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Sen. Dill, Rep. Nadeau and members of the Inland, Fisheries & Wildlife Committee -

I am Rep. Peter Lyford, representing District 129 - Eddington, Clifton, Holden, Veazie and part of Brewer. I'm here today to introduce my bill - An Act to Start a Spring Bear Hunting Season. Having previously served on this committee for four years, I know the importance of bringing to this committee something sweet!

Having gone on bear den visits and talking with IF&W biologists, I have learned there is an excess of manageable bear in this state. My understanding is that the manageable herd is 24,000 (+/-), whereas we have 35,000 (+/-) now in Maine. This trend is not unique to Maine - recent numbers have shown an increase of around 300% of both brown and black bear across the country. Therefore, I believe a spring bear hunt would be exciting. Maine is a leader!

Some of the reasons for a spring bear hunt is the interaction between bears and humans. For example - in the spring of the year, complaints about bears and bird feeders, and bears and beehives. As you can see in the photos, there is an electric fence around the hives to deter bears. You probably all know the importance of honeybees to agriculture. These bee yards are not located in remote areas. The photos you're looking at are located near Dysart's on Broadway in Bangor and you can hear children playing in the background. Of the five apiaries (bee yards) which I have, three are constantly under attack. Peter Cowan, president of the Penobscot Beekeepers Association, endorses this proposed bill also.

I've spoken with Nancy McBrady, who is the Executive Director of the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine. Where she would not endorse this concept bill, she felt quite strongly that the commission would once it became a law. As you may or may not know, bears graze on and roll in the blueberry plants.

As you know, bears are carnivorous. As the herd grows larger, the possibility exists of newborn deer, young moose, turkey, partridge, woodcock and other birds and animals being affected.

Our neighbors in New Brunswick, Canada, have a spring bear hunt, allowing up to two bears per person. It would be nice to have some of that business stay here in Maine, such as guides, lodging, restaurants, etc. This bill was recommended for the last week of May and first three weeks of June. The reason for these dates is the large landowners felt their roads would be open and drivable by that time. I spoke to Dave Cole of AFM (American Forest Management) and his feelings were basically the same as the Blueberry Commission.

Those are some of my reasons for proposing this bill. The real work would begin at the work sessions if this bill is adopted. You'll have to decide on many issues, such as hunting dates, permit fees, guns, crossbows, baiting and wildlife management districts. The benefit would be new revenue for IF&W, guides, lodging, taxidermy, meat processing and even fishing licenses.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill today.





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