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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 829

An Act to Standardize the Laws Regarding the Carrying of Concealed Handguns in State Parks

March 26, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary, my name is Andy Cutko, and I am the Director of the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL). I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) as neither for nor against LD 829, *"An Act to Standardize the Laws Regarding the Carrying of Concealed Handguns in State Parks."*

This bill seeks to amend BPL statute 12 MRS §1803 sub-§7 by aligning it with a 2015 state law change that removed the permit requirement for concealed weapons. The proposed amendment to BPL statute would not affect the current policy and practice in Maine State Parks and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, which allows firearms, including handguns, as long as they are concealed. "Open carry" is prohibited within State Parks by rule, except in areas designated for hunting during hunting season.

The existing policy works well for the Bureau, and we are unaware of significant incidents or concerns regarding firearm possession or use in State Parks. Accordingly, the Bureau is agreeable to the proposed language alignment regarding 12 MRS §1803 sub-§7. However, BPL has no oversight over Baxter State Park, which is under the jurisdiction of the Baxter State Park Authority, and we have no oversight over Acadia National Park, which is under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

Bureau staff can be available to answer any questions at the work session.

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