

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 84**

LD TITLE: AN ACT TO EXPAND TURKEY HUNTING

SPONSORED BY: Senator SAVIELLO of Franklin

CO-SPONSORED BY: Representative CRAY of Palmyra and
Senate President ALFOND of Cumberland, Senator GERZOFSKY of Cumberland,
Senator JACKSON of Aroostook, Senator COLLINS of York, Representative
TIMBERLAKE of Turner, Representative WOOD of Sabattus, Representative
HARVELL of Farmington

DATE OF HEARING: February 12, 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. 84.

L.D. 84 makes many changes in the laws regarding the hunting of turkeys.

The Department is directed in statute to manage the wildlife resources of the state for their preservation, protection, enhancement and use. While the Department agrees that there are opportunities to increase turkey hunting opportunity within the state we are concerned that many of the changes suggested in this bill would impact the Department's ability to manage wild turkeys in Maine responsibly. From the very beginning there has been strong public interest on the part of the public in reintroducing and managing turkeys in Maine. This effort has been spear headed by the National and State Wild Turkey Federations and many sportsmen's clubs throughout the state. These sportsmen have contributed their dollars and time in the recovery of turkeys within Maine, without which the effort would have likely failed. They have continued to participate in regular meetings since those first days assisting the Department in resolving nuisance problems, in trap and transfer operations and support for efforts in updating turkey management as the population has grown and expanded. Currently the Department is reconvening the Wild Turkey Working Group. This group is comprised of representatives from sportsmen groups, landowner groups and people representing agricultural interests. This effort blends the biological information brought forth by the state's wildlife biologists

employed by the Department with the needs, interests and social concerns of the working group. The outcome is management goals and objectives for wild turkeys that are derived from sound science and public participation. In this forum we believe the Department's mandate for managing the wildlife resources of the state are met while balancing the concerns of the citizens and visitors to Maine. We would suggest that allowing this group to meet and bring forth suggestions ("or recommendations") for the Department to implement would result in the desired increase in turkey hunting opportunity therefore meeting the intention of the Bill. This would also retain the tools necessary to manage wild turkeys and address some recognized problems while continuing the tradition of strong public involvement in wild turkey management in the State of Maine.

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