



To: Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
100 State House Cross Building Room 206
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 205 (SP 92) - An Act to Amend The Bag Limit For Turkey

Position: Oppose

Date: February 10, 2025

Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,

My name is Fred Bird, I am the Manager for the Northeastern States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) and a licensed Maine sportsman. I respectfully urge you to oppose Legislative Docket 205 (LD 205) An Act to Amend the Bag Limit for Turkey – legislation that seeks to set Maine's wild turkey bag limit the same as the ruffed grouse limit.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

State-based fish and wildlife management authority should be left in the very capable hands of Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW). MDIFW is the best equipped to address fish and wildlife management issues within the Pine Tree State. It is staffed by trained professionals with backgrounds with a wide variety of expertise, including biology, law enforcement, land management, wildlife biology, and numerous other disciplines.

To that end, in recent years the MDIFW went through an extensive planning process to develop wild turkey management goals and objectives. This process included multiple opportunities for public input, including a scientific survey of public attitudes towards wild turkeys. That effort identified several wildlife managements districts (WMDs) that were approaching or exceeding social carrying capacity and were in need of population stabilization. In 2019 the MDIFW established a season framework with liberalized fall bag limits in those specific WMDs to stabilize populations through the harvest of females. However, in many northern WMDs the wild turkey population is small and very vulnerable to overharvest.

The majority of human and wild turkey conflicts/ complaints are generated out of Maine's agricultural community in the form of crop depredation, for which the state already has a solution via Chapter 921: WILDLIFE CAUSING DAMAGE OR NUISANCE, §12402. Damage to crops or orchards. In fact, while other species are simply categorized as "nuisance animals" this section specifically names wild turkeys and what, "the cultivator, owner, mortgagee or keeper of any orchard or growing crop..." may do to protect their crop. An owner, "may take or kill wild animals or wild turkeys night or day when the wild animals or wild turkeys are located within the orchard or crop where substantial damage caused by the wild animal or wild turkey to the orchard or crop is occurring. For purposes of this section, corn is not considered grain." With this liberal solution in combination with the already existing liberal bag limits, the need for adjusting season or daily limits further is wholly unnecessary, risks jeopardizing the populations in the northern districts, and is not supported by scientific data from the on-the-ground experts at the MDIFW.

In recognition of the negative bearings that LD 205 would have on Maine's recovered and healthy wild turkey population as well as Maine's sportsmen and women, CSF stands in firm opposition. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this issue. Should you require additional information on this, or other sportsmen-related topics, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred Bird", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Fred Bird
Manager, Northeastern States | Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
110 North Carolina Ave, SE | Washington, DC 20003
fbird@congressionalsportsmen.org | 603-583-7484