the Cranberry Isles with a shotgun or bow in accordance with applicable laws and rules.

Sec. 29. This provides that a person may not hunt wild hares or rabbits in any manner except by the ordinary method of shooting with guns, archery equipment or by falconry.

Sec. 30. This provides that a person may take suckers by the use of a hand spear, by archery equipment or by snagging.

This bill makes the statutory changes that the department feels are necessary to implement the direction provided to us by this Committee during the 130th Legislature. The bill includes numerous provisions and touches upon many aspects of our work, including deer management, law enforcement, licensing and permit requirements, and safety courses.

We feel that allowing the use of crossbows during traditional archery seasons has been very successful, and the changes in this bill are necessary to reduce the complexity and confusion surrounding crossbow laws.

We would ask this Committee if they would consider a friendly amendment that would create a delayed effective date of January 1, 2024. Since this bill has come out so late in the legislative session and the need to have some rulemaking completed to align with any new statutory changes from this bill, we believe it would be simpler to have an effective date in 2024. This would allow the department to educate the hunting public on any changes for the 2024 fall season.

I would be happy to answer any high-level questions at this time, but since this bill involves so many of the department's programs, I will defer detailed questions to our staff at the work session.