

**TESTIMONY OF SUSANNA RICHER –
IN OPPOSITION TO
LD 1343, “An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife”
Committee On Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
April 9, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony regarding LD 1343, “An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife”

The bill is redundant and unnecessary.

This definition of “harvest” in conjunction with the 2023 “Right to Food” constitutional amendment implies ownership of wild animals as well as a right to hunt. It also further supports legal challenges of existing laws, intended to protect wildlife and landowners and has the potential to restrict lawmakers from passing future legislation to limit hunting, fishing and trapping in response to environmental and wildlife population changes that may not align with the “right to harvest.”

In 2023, Jim Connolly from the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife stated the following in his testimony regarding the definition of “harvest” included L.D. 1823, the Right to Food constitutional amendment bill:

Another section of LD 1823 creates in Title 12 §10001 sub-29A the definition for “Harvest, the verb. The verb Harvest means to gather, forage, catch, trap, hunt, fish, take, or kill for human consumption, sport, wildlife management or population control” The Legislature has already established definitions for hunting, trapping and fishing in Title 12 §10001 that would be affected by the new verb harvest that IS included in this bill. The Department does not believe inserting this definition of harvest into Title 12 Part 13 IS necessary, find it confusing since “harvest” is included in the definition of hunting, and believe it will likely have unintended consequences in the interpretation of existing sections of Title 12 where the word is already used in activities that don’t relate to food.

Hunting rights are not in jeopardy. Hunters and trappers are a powerful minority in Maine, not a persecuted one. Their privilege is already cemented in state statute.

1. In 2015, the Department’s mission statement [was legislatively changed](#) to make hunting, fishing and trapping (not science) the preferred basis for managing our state’s wildlife. This is already in effect in Maine and does not need to be duplicated or expanded on.

§10051. Department established

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is established to preserve, protect and enhance the inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the State; to encourage the wise use of these resources; to ensure coordinated planning for the future use and preservation of these resources; to provide for effective management of these resources; and to use regulated hunting, fishing and trapping as the basis for the management of these resources whenever feasible. [PL 2015, c. 416, §1 (AMD).]

2. For the past 35 + years, hunters and trappers have been given full access to hunt and trap on more than half a million acres of land purchased with Land for Maine’s Future Program funds. Because the agency’s funding depends on income derived from the sale of licenses, guns and ammunition, MDIFW largely functions to serve hunter and trapper interests, not the broader public. As a result, hunting and fishing opportunities continue to grow in Maine. That is unlikely to change.

We have already blurred the lines by including the word “harvest” in the recent constitutional amendment regarding the Right to Food. Further enshrining the word “harvest” in connection to killing animals whether it be for food, “management” or for “recreation” (fun?) is unethical especially when related to recreational hunting, trapping, and fishing where the animal is not killed for sustenance.

While the word “harvest” is often used by government wildlife and fisheries agencies as a more palatable term for killing or reporting number of animals killed, the proposal equates the act of killing wildlife (for any reason) with gathering berries or harvesting a field of corn. We harvest fruits, vegetables, and grains. We slaughter livestock. We kill wildlife.

This proposal favors a small special interest group (hunting/ fishing lobby) over the welfare of the general public and science-based wildlife management.

Hunting is a privilege not a right. We don’t harvest animals; we kill them. We do not “own” wildlife; we hold wildlife in public trust. Wild animals are not ours to do with as we please.

For the above reasons, please vote “Ought not to pass” on L.D. 1343. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Susanna Richer
Portland, ME

Sources

Chapter 903: Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Subchapter 1: Department Established

<https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/12/title12sec10051.html>

Testimony of Jim Connolly, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries And Wildlife

LD1823, An Act to Protect the Right to Food

<https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=174536>