



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 24, 2025

### **Public Testimony of LD 971 "An Act to Repeal the Law Regarding Checking Baitfish Traps"**

Presented by Representative Strout of Harrington – District 11

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and distinguished members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Representative Tiffany Strout from Harrington, representing the towns of Milbridge, Harrington, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Centerville, Addison, Jonesport, Beals, Jonesboro, Roque Bluffs, Whitneyville and Machias and I am here today to present my bill **LD 971 An Act to Repeal the Law Regarding Checking Baitfish Traps**.

I am presenting this bill on behalf of my constituent who is active in both trapping and selling baitfish. He brought this law to my attention due to some safety concerns and after learning more about the law I am in support of modifications.

The current law states baitfish traps and holding cages must be labeled with the owner's name and address and must be tended at least once every 7 days by the person who set them. Baitfish traps may only be used to harvest baitfish species, as defined. All other fish must be immediately released alive into the water from which they were taken.

Baitfish can be trapped throughout the year but those who sell them commercially mostly trap through the winter season when the demand is higher for use in ice fishing. The need for a modification in the law for the checking of the traps every 7 days is a safety issue for both the trapper, the fish being trapped and the Warden's Service enforcing the laws.

As we know, the climate is changing, and the weather conditions and temperatures continue to be variable causing the ice to freeze and thaw multiple times through the winter season. When there is a requirement of checking the traps every 7 days people are forced to go on to the ice even though it may not be safe to do so. There is also the chance of inclement weather making the roads not safe to travel, or the roads to get to the location of the traps may not be passable after a storm. There is also concern for the health of the fish after being exposed to freezing temperatures when dumping the traps.


I do understand it is the job of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to put laws in place to help ensure good stewardship of all wildlife living on the land and in our lakes, ponds and streams and with a law you need to have some restrictions to allow them to do their jobs properly. With this understanding, I

District 11 Addison, Beals, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Harrington, Jonesboro, Jonesport, Machias, Milbridge, Roque Bluffs, Whitneyville, Centerville Township, and North Washington (Part)

would like to offer an amendment to my bill that would divide the seasons for checking the bait fish traps to the following: From April 2<sup>nd</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> the law would stay the same for checking every 7 days and from November 1<sup>st</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup> you would need to check traps every 14 days. This modification would keep the 7 days as seen appropriate for the warmer months and 14 days for the variable weather months allowing the department to have oversight and enforcement year-round.

Thank you for your time today. My constituent is here today to provide more details about his experience with trapping bait fish and I believe someone from the department would be able to answer specific questions about the care of the fish and could answer any questions requiring clarification but am happy to answer any questions that I can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tiffany Strout". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tiffany" and last name "Strout" clearly distinguishable.

Tiffany Strout  
State Representative