

Steven Wilcox

Wytopitlock Maine

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My name is Steven Wilcox I live in Wytopitlock Maine, I hunt, trap and guide for bear. I been a guide and involved in the bear hunt for 25 years. I oppose LD 337

I do not support a spring bear season, for many reasons, such as soft roads and landowner relations, to public perception of our hunting, but my main concern is for the bears and there population level. We have a quality bear hunt here in Maine and I do believe in most areas of the state we are harvesting the numbers we need to, or very close to it. I am concerned a spring season would increase the harvest enough to jeopardize our population numbers and I will compare that to what happened to the moose in zone 11. Back when the IF&W went to a 2 week season on the moose they designated cow tags, and put the harvest at 280 permits for wmd 11, with the goal to reduce the population due to accident's on rt 1 rt 2 rt 2a and 95. This was in 2001 it went on for over 10 years, I raised my concerns when Danny Martin was commissioner that we needed to look at this harvest and feel I was ignored, and excuse given why the harvest was so low in this WMD. It wasn't until commissioner Woodcock took over they flew the zone and counted moose, the next year we went from 280 permits to 50, because of the low moose population. I can see the same thing happening to our bears, but we can't fly and count them like moose, and the research areas where they do watch population levels are far enough away that I do not feel it would reflect what was happing at home. I have seen under different administration there are different goals and different areas where personal and resources are put for different reasons. Which I believe was some off the reasons of our moose issues, but could easily happen to our bears as well. I do not feel a spring season is worth jeopardizing our current season.

One thing that we all need to realize is a spring season will not increase a bear harvest significantly where there are issues, it will increase it were we are already harvesting bears. I feel the best way to increase the harvest and keep the best tabs on what going on is to lengthen our fall seasons. We have a good handle on what types of natural influences affect the harvest in the fall. We can quickly identify issues and have changes made by the next fall, with plenty of time for planning. I would not expect that going from a spring season into a fall season.