



Maine Professional Guides Association

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Opposing LD 337 An Act To Start A Spring Bear Hunting Season

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative Nadeau and distinguished members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. My name Don Kleiner, I live in Union and am the Executive Director of the Maine Professional Guides Association.

I am here today opposing LD 337 An Act to Start a Spring Bear Hunt. Long ago Maine had a spring bear hunt. That hunt was ended in 1980 partly out of concern for the bear population. Since then we have only needed a fall hunt to manage our bear population.

The current season length and structure was developed in cooperation with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to help reduce the bear harvest and minimize conflict between hunters in the early 2000's. Since then as you have heard the bear population appears to be growing. I have heard from several members who tell me that the numbers are not as high as they have been in the past in the more remote regions of our state. But certainly the population is expanding into the more settled regions.

The department currently has additional time available in the fall to allow bears to be taken over bait under the existing statute the same with the hound hunt. I might also point out that very few of our members operations are operating at capacity. Since the economic downturn almost ten years ago nonresident bear hunters are not coming to Maine in the numbers they did in the past. We would like to suggest that with some assistance from the state in promoting the existing hunt we might fill the beds in lodges and then increase the number of bears taken in the fall. Rather than adding an additional season and a more problematic time of year.

Finally, as I am sure you will hear from our landowner partners they are not at all interested in having traffic on soft springtime roads and we share their concern. We are their guests during any season and want to be sure that we are welcome guests.

We believe that there is ample opportunity to increase our bear harvest in the existing season framework without adding an additional season or offending our landowner hosts.