

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1474  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAWS PERTAINING  
TO THE HUNTING OF BEAR**

**PRESENTED BY: Representative HARLOW of Portland**

CO-SPONSORED BY: Representative BOLAND of Sanford  
Representative BOLDUC of Auburn  
Representative CHIPMAN of Portland  
Representative KAENRATH of South Portland  
Representative MORRISON of South Portland

**DATE OF HEARING: May 10, 2013**

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in opposition to **L.D. 1474**.

L.D. 1474 prohibits, with certain exceptions, hunting bear with dogs and trapping bear. The bill also sets a permanent closed season on bear hunting from January 1st through July 31st and decreases the bear bag limit from two to one. In addition, the bill prohibits the trade in bear gall bladders and imposes increased penalties for bear poaching for repeat offenders.

LD 1474 will eliminate or limit several important tools used by wildlife managers to maintain wildlife populations at biologically and socially acceptable levels including season timing and length, bag limits, and legal methods of harvest. These tools allow the Department to adjust bear harvest regulations to ensure the conservation of Maine's black bears and wise use of the resource, while reducing conflicts between people and bears. At times, appropriate wildlife management includes increasing hunting opportunity; thus this bill could hamper the Department's ability to meet publically derived bear population objectives.

This bill really involves the two parts of Black Bear Management in Maine, the biological and the social aspects of wildlife management. Previously based in part on the biology and science this same issue was addressed in the 2004 referendum. From the

Department's perspective the only things that have changed are: the bear population has continued to grow to an all-time high of over 30,000 animals, the science supporting bear management is even stronger and more compelling today and the need for active management to control the bear population remains.

**Title 12 §10051 states "The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is established to preserve, protect and enhance the inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the State; to encourage the wise use of these resources; to ensure coordinated planning for the future use and preservation of these resources; and to provide for effective management of these resources."**

Bear Management in Maine is based on sound science and publicly derived goals and objectives. Hunting, trapping and hounding are important wildlife management tools that help maintain the Maine bear population at acceptable levels while limiting nuisance problems and contributing to public safety. The Department will continue to refine our bear management system to account for advances in population modeling, additional data we have gathered from our bear management program, legislative mandates and the public input we receive as part of our ongoing Species Management Process.

LD 1016 has been submitted to address the trade of bear gall bladders and penalties.

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