



## **RANGELEY REGION GUIDES' & SPORTSMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 244 • Rangeley, Maine 04970

OUR MISSION IS THE CONSERVATION,  
PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF  
WILDLIFE FOR SPORTSMEN, SPORTSWOMEN,  
AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

**Date: February 24, 2025**

**To: Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
Legislative Committee.**

**From: Sonny Pierce, President of Rangeley Region Guides' and Sportsman's Association,  
Rangeley, Maine.**

**Greetings;**

The Rangeley Region Guides' and Sportsman's Assn is pleased to offer our support for LD 77. RRG&SA was established in 1895 and in 2024 had a membership of over 1100, our second highest number in the history of our Association. Needless to say, our history of recreational fishing is rich and extremely important to the Rangeley Lakes region. Our Board of Directors voted unanimously to support the initial draft of LD 77 with the seven dollar increase on all fishing license fees and believes this increase is desperately needed to keep pace with inflation and allow added funds for important staffing and research. However, we have certain reservations concerning the revised draft of LD 77 in that it does not necessarily dedicate funds specifically for research and management of wild native fisheries. It is our understanding that all the anticipated license fee revenues generated under the revised LD 77 will go to the State's General Fund and NOT specifically appropriated or dedicated to much needed fishery projects. We are looking for assurance that these funds will be fully allocated and designated for the intended purpose of fishery management and research. Further we are concerned that the funding proposed for access and maintenance of boat launching facilities would seem totally inadequate. There is a growing need for additional access and more launching facilities. The \$150,000 proposed, if used to support additional staff, leaves very little outside administrative functions for registrations, boat stickers, safety courses, etc., to purchase, develop or maintain additional facilities. Further, how does the MDIFW Boating Access Program coordinate with MDACF Boat Access Program?

Recently MDIFW Biologists proposed a very critical research project on Mooselookmeguntic Lake. Mooselookmeguntic Lake is a Heritage Water and supports wild native populations of Brook trout and Landlocked Salmon. The lack of specific knowledge of these populations, specifically their critical spawning habitats, population dynamics and other biological parameters, is necessary to provide for proper protection and management ensuring the sustainability of these wild populations. The need was critical due to increasing use and harvest but funding was not available to undertake this research. RRG&SA along with other

Conservations Agencies and individuals raised the necessary funds to purchase radio tags, telemetry tracking equipment and soliciting several Maine Guides and experienced anglers to help capture fish for tagging. This is a multi-year project still on-going but has already yielded much very valuable data on these populations. In addition, we have learned that the genetics of the wild Brook trout population in the Rangeley Region are rare and unique and one of only a very few such Brook trout populations known to exist. When approached for assistance, our Association was appalled by the fact that MDIFW funds were not available for such important projects. That led us to wonder how many other needs for critical information necessary for proper management are going unattended. The tremendous increases in use, added environmental pressures and threats from invasive species are all growing concerns.

Many years ago, I served as a Regional Fisheries Biologists in the Sebago Lake Region. Our staff of three was responsible for the active management of over 300 lakes and ponds including Sebago Lake, Maine's second largest body of water, along with nearly 4000 miles of streams and rivers. All the Fishery Regions today are responsible for the management of about the same number of waters. I retired in 1995. In the 30 years since my retirement, there are roughly the same number of Fishery staff managing the same resources despite mounting pressures on our valuable fishery resources. Maine has over 6000 lakes and ponds and over 30,000 miles of streams and rivers. There is still room to actively manage more waters, stock more Trout and Salmon and to provide more fishing opportunity here in Maine.

While we support any increase in funding for fishery management and research, we question if it is enough with either the original LD 77 or the revised LD 77. The increase being proposed is nothing more than the purchase of a couple of lures or a couple of "BIG MAC" meals for every individual. With recreational fishing in Maine generating more that 400 million dollars a year to our local economies, we need to ensure that our fishery resources are sustainable and viable for generations to come. Sports Fishing in Maine, both Freshwater and Saltwater, is well known. Unfortunately, we have always been disadvantaged financially to fully provide the necessary management and research to address the growing needs and to further increase fishing opportunities here in Maine. While the efforts of MDIFW have been commendable, the nearly 15 years that have passed since the last license fee increase warrants at least this increase, if not more, and is still affordable for a Sport like fishing that one can do virtually year-round.

RRG&SA is pleased to offer our support for additional funding to further the endeavors of MDIFW to conserve, to protect and to further enhance our valuable fishery resources here in Maine.

Respectively submitted:

*Sonny Pierce*

President, Rangeley Region Guides' & Sportsman's Assn

Registered Maine Guide