

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D.1095**

**“An Act to Restrict Removal of Common Loons for Relocation in  
Maine from Bodies of Water of 500 Acres or Less”**

**Presented by:** Representative LYMAN of Livermore Falls. (BY REQUEST)  
**Cosponsored by:** Senator RAFFERTY of York and Representatives: BAGSHAW of  
Windham, COLLAMORE of Pittsfield, DRINKWATER of Milford, GRIFFIN of  
Levant, HAGGAN of Hampden, MASON of Lisbon, MORRIS of Turner, WHITE of  
Guilford.

**DATE OF HEARING: April 14, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 1095**.

This bill prohibits the removal of a Common Loon from a body of water that measures 500 acres or less as part of a wildlife relocation program.

We recognize that Maine residents and visitors cherish the loons that inhabit the thousands of lakes and ponds in our state. Maine’s loon population is quite robust and makes over 70% of the breeding loons in the northeastern U.S. While loons face challenges throughout their range, Maine’s adult population has been steadily rising since the 1980s. Our chick population has been relatively stable, indicating we are likely near capacity on most of our lakes and ponds. Other northern states in the U.S. are not as fortunate; two states list the Common Loon as threatened, six list it as a species of concern, and another five consider it extirpated. Loons are not listed in Maine because they are considered relatively abundant and secure.

Maine’s loons are part of a larger population, one that spans all of New England. There is no guarantee that a loon chick hatched on a specific lake will return to that waterbody when it reaches breeding age. It very likely will settle somewhere else, possibly tens or hundreds of miles away. Translocation of wildlife, including loons, is a well-accepted wildlife management tool that can be used to aid population recovery or to relocate problem individuals.

Since 2016, Maine has contributed to recovery efforts in Massachusetts, by permitting the translocation of chicks to the state. This project is now complete; however it was a proven success and exemplified cooperation among Maine, Vermont, New York, and Massachusetts fish and wildlife agencies for the benefit of the larger northeastern population.

There are several examples where wildlife has been translocated from one state to another to aid in recovery efforts. Maine's Atlantic Puffin population recovery was jump-started by translocating 10-day old chicks from Great Island, Newfoundland to Eastern Egg Rock, where biologists reared them in artificial burrows. Today we have over 1,200 puffin pairs nesting on at least four islands.

The Peregrine Falcon is another success story that would not have been possible without contributions from other locations. Extirpated in Maine by 1962, this species' recovery began with the releases of 153 captive-bred young peregrines in the 1980s and 1990s. Maine and several other states benefited from "hacking" programs that used genetic stock obtained worldwide. Our population has since grown to over 40 nesting pairs.

More recently, Maine has been on the giving end by translocating over 130 Wild Turkeys to Texas in 2021-2023. Turkeys from Maine and eight other states were translocated to Texas in efforts to restore their population to a level that can someday sustain hunting.

Each of these translocation efforts involved extensive planning, an in-depth understanding of the biology and ecology of the animals, cooperation of federal and state agencies, involvement of non-governmental organizations, transportation considerations, federal and state permit requirements, animal care standards and agreements, and public outreach and education.

Maine has benefited as a recipient of translocated wildlife from other states for recovery purposes and should retain the option to do the same for other states. This bill could remove that option for a specific scenario (loons on lakes <500 acres) and set a precedent that could have unforeseen consequences in the future. For those reasons, we are opposed to this bill.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.