

TESTIMONEY TO THE AGRICULTURAL, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY  
COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 527

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 offered by Tim Caverly

**Bill "Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,  
Bureau of Parks and Lands To Establish a Law Enforcement Training Program for Park  
Managers and Certain Bureau Staff"**

Good afternoon Senator Dill, Representative Hickman and Honorable Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee." My name is Tim Caverly of Millinocket and I am speaking to support the passage of L.D. 527.

I am an author and creator of Allagash Tails. A small Maine business who has published 9 books about our northern forest. For the last several years my wife and I have been visiting schools throughout New England, where we have presented to over 8,000 students to encourage learning about Maine's natural world.

Before becoming an author, I was a Maine park ranger for 32-years and worked in the four corners of our State. My love of the outdoors began as a youngster when my father was a Fire Warden for the Maine Forest Service. By the age of 10, I was on patrol helping dad extinguish wildfires.

My brother Buzz was a ranger and director of Baxter State Park for 46 years. When not with my father, I spent summers following my brother in the woods and waters that lie in the shadow of Mt. Katahdin.

Due to those experiences, I know the duties and responsibilities of rangers and wardens, and I know the dangers and challenges that exist for themselves and the using public.

Today I often spend time in Maine State Parks. However, I have been discouraged to learn that the field Agency has been besieged by its own governance; a once proud and well cared for park system is falling into obscurity. An organization where rangers once wore badges and name tags, now don staff t-shirts. Daily enforcement patrols are seldom found, but that wasn't always the case.

Parks and historic sites, where highly trained rangers oversaw daily operations, has become a system that depends on campground hosts for basic coverage. In 2018 one park enlisted nearly a dozen campground volunteers to 'get the job done.' Our Parks are a place where families and friends still gather but may remain unaware there is little protection provided by untrained and unauthorized ranger staff.

In Maine State Parks rangers would take time to know their visitors to determine areas of bad behavior. In today outdoor world, park staff often pass by their customers, keeping heads down to avoid making eye contact. History tells that Maine parks were a place where rangers were proud to provide public safety and resource protection. A staff encouraged to attend sportsman shows to such places as Harrisburg, Pa-where men and women in uniform grasp the opportunity to educate about their State.

The administrative park office in Augusta argues that today people generally behave themselves in Maine parks and there is minimal need for concise law enforcement training or the ability to summons and arrest. I disagree. For the organization to institute such a hands-off enforcement philosophy makes the directors as culpable as if they were taking an active role in the violations and breaking of State laws.

In 2018 three million people visited our State Park System. For a bureaucracy to claim that serious enforcement issues do not exist or may be resolved by calling another remotely located department is either naïve or is information being promoted by an administration intentionally providing false information.

Such a lack of honest communication places our State's visitor and rangers in harm's way. It is interesting to note that we are having this discussion of reduced law enforcement responsibility by parks, a year after the Maine Legislature authorized the arming of Maine's Forest Rangers.

There cannot be a reasonable doubt in anyone's mind that our State Park **Rangers ARE** first responders in every sense of the term; they **ARE** the boots on the ground whom supply our visitors and natural resources with a first line of **PROTECTION**.

Please allow me to discuss the issues I personally witnessed as a **duly sworn-in commissioned Maine Park Ranger**, along a list of problem's rangers still face. But with my examples of today you will not hear a discussion of violators operating motorized equipment while under the influence, Nor, about excessive speed, driving to endanger, minor fireworks, beer on beaches, or domestic disputes. Not because those violations don't occur, but because they happen so frequently it would be repetitious to include those instances with each example.

A partial list of emergency responses by my rangers and I include but are not limited to:

**At Sebago Lake State Park**

Criminal trespass, theft of boats and equipment, public intoxication, fights, emotional breakdowns, and explosive devices such as the powerful firecrackers M-80's.

**At Cobscook Bay State Park**

Drug parties that occurred when growers harvested the buds from 130 Marijuana seedlings. The park forest was torched by an individual in anticipation he would be hired by fire departments to extinguish the blaze. Another arsonist drove along Route 1 throwing flaming pieces of newspaper out their car window to inflame Cobscook Bay Park and the nearby Moosehorn National Refuge. While I was at Cobscook there was also incidents of night hunting, illegal digging of clams in closed mud flats, and Sunday hunting on the game refuge.

