

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 2221**

“An Act to Amend the Composition of the Landowners and Land Users Relations
Advisory Board”

Reported by: Senator BALDACCI of Penobscot

March 2, 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Kris MacCabe, Landowner Relations Corporal for the Maine Warden Service speaking on behalf of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, in support of L.D. 2221 An Act to Amend the Composition of the Landowners and Land Users Relations Advisory Board.

This bill comes before you as a result of Resolve Chapter 82 (LD 1308), Directing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Examine Issues Related to Public Access to Privately Owned Lands. After extensive discussions with Working Group members in 2025, one of the key priorities identified by the Working Group was to continue addressing these issues through the already established Landowners and Land Users Advisory Board and this bill will help that priority. This bill advances that recommendation by strengthening and refining the Board’s composition to better reflect today’s access landscape.

Specifically, the bill amends the membership of the Landowners and Land Users Relations Advisory Board by:

- Increasing the number of outdoor recreationist representatives;
- Adding greater specificity regarding the qualifications and experience required of those members;
- Adding a representative from an organization that manages recreational access to the North Maine Woods; and
- Adding five nonvoting members: two representatives from the Department’s Bureau of Warden Service, one representative from the Department of Economic and Community Development, and two representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

These changes are directly aligned with the findings of the Working Group report, which states that the *“legislative recommendations are intended to reduce landowner risk, clarify accountability, and support the long-term sustainability of Maine’s access tradition. Ensuring the long-term stability of Maine’s public access tradition requires statutory updates that reflect*

modern recreational pressures and provide clearer protections for landowners. As new uses, technologies, and visitation patterns increase the potential for environmental damage, landowners have expressed growing concern about their exposure to cleanup and restoration costs. Strengthening Maine's legal framework can help address these concerns, reinforce shared responsibility among users, and encourage continued public access to private lands."

Current statute already requires the Board to conduct an organizational review every five years to assess whether additional or different representation is needed. Both the Board and the Department believe that these adjustments are appropriate at this time and will help carry forward the goals identified by the Working Group.

By broadening representation and ensuring relevant expertise is at the table, this bill will strengthen collaboration between landowners, recreationists, and state agencies, and help secure the future of Maine's longstanding public access tradition.

For these reasons, the Board and the Department strongly support this bill.