

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and esteemed members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. It's a pleasure to speak with you today in support of LD 77.

My name is Don Kleiner, and I'm a Master Maine Guide living in Union. My company, Maine Outdoors, has been providing outdoor experiences in mid-coast Maine for 38 years, specializing in families and beginners. To give you some context, my small business sells about \$1200 worth of mostly one-day (\$13) fishing licenses annually. I became a license agent years ago because my town office wouldn't issue licenses to non-residents. Now, I'm an electronic agent, and license fees are included in my trip pricing.

First, I want to commend you all for your role in what is without a doubt the world's most successful fish and wildlife management system: the North American Model of Conservation. This model relies on scientific understanding of fish and wildlife populations and is funded primarily by user fees. In Maine, hunting, fishing, and even guide license fees support fish and wildlife management for *all* species, including those we do not hunt or fish for. This represents a significant commitment made over a century ago, and I sincerely thank you for your thoughtful service in your important capacity.

A key part of your responsibility to resource users, future generations, and the resources themselves is ensuring adequate funding for the necessary work that makes the model successful. This brings me to my support of LD 77. Thank you, Representative Wood, for bringing this vital discussion forward.

It's been quite a few years since the last fee increase, and as we all know, prices have risen significantly across the board in that time. A personal example: my first boat cost \$18,000, and I replace it roughly every five years. Using the same order sheet, my most recent boat cost over \$42,000! I believe that the boat I purchased at the time of the last license increase cost \$24,000. It's a sure sign of getting older when you remember those remarkably low prices of the past. I'm certain our resource managers have experienced similar cost increases in their operations.

While the general fund has contributed significantly to the Department's budget in recent years, we all need to ensure consistent funding as budgets tighten. This is crucial for continuing the vital resource management work we're committed to.

The proposed fee increases are reasonable. A resident season license would increase by about 30%, and the non-resident season license by roughly 10%, keeping Maine in line with neighboring states.

However, I do have a concern regarding the shorter-term licenses. Some increases reach as high as 60% for a one day license (both resident and non resident), my worry is that compliance is already an issue short term licenses. We want everyone who fishes to have a

license for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is their importance in federal funding formulas. Such a significant increase might actually *discourage* people from purchasing short-term licenses. I suggest revisiting these specific increases to reduce the percentage and hopefully encourage even better compliance.

Finally, I strongly encourage you not to create another special fund within the Department's budget. This would be a great service to future legislators like yourselves and the public who want to understand the Department budget. The Department's budget is already complex, involving state and federal funds, along with many dedicated funds from multiple funding sources. I sympathize with citizens and legislators who struggle to understand this complicated funding system, even those with experience can glaze over. Please do not increase that complexity.

Thank you for your time and consideration and do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance in your deliberations on this or any issue.

Thank you.

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