



**Humane
World for
Animals**

Formerly called the Humane
Society of the United States and
Humane Society International

**Testimony in Opposition to LD 1343
An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife
Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
April 9, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

On behalf of our Maine supporters, Humane World for Animals, formerly called the Humane Society of the United States, expresses its opposition to LD 1343. If approved, this could enshrine cruel, outdated and unscientific wildlife killing practices in the Maine constitution, and could impede the ability of Mainers, and their elected and appointed officials, to initiate and enact policy on issues and subject matters of their own choosing.

LD 1343 is a solution in search of a problem, because the Maine Supreme Court has ruled that Article 1, Section 25 of the Maine constitution¹ already includes the right to hunt by stating:

Right to food. All individuals have a natural, inherent and unalienable right to food, including the right to save and exchange seeds and the right to grow, raise, harvest, produce and consume the food of their own choosing for their own nourishment, sustenance, bodily health and well being, as long as an individual does not commit trespassing, theft, poaching or other abuses of private property rights, public lands or natural resources in the harvesting, production or acquisition of food. CR 2021, c. 1 (NEW)²

But while the state's constitution *affirms* that Mainers have the right to hunt for food, LD 1343 could have the opposite effect of *restricting* the right of Mainers to improve and update wildlife management policy so it aligns with current science and changing public values. LD 1343 defines "harvest" as not only to gather, forage, catch, trap, hunt, fish, take or kill "...for human consumption, nourishment, sustenance, bodily health or well-being," **but also "...for sport, wildlife management or population control."** By establishing this definition, LD 1343 could prevent changes to wildlife killing practices that are claimed to be done for sport, wildlife management or population control—**even if those practices are strongly opposed by the public, contravene longstanding hunting ethics, or are not supported by the best available science.**

LD 1343 proposes to tell the citizens of Maine what policy matters they may or may not bring forth for consideration. The principles of both representative and direct democracy and civic participation are an important part of Maine's history. The right to exercise those principles is cherished by the state's citizens and deserves preservation, not deliberate obstruction.

Further, LD 1343's restrictions on policy could hinder the ability of state officials to make management policy decisions about Maine wildlife that are based on the most current scientific research and data.

Maine residents highly value their wildlife, as well as their right to advance policy to protect and preserve that wildlife. Research finds that Americans—whether they live in urban, suburban or rural areas across the nation—do not support practices that they view as pointless, unsporting or wasteful. The *American Attitudes Towards Hunting, Fishing, Sport Shooting, and Trapping 2019* report by the National Shooting

Sports Foundation and Responsive Management found that while Americans are still supportive of hunting in general, approval varies considerably depending on the stated reason for that hunting. If it's utilitarian in nature, for meat, or to obtain organic or locally sourced food, public approval is very high. However, the survey goes on to say, "... approval of hunting drops substantially when the reasons are for the sport, the challenge, or a trophy," and there were similarly low approval numbers for motivations for trapping that included to make money, for fur clothing, and for recreation.³ Similarly, a national poll by the respected, bipartisan firm Remington Research Group in January 2022 found that 80% of Americans oppose wildlife killing contests, in which participants compete for cash and prizes for killing the most, the largest or even the smallest animals in organized competitions.⁴

A keystone study titled *America's Wildlife Values* has documented a substantial shift in public attitudes away from a *traditionalist* view of wildlife—a belief of human mastery over wildlife and that wildlife should be managed for human benefit—and toward a *mutualist* view of wildlife, or the belief that humans and wildlife should coexist and that the welfare of animals is important.⁵ That study also found that Maine has nearly 10% more mutualists than traditionalists, and that 68% of Mainers agreed with the statement that the state should strive for environmental protection over economic growth.⁶

Other studies, including the *Nature of Americans Report*, have found that Americans express broad interest in nature, believe connecting with nature is important, and want to conserve wildlife species and their habitats.⁷ In recent years the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and the Wildlife Management Institute have noted these studies and underscored the need for state wildlife management agencies to appeal to a broader constituency to ensure that wildlife agencies remain influential in the future.⁸

We therefore ask that this committee to vote ought not to pass, and that you uphold the rights of Mainers to advance any and all policy issues that are important to them. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

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¹ See *Virginia Parker et al. v. Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife* at <https://www.courts.maine.gov/news/parker/index.html>

² Constitution of the State of Maine at <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9050>

³ "American Attitudes Towards Hunting, Fishing, Sport Shooting, and Trapping," Responsive Management and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (2019), p. 14,

https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/7715/5733/7920/NSSF_2019_Attitudes_Survey_Report.pdf

⁴ National Public Opinion, January 2022, Remington Research Group,

<https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/docs/National-Public-Opinion-011022-condensed.pdf>

⁵ Manfredo, M.J., Sullivan, L., Don Carlos, A.A., Dietsch, A.M., Teel, T.L., Bright, A.D., & Bruskotter, J. (2018). *America's Wildlife Values: The Social Context of Wildlife Management in the U.S.* National report from the research project entitled "America's Wildlife Values." Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/wp-content/uploads/sites/124/2019/01/AWV-National-Final-Report.pdf>

⁶ Dietsch, A.M., Don Carlos, A.W., Manfredo, M. J., Teel, T. L., & Sullivan, L. (2018). State report for Maine from the research project entitled "America's Wildlife Values." Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University,

Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources.

<https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/results/>.

⁷ Kellert, S.R., Case, D.J., Escher, D., Witter, D.J., Mikels-Carrasco, J., Seng, P.T. April 2017. *The Nature of Americans: National Report*. [https://natureofamericans.org/sites/default/files/reports/Nature-of-Americans National Report 1.3 4-26-17.pdf](https://natureofamericans.org/sites/default/files/reports/Nature-of-Americans%20National%20Report%201.3%204-26-17.pdf)

⁸ The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and the Wildlife Management Institute: *The Fish and Wildlife Agency Relevance Roadmap (v1.0); Enhanced Conservation Through Broader Engagement*. September 2019 at [https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/2515/7547/9977/Fish Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap Final 12-04-19-lowres.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/2515/7547/9977/Fish_Wildlife_Relevancy_Roadmap_Final_12-04-19-lowres.pdf)