



Maine Professional Guides Association

55 Morrison Hill Road
Wilton, ME 04294

www.maine-guides.org

Testimony in Opposition to LD 814 An Act to Restrict the Daytime and Nighttime Killing of Coyotes April 3, 2023

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the committee, my name is James Cote and I am here today in opposition to LD 814 on behalf of the Maine Professional Guides Association.

This legislation would fundamentally and arbitrarily reduce the effectiveness of Maine's coyote management strategies, and further flies in the face of over three years of work by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and numerous stakeholders on Maine's new ten-year furbearer management plan, and decades of biological work prior.

Currently, the Department is in the process of obtaining public feedback on the most comprehensive furbearer management plan in Maine history. The draft that is currently published for public comment is the result of an extraordinary effort by Maine's biologists, landowners, hunters, trappers, animal-rights advocates, and other diverse public interests. It is a work product that Maine can be proud of.

To guide this process, the Department retained the professional services of Responsive Management, a global leader in public opinion research and analysis on wildlife and natural resource issues. Responsive Management and the Department went to great lengths to solicit Maine people's views on a number of furbearer species and to produce scientific analysis of how those views should interface with furbearer management strategies over the next decade. Specifically, the Department devotes an entire chapter of this 200 page plan to the Eastern Coyote, which begins on page 73. I would encourage the committee to read this specific chapter.

Chapter 8.0, Eastern Coyote, details the history of coyote management in Maine since 1971. It shares information about the public's opinion of the coyote population, noting that more Maine residents feel that the population is too high than too low. The report also suggests that over a third of Maine residents responded that coyotes are a danger or nuisance, and that Maine residents ranked them the least beneficial of all furbearer species. Now, I only mention this to demonstrate that there seems to be a direct contradiction between the responses of this scientific public surveying effort of your constituents and the proposal contained within LD 814.

Despite lots of the noise, most hunters do have an appreciation for coyotes and many in this room are true students of their biology. We have invested significant time, energy, and resources on rebuilding our deer populations in northern, eastern, and western Maine. Instead of arbitrarily eliminating six months of coyote hunting and population management based on the emotions that we will no doubt hear today, I would urge this committee to lean on the science that has been undertaken to produce a gold-standard coyote management

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strategy for the next decade, and give the Department the support and resources that they need to implement the coyote goals and management strategies identified in section 8.6 of the plan. These goals and management strategies include:

- 1) Maintain healthy, abundant coyote populations
- 2) Maintain a sustainable coyote population
- 3) Maintain coyote hunting and trapping opportunities
- 4) Increase public understanding of coyotes and coyote management
- 5) Minimize human-coyote conflicts
- 6) Conservation of other species

These seem like goals and strategies that the vast majority of Maine can agree on. Interestingly, these goals and strategies also do not include a six-month prohibition on hunting coyotes or other restrictions contained within this legislation. For these reasons, we ask you to vote ought not to pass on LD 814. Thank you for your consideration.