

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 2054**

**“An Act to Clarify the Laws Regarding Moose Hunting Permits for Hunting  
Outfitters”**

**SPONSORED BY:** Presented by Representative MASON of Lisbon.

**DATE OF HEARING: January 21, 2026**

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Timothy Peabody, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in support of L.D. 2054 An Act to Clarify the Laws Regarding Moose Hunting Permits for Hunting Outfitters.

This bill that Representative Mason agreed to sponsor originated from our Department recognizing the need to clarify some ambiguity as well as keep the moose lodge, hunting outfitter permit allocation process aligned with what the original intent of the law aimed to do.

I would like to offer some history on the law for the Committee’s awareness. The original law that allocated a percentage of moose hunting permits to be available to “hunting outfitters” (Public Law Chapter 437) went into effect in 2014. The law specified that each year 10% of all moose permits exceeding 3,140 of the total moose permits provided shall be allocated to hunting outfitters by means of a lottery. At that time a “hunting outfitter” meant a person who operated an eating and lodging place licensed under Title 22, chapter 562 and who provided package deals that included food, lodging and the services of a guide licensed under Title 12 Chapter 927 for the purpose of hunting. The hunting outfitter permit recipient was allowed to sell or transfer that permit only once, and only under certain conditions.

The Department testified neither for nor against the bill, supporting ways to stimulate Maine’s economy and the tradition provided by the sporting camp industry in Maine but citing multiple concerns over social, biological and administrative impacts for the department if the law was enacted. Between 2014 (when the law passed) and 2017, the number of permits allocated never exceeded 3,140 (the minimum permit allocation threshold to provide hunting outfitter moose permits) so no permits were allotted to hunting outfitters.

In 2017, a bill was proposed (LD 843) to change the formula for hunting outfitter moose permit allocations. The bill was amended, and the final law reduced the number of moose hunting permits that may be issued to nonresidents from 10% to 8% and allowed up to 2% of the total number of moose hunting permits to be issued to qualified hunting lodges. IFW opposed the amended version because it created an issue of fairness for nonresident applicants. This bill was

vetoed by then Governor LePage and was overridden by the Legislature and went into effect in 2018 as Public Law Chapter 458.

Since then, there have been moose permits for hunting lodges allocated each year. IFW administers this program and questions have arisen on how it is administered in terms of who meets the statutory criteria vs. the intent of the law, business related complaints and concerns from one hunting outfitter over others whether it is questions on the qualifications of a hunting outfitter or illegal sales and trading of these permits the list goes on.

LD 2054 proposes to bring clarity to some of the questions beginning with Section 1 of the bill clarifying that moose permits for hunting lodges do not qualify for deferments i.e. medical or multiple permits in a household, that are afforded to the general moose permit lottery. Current law states that "*A permit issued under this subsection may only be used for the year, season, sex, and wildlife management district for which the permit is issued*" which isolates the permits from considerations of the general lottery related to deferments. We are hoping for a good discussion on this issue to provide clarity to the hunting community.

Section 2 of the bill proposes to clarify that a recipient of a moose permit granted under the Lodge Permit section may not sell a subpermittee or an alternate subpermittee designation. Complaints have been received about the sale of subpermittee designation, and the Department would like the perspective of this Committee on this issue, should we mirror the prohibition of the sale of a subpermittee in the general moose permit lottery?

Since last session in addition to the clarifications referenced in this bill there have been many conversations about ways in which this process can or should be "cleaned up" further. In some cases, there are so few bull-only moose permits distributed in certain WMDs for a specific season that given the formula for permit distribution between residents, nonresidents and hunting outfitters, the hunting outfitters will be issued all available nonresident permits in a particular zone for a particular season and there will never be any permits left for a nonresident moose hunter who applies in the WMD of their choice. The department would like to discuss this further with the Committee and perhaps amend the bill to include a way to address this issue.

In conclusion, the Department tries to focus on the management of the moose population through science and fair distribution of available permits. We continuously face the social ramifications of the lottery processes and have been asked to clarify the boundaries, enforce the intent of the law and seek changes to the law to reduce frustration and confusion.

We are aware of other individuals, organizations and businesses that will be interested in adding additional amendments to this bill and we look forward to the conversations

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

**Possible Amendment Language for LD 2054 presented by MDIFW**  
(anything struck through or underlined is part of LD 2054, anything highlighted in yellow is amended language)

**§11154.**

**14. Permits for hunting lodges.** Moose hunting permits issued to hunting outfitters must be allocated through a chance drawing separate from the chance drawing under subsection 9. The fee for a moose hunting permit under this subsection is \$1,500.

A. For the purposes of this subsection, "hunting outfitter" means a person who operates a sporting camp as defined under Title 22, section 2491, subsection 11 that is licensed under Title 22, chapter 562 and who provides package deals that include food, lodging and the services of a guide licensed under chapter 927 for the purpose of hunting. [PL 2013, c. 538, §24 (NEW).]

B. A hunting outfitter may sell or transfer a permit allocated under this subsection only once, only to a hunter who is eligible under paragraph F and only under the following conditions:

- (1) The sale or transfer must be part of a package deal that includes the food and lodging to be provided by the hunting outfitter to the person receiving the permit;
- (2) The person receiving the permit from the hunting outfitter must be accompanied during the hunt by a guide licensed under chapter 927;
- (3) The hunting outfitter must notify the department of the identity of the person receiving the permit; and
- (4) The hunting permit may not be sold or transferred by the hunter. [PL 2013, c. 538, §24 (NEW).]

C. A hunting outfitter may be allocated more than one permit. [PL 2013, c. 538, §24 (NEW).]

D. A permit allocated under this subsection may be used only for the year, season, sex and wildlife management area for which the permit is issued. A deferment may not be granted under the authority of subsection 17 or 18 for a permit allocated under this subsection. [PL 2013, c. 538, §24 (NEW).]

E. Permits allocated under this subsection may not exceed ~~10%~~ 5% of the total permits issued per year for each season, sex and wildlife management area permit type. [PL 2013, c. 538, §24 (NEW).]

F. An individual may hunt with a permit sold or transferred under this subsection only if that individual is otherwise eligible to obtain and hunt with a permit under subsection 5. [PL 2013, c. 538, §24 (NEW).]

G. If proceeds in any year from the auction authorized under subsection 11 are less than \$107,000, proceeds from the sale of moose permits to hunting outfitters pursuant to this subsection must be used to fund youth conservation education programs as provided under subsection 11 up to \$107,000. The remainder must be deposited in the Moose Research and Management Fund under section 10263. [PL 2017, c. 458, §2 (AMD).]

I. A recipient of a moose permit granted under this subsection may not sell a subpermittee or an alternate subpermittee designation.  
[PL 2017, c. 458, §2 (AMD).]

**Summary:**

LD 2054 proposes to prohibit a hunting outfitter from deferring a moose lodge hunting permit due to significant medical illness or due to a single household's holding multiple permits. The bill also clarifies that a recipient of a moose permit from a hunting outfitter may not sell a subpermittee or an alternate subpermittee designation.

This suggested amendment language will reduce from 10% down to 5% the number of total permits allocated for moose hunting lodge permits per year for each season, sex and wildlife management district.