



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Sally Cluchey

Phone: (207) 814-8879

Sally.Cluchey@legislature.maine.gov

February 26, 2026

Testimony of Rep. Sally Cluchey regarding

LD 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Baldacci, Representative Robers, and distinguished members of the AFA and IFW Committees.

On behalf of myself and Representatives Bridgeo, Dill, and Terry, ^{Roberts} I am here to respectfully propose an amendment to the supplemental budget for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to add a new initiative supporting restoration of public transportation to Swan Island in the Kennebec River.

Swan Island is a 2,000-acre wildlife management area located in the Kennebec River between Richmond and Dresden. It is owned and managed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife as part of the Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area. This extraordinary public resource combines wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation, historical preservation, and education in a way few places in Maine can.

The island provides critical habitat for white tailed deer, bald eagles, and migratory birds and was the site where the department began the successful process of repopulating the state's wild turkey population. It is also home to the remnants of the former town of Perkins, including five standing homes from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a cemetery dating back to 1802, and the entire island is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For decades, Swan Island served as a hub for Mainers across the state for wildlife education, learn-to-hunt programs, camping, hiking, and school-based experiential learning.

However, in 2022, ferry service to the island was discontinued due to aging infrastructure and updated U.S. Coast Guard inspection and staffing requirements. Without a compliant vessel and necessary upgrades, regular ferry access became infeasible. As a result, public access has been drastically reduced, limited primarily to those with private boats.

The process of restoring ferry access has involved two key steps: rebuilding the pier and developing a transportation plan. Last year the AFA Committee appropriated \$150,000 in general funds to match \$350,000 in federal funds for pier repairs, and I believe that work is either underway or already completed. We also established a working group to develop a plan to restore accessible public transportation.

The report back from the working group recommended a phased approach for restoring access: first contracting with a licensed small passenger vessel for seasonal service, and concurrently upgrading the department's vessel to accommodate larger educational and historic groups in future seasons.

In response to those recommendations, we respectfully propose that the supplemental budget for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife be amended to include:

- A one-time General Fund allocation of \$50,000 to upgrade and certify the department's vessel to be able to accommodate large; and
- An ongoing annual General Fund allocation of \$45,000 to contract for seasonal small-vessel transportation services.

Had the working group report been completed earlier, we would have worked with the department to include this initiative in the Governor's proposed supplemental budget. The department supports the recommendations of the report. Rather than introducing separate legislation, we respectfully encourage the Committee to incorporate this funding directly into the supplemental budget as a new initiative.

This modest investment restores access to a unique Wildlife Management Area of statewide significance, strengthens educational, and conservation programming for all Mainers, and supports the local economy. Thank you for your consideration.