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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



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COMMISSIONER

Testimony on LD 1322 - Maine

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and esteemed members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee,

My name is Jeff McCabe, I am the director of the Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation, and I am testifying today neither in support nor opposition to LD 1322. The **Office of Outdoor Recreation** established within the Office of Tourism, leverages Maine's assets and outdoor recreation heritage to grow the outdoor recreation economy and build Maine's outdoor recreation brand as part of a coordinated effort with partners from the public and private sectors.

To meet our charge, we actively engage with key state agencies on a regular basis. Our work with IF and W includes actively discussing data, events, programming and marketing. I know our partners at IF and W are a phone call or email away. Our collaboration with IF and W is agency wide. I want to publicly say, thank you to the IF and W Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner for prioritizing our working relationship.

Much of our work at MOOR is industry facing and being able to share detailed information is vital. We recognize the importance of brand identity and trusted messengers, that is why we use IF and W created content, resources and programming. We want people engaging with IF and W and asking IF and W clarifying questions. We never want to duplicate or create confusion for the public.

Recently Maine's 10-Year Outdoor Recreation Economy Roadmap was launched and provides a comprehensive vision for enhancing the recreational infrastructure of our state. Its primary goals include expanding access to outdoor activities, fostering community engagement through recreation, and ensuring that Maine's natural resources are preserved and enjoyed by future generations.

The *Maine Recreation Road Map* emphasizes the importance of preserving and promoting Maine's outdoor heritage, including activities such as hunting, fishing, and other forms of outdoor recreation that are integral to the state's culture and identity. Hunting is not only a popular recreational activity in Maine but also plays a key role in wildlife management and conservation efforts. We also recognize the opportunities to bring new people of all ages into hunting and continue to support IF and W's work in doing that.

In closing, the *Maine Recreation Road Map* emphasizes collaboration between state and local agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations to create cohesive and interconnected recreational networks. Work on implementation of the road map is already underway and defining key areas, programs and people to foster the work is ongoing.

Below are just some quick examples how IF and W work is already contributing to Maine's **10-Year Outdoor Recreation Economy Roadmap**.

1. Elevate Maine's Outdoor Recreation industry into a critical and thriving pillar of the state's economy

- **Strengthen Collaboration:** Unify industry stakeholders by establishing dedicated trade associations and organizing annual gatherings like the Maine Outdoor Economy Summit to foster a cohesive voice for the sector.
- **Communicate Economic Value:** Implement a statewide campaign utilizing social media, career fairs, and outreach events to raise awareness of career opportunities in the outdoor industry, targeting middle and high school students and their families.

2. Increase and sustainably managing outdoor recreation within the state.

Strategy 2B: Ensure that Maine's outdoor recreation opportunities are inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to all communities.

- This strategy aims to foster diversity in participation across various dimensions, including race, ethnicity, gender, ability, age, sexual orientation, and nationality. Actions include designing outdoor spaces inclusively, reducing barriers such as transportation, language, and financial constraints through programs like gear-lending libraries and free access days, and supporting community-led organizations to teach and mentor within their communities.

Strategy 2C: Expand programming to teach outdoor recreation skills and promote everyday access.

- This strategy focuses on strengthening Maine's outdoor recreation culture by expanding skills-based programs and increasing public knowledge of recreational opportunities. Leveraging Maine guides and outdoor educators, the state aims to empower residents, visitors, and students to confidently engage in activities like biking, hiking, paddling, and skiing while learning responsible practices.

Strategy 2D: Support private landowners to maintain and improve recreational access.

- Given that approximately 94% of Maine's forest land is privately owned, maintaining public access to these lands is crucial. This strategy involves strengthening relationships with private landowners to ensure continued access to recreational assets such as trails and waterways, which is vital as outdoor participation grows.

Strategy 2E: Grow Maine's outdoor recreation management and resource stewardship capacity.

- This strategy aims to enhance the state's capacity to manage outdoor recreation resources sustainably. It includes promoting the health benefits of outdoor recreation by encouraging active lifestyles through collaboration with healthcare industry leaders and local communities and minimizing barriers to outdoor recreation opportunities.

4. Establish Maine as a Premier State for Outdoor Recreation Businesses, Education, Training, and Career Opportunities

- **Engage Youth in Careers:** Develop specialized programs in collaboration with Career and Technical Education leaders and Extended Learning Opportunity coordinators to establish dedicated pathways from high school to careers in outdoor recreation.
- **Attract Talent:** Strengthen post-secondary education and training opportunities in outdoor recreation fields to attract and equip Maine's youth for careers in the industry.
- **Enhance Professional Development:** Promote professional development and employer collaboration to build a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and growth in the outdoor recreation sector.
- **Support Business Growth:** Provide resources and support for starting and scaling outdoor recreation companies, fostering entrepreneurship and economic diversification within the sector.
- **Drive Innovation:** Invest in research and development to stimulate innovation in outdoor recreation products and services, ensuring Maine remains competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

Thank you for considering these points in your review of LD 1322.