



Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Institute for Legislative Action (SAM-ILA)

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Testimony in Opposition of LD 1293, *An Act to Prohibit Coyote Killing Contests in Maine*, before the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, presented by David Trahan, Executive Director, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Institute for Legislative Action.

The honorable Senator Baldacci, Rep. Roberts, members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee, my name is David Trahan, I am the Executive Director of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine Institute for Legislative Action. I am testifying in opposition to LD 1293, An Act to Prohibit Coyote Killing Contests in Maine.

For decades, Maine's coyote derbies have served as essential instruments in managing our Coyote populations. These derbies, privately sponsored and organized in partnership with local businesses, were born out of necessity. In 2003, when the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife was forced to abandon its longstanding coyote snaring program due to legal challenges from anti-hunting groups, Maine hunters did not stand idle. Instead, they mobilized, and by 2008, organizations like the Aroostook County Conservation Association were formed to preserve critical deer wintering areas and to control winter and spring predation on Whitetail deer populations. These groups quickly demonstrated their commitment by launching annual coyote derbies that continue to this day.

Critics argue that these events are nothing more than a bounty system, putting a price on dead coyotes. However, it is crucial to understand that these derbies are part of a larger, biologically sound strategy aimed at improving deer survival in a place where deer populations have been decimated. By using incentives to increase coyote harvest, these events help maintain balanced ecosystems and protect our deer populations.

Consider the Moosehead Lake Togue fishing derby, licensed by Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the initiative born out of a similar challenge, which has successfully managed to regulate an overpopulated species and support a valuable fishery for years. This example illustrates that targeted, incentive-based approaches can yield significant benefits for our natural resources. In addition, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues depredation permits to kill migratory birds that threaten other protected bird species.

Furthermore, the organizations that hold the coyote derbies are not solely focused on coyote control. They actively invest time and funds into improving deer habitats - developing food plots, planting cedar trees, and even partnering with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine to secure critical deer wintering areas. These same groups introduced legislation that purchases, manages and protects deer wintering areas. These collaborative efforts represent a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to wildlife management that supports Maine's broader goals for deer recovery.

Eliminating coyote derbies through LD 1293 would not only discard a cost-effective and proven method of population control, but it would also undermine the longstanding efforts of Maine hunters and conservationists dedicated to maintaining our wildlife balance. For these reasons, I urge you to reject LD1293 and to continue supporting the innovative, locally driven programs that have benefited our state for over a decade.

David Trahan, Executive Director

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