

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 738

**LD TITLE: AN ACT TO PROMOTE THE NORTHERN MAINE
ECONOMY AND SUPPORT MAINE'S SPORTING CAMP
TRADITION**

SPONSORED BY: Senator JACKSON of Aroostook
Co-Sponsored by: Representative WOOD of Sabattus
Senators DUTREMBLE of York
Senator HASKELL of Cumberland
Senator TUTTLE of York
Representative SHAW of Standish

DATE OF HEARING: May 3, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Andrea Erskine, Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking neither for nor against **L.D. 738**.

This bill proposes to direct the Department to offer for sale a certain number of moose permits for the camps' use. It establishes qualifications for eligibility. This committee considered similar proposals during the last session.

While the Department supports ways to stimulate Maine's economy and the tradition provided by the sporting camp industry in Maine there could be several social and biological issues with this proposal which the Committee should take into consideration.

1) The Department auctions off 10 moose permits each year with all the proceeds going to conservation schools in Maine. This auction brings in about \$100,000 each year. The Department is concerned that the proceeds from this auction could be negatively impacted by offering an additional 250 permits for sale each year.

2) Some current moose permit applicants will argue that any additional moose permits should simply be added to the regular lottery and be available to anyone who can afford the relatively small amount of money required to enter that lottery.

- 3) Currently non-residents can purchase as many chances in the regular lottery as they want. Some of these people who spend \$500 to \$1000 in the regular lottery will now simply opt to buy one of the auctioned permits from a lodge.
- 4) This legislation would require the Department to establish an additional lottery/auction each year.
- 5) The Department has reservations about allocating an additional 250 moose-hunting permits because of its effect on the moose population, the availability of “trophy” bulls for hunting and viewing, and the Department’s ability to achieve publicly-derived moose management goals.

Currently the Department is required to meet publicly derived moose management objectives for each WMD. This includes maintaining a stated density of moose AND a threshold level of mature bulls and threshold ratio of bulls to cows in specified management units. Annual permit allocations reflect changes in reproduction and mortality as well as allowing for a certain level of harvest. While current aerial survey data across much of the north has provided us with reliable estimates of moose numbers and bull/cow/calf composition unknowns regarding annual mortality require a cautious approach to permit allocations. Any permit allocations above current levels must be evaluated in this context, since additional hunting mortality plays a role in moose density and the number of bulls that are available. Further information is warranted regarding adult and calf mortality since current survey information suggests calf losses may be problematic for future growth in some areas. Similarly adult cow mortality plays the most critical role in population changes and data is critical to understand this prior to additional changes in moose management.

The Department continued helicopter surveys in northern Maine this winter to count moose and to determine if the methodology was appropriate to derive an estimate of moose numbers. The results appear promising. Before considering a significant increase in the number of moose permits, the Department would like the opportunity to recalibrate its moose population model and its moose population estimate. This could be completed as early as next winter if suitable weather conditions occur and there are no significant equipment failures.

Due to a healthy moose population that can sustain increased hunting pressure; an additional 200+ permits were added to the 2013 Moose Hunt Lottery. This increase will help stimulate Maine’s economy as a whole and some percentage of those hunters will utilize guides and sporting camps for assistance in their hunts. We would encourage the Committee to consider the moose permit process from a broad perspective and the positive impact it can have on the entire hunting community rather than for one segment of hunters.

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