



T4 Indian Purchase Township, Jo- Mary Island, Maine

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LD-1737, “An Act to Ensure the Future of Maine’s Sporting Camp Heritage”

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and respective members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Katy Wood, I am a resident of T4 Indian Purchase Township. I own and operate with my husband, Bud Utecht, Buckhorn Camps and I proudly serve as a Board Director of the Maine Sporting Camp Association. I am providing testimony today in support of LD-1737, as Amended by the Sponsor (5-19-2025).

Buckhorn Camps is a traditional Maine sporting camp founded in 1895. Located on a 332-acre island in T4 Indian Purchase Township—Jo Mary Island—Bud and I have the honor of being the first private landowners on this land, having purchased the camps in June 2020 after decades of leased operations. As new sporting camp owners, we fully embraced the responsibility of preserving Buckhorn’s legacy. We underwent an extensive inspection and licensing process through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and complied with a septic system review due to our waterfront location. We renew our license annually and remain committed to operating a safe, welcoming, and regulation-compliant facility.

However, we are increasingly concerned about the future of Maine’s sporting camp heritage under current standards. The existing regulatory framework often applies requirements designed for urban lodging — such as those in Portland or Bangor — to off-grid, remote locations like ours. This includes mandates for sprinkler systems, individualized septic systems for each cabin, and infrastructure upgrades that are simply not feasible on remote islands with limited water access, no grid electricity, and virtually no road infrastructure.

We know of fellow sporting camp owners who have tried to sell, only to find out that the regulations in place make it nearly impossible for new buyers to operate as a sporting camp. Many have been forced to sell their camps as private compounds instead, effectively removing

these properties from Maine's outdoor heritage economy. That's not just a loss for the owners—it's a loss for our state's cultural and economic fabric.

These camps serve a vital role in connecting people to the North Maine Woods. They support local guides, outfitters, and tourism, and they are one of the few ways people can still disconnect and immerse themselves in Maine's natural beauty.

LD 1737 proposes common-sense distinctions between remote commercial sporting camps and more accessible lodging facilities. It recognizes the realities of operating in unorganized territories, protects our heritage, and ensures that future generations can continue this tradition.

We strongly support this bill and urge the committee to pass it. This legislation is not about avoiding safety or health—it's about fairness, practicality, and preserving something uniquely Maine.

Thank you for your time, and for considering our perspective as proud stewards of Buckhorn Camps.

Sincerely,

Katy Wood & Bud Utecht

Owners, Buckhorn Camps

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