

March 29, 2023

Greetings,

My name is David Person. I am commenting on LD 814. I am a retired wildlife biologist with over 30 years experience with wildlife management and research. I graduated with a BS degree in wildlife management from the University of Maine at Orono in 1977. I was the assistant deer project leader for the state of New Jersey during 1980-1984, then moved on to Vermont to get a MS degree in wildlife ecology from the University of Vermont. My thesis work involved the first comprehensive study of coyote ecology in Vermont. I trained in mathematics and statistics and worked for the Vermont Department of Health as a statistician and analyst from 1988-1991. I left Vermont for Alaska in 1991 to take a PhD. graduate fellowship at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. I studied wolf ecology and predator-prey dynamics among the islands of Southeast Alaska and after obtaining my doctorate, went on to work for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as their predator-prey research scientist for Southeast Alaska. All told, I spent 22 years studying wolves and deer in Alaska. I retired in 2013 and moved to Vermont that same year. I continue to do consulting work and am still publishing papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals as recently as 2022. I am an author on about 40 peer-reviewed papers, book chapters, and technical reports with most focusing on predator ecology, modeling ecological communities, and predator-prey dynamics. I recently served as a scientific advisor to the Maine furbearer advisory committee convened to review management plans for foxes and coyotes. Unfortunately, illness during summer 2022 prevented me from continuing that process further.

I support LD 814 because it elevates coyotes to the same status as all other big game and furbearers in Maine, something long overdue. Some might argue there are no concerns about depleting coyote populations in the state and so a closed season is not necessary. Well by that same logic, I suggest you remove closed deer seasons for many of your southern wildlife management units as those abundant deer populations seem impervious to the state's regulatory regimes. The reason why coyotes have no closed season is because an influential segment of Maine's hunting population views coyotes as invasive, vermin, and pests. In contrast, there are many in Maine who disagree with that opinion. A closed season is the first step to establishing a viable, scientifically credible, and flexible management regime for coyotes. Closing the season during spring and summer allows coyotes some months reprieve from legal persecution when they are denning and raising young. Of course there are some folks who think killing coyotes during pup rearing is good idea because if the breeding female is killed, the pups will probably starve so you've removed 4-5 coyotes in one shot. I suppose they would be willing to apply that same logic to overabundant deer in the southern tier? Why not kill does in June and July so their fawns starve as a way to efficiently reduce deer numbers? They value deer but not coyotes. During our meetings of the Maine furbearer advisory group, the state nor anyone else could supply any compelling or unambiguous evidence that the open season and other efforts to reduce coyotes has increased harvest of deer. Evidence that coyotes kill deer is not sufficient to determine the effect of predation on deer populations. There are much more data needed on both coyote feeding ecology and deer reproduction. The coyote control program is a drunk driver with no scientific guardrails. You need to

determine whether deer are regulated or limited by predation. Under regulation coyote predation limits the extremes of deer population growth . Under limitation, predation acts as a cap on the deer population through which they cannot grow beyond without the cap being removed. The state of Maine has never indentified those processes at work in Maine and even if some segments of a deer population were limited by predation, it is absurd to think that would apply statewide.

I think it unlikely if LD 814 is passed, there will be any detectable changes in deer harvesting in the state and if there is, and a scientifically sound case can be made that a population of deer in a specific region are limited by predation, then allow an open season as an exception in that region but not others in the state. Manage coyotes like other species with seasons and bag limits tailored to local conditions rather than a pest to be destroyed. Coyote predation has tremendous benefits with respect to regulation and control of small mammal populations. After almost 80 years, they have become an integral part of Maine's ecosystems. They have not simply replaced wolves. Their roles are a bit different with less obligation to subsist on large mammals. Like foxes and raccoons, they can do damage to property, pets, and livestock but a bulldozer approach like open seasons has never solved those problems. They require specific targeted actions all of which can be written into enlightened regulations. I urge you to pass LD 814.

Sincerely,

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