**At the Allagash Wilderness Waterway**

Rogue guide building unauthorized campsites and forcing parties off sites. Illegal oversized groups, and a trickster who had been breaking into State Camps, opening official files, stealing firearms, vandalizing camps and equipment. Which ended in arson of the AWW Headquarters on Umsaskis Lake.

Dogs chasing deer, over the limits of fish and game, theft of camping equipment and vehicles. Fight at a sporting camping which ended up in one man getting hit in the face by a piece of stove

wood, a drunk snowmobiler who ran his sled into the back of a log truck, arson of Page Camp in T11R13, a person who accidentally shot themselves while camping in the AWW. Trucks driving into the middle of the Wild and Scenic Allagash River and a local resident carrying a calf moose in his van.

### **Additional instances**

#### **Reid State Park**

In 2018 Rangers reported that hypodermic needles were found on park beaches, lifeguard stands, and in bathrooms. In 2018 rangers responded to drug overdoses where medics were called and Narcan provided.

In 2018 while camping at a remote State Park, my wife and I heard of a convicted sex offender had stalked a female Park Naturalist.

In 2018 Bradbury Mt. State Park dealt with homeless people. who at first refused to register for campsites, resisted paying camping fees and then stayed beyond legal limit of nights.

Dogs off leashes are an habitual problem. Rangers routinely tell the same owners to lease their dogs' numerous times. During the summer of 2016 in Camden Hills State Park, a dog on leased was mauled and severely attached by a dog off lease.

I must wonder how many other instances are there and are park rangers encouraged by Bureau Directors to report those instances? If not why not? If there are written incident reports, are they on file? If not, why not?

### **In Summary**

Yes, the duties of today's park ranger are demanding; despite the claims by appointed officials. It is not unusual for rangers to confront all I have mentioned; and more. Last year at a manager's meeting, staff asked their administration how Ranger's should respond to an active shooter. The instruction given by Park Directors was, "run, hide and if cornered, fight." Today our Park leaders seem more interested in ducking, dodging, and darting to keep their jobs rather than ensure staff have the training and equipment to provide public safety, and resource protection.

On March 8th, I presented a literacy program to over 200 students in a southern Maine school. At the end of my last program a 14-year-old girl asked. "I want to be a Park Ranger, Forest Ranger or Game Warden when I grow up. Which one will allow me to learn about our environment and protect people?" I sadly suggested a Forest Warden or Game Warden might be a good choice, because under the leadership and philosophical attitude of today's Parks leaders, I can't guarantee that our once proud Maine State Park System will continue.

I truly feel that that the passage of L.D. 527 will ensure that Rangers and Managers of Maine Parks will have the professional training, authority and professional encouragement that our rangers need, visitors deserve. Training that should be available for this upcoming summer season, and not delaying until September-after the busiest time of the year has passed.

Thank you for your time and I am willing to answer any questions you may have.

EXHIBITS TO ACCOMPANY THE TESTIMONY OF TIM CAVERLY TO THE  
AGRICULTURAL, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE IN  
SUPPORT OF L.D. 527 MARCH 8, 2019

Exhibit 1 Biography of Tim Caverly.

Exhibit 2 Dept. of Conservation Law Enforcement Commission of Tim Caverly.

Exhibit 3 Pictures of September 1982 Destruction of Allagash Wilderness  
Waterway Headquarters.

Exhibit 4 Facebook Article of Dog Mauling at Camden Hills State Park August  
2016.

Exhibit 5 Picture Taken at Michaud Farm Ranger's Station of Northern Maine  
Resident. The Man is holding a baby moose he'd carried in his van.

Exhibit 6 Title 12 Chapter 220 Section 1806 providing for enforcement by Maine  
Park Rangers and Managers

Exhibit 7 Title 12 Chapter 211 Section 905 declaring that the Baxter Park  
Authority SHALL exercise police authority over Baxter State Park.