



ANIMAL

Behavior & Healing

Opposing LD 337: An Act to Start a Spring Bear Hunting Season

Good afternoon Senator Dill, Representative Nadeau and distinguished members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. My name is Gina Garey, I live in Portland and am the Founder and Principle of Animal Behavior and Healing and hold a Master's of Science in Animal Behavior Analysis.

As a professional Animal Behavior Analyst, it will come as no surprise to you that I am here today to ask the committee to oppose LD 337, for all the reasons you already know and will hear about today.

Animals' behavior is effectively shaped & reinforced largely through the use of positive reinforcement in the form of a rewards system, that includes food rewards. The habituation of animals to various stimuli and environments is largely accomplished with this reward system. It seems fairly obvious, and science and the data on Maine's bear population back this up; that feeding the bears is at the root of the population growth, their habituation to human food stuffs and the scents associated with it, such that IF&W has failed in their mission to effectively manage bears, and in their responsibility to reduce the potential for human bear conflict; by relying solely on lethal methods to manage the bear population.

The existing bear hunt in Maine continues without the benefit of applying the scientific data within our existing bear management program, and by continuing to bait/feed them, the bear population continues to grow. It is illegal in Maine to bait deer to hunt them, yet IF&W has not yet adopted this

sensible rule when it comes to bears, in spite of all the evidence that they should.

When we take into consideration statistics on the reproductive health of the bear population due to adding high calorie foods to their diet along with the decrease in hunting interest, and the increase in Wildlife watcher numbers and revenues, it seems obvious to me that this discussion is headed in the wrong direction when it comes to your duty and lawmaking capabilities on behalf of IF&W and Maine's great resource, its wildlife.

Finally, I oppose LD 337 on the basis of its inherent cruelty. Orphaning infant cubs and leaving them to starvation and predation is inhumane, and is widely frowned upon by the majority of Americans who prefer conservation of species over inhumane management practices, and it will mar our state's image irrevocably, even as its cruelty would cause immense suffering to Maine bears.

When Alaskans were confronted with the proposal for denning and killing of their wildlife in the Arctic National Refuge, they rejected the idea by a large majority and I believe you will find that the majority of Mainers feel the same way.

This idea is no better. There has not been a Spring Bear Hunt in Maine for over 25 years, and for very good reason. If IF&W needs more revenue let it not be on the backs of innocent baby bears, rather, let's increase access for wildlife viewing possibilities to raise more funds, as this is where the world is heading.

I urge you all to vote ought not to pass on LD337.

Thank you for your attention.

- Data on Wildlife watching revenues, the effect of feeding on bear reproduction and decline in hunting participation available on request