

LD 125 testimony as prepared March 12, 2021 by Al Cowperthwaite

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Forestry and Conservation Committee. My name is Al Cowperthwaite and I am a resident of Houlton. Today I am offering testimony in my capacity as Executive Director of North Maine Woods Inc. related to LD 125.

It is no secret that there are many different landowners in three and half million-acre North Maine Woods program, all which have their own individual management styles. The result is a very diverse northern Maine forest. Some landowners have created significant ecological reserve areas where no harvesting or road building is allowed. Some owners conduct intensive harvest and forest regeneration programs, as necessary to support a future supply of wood for Maine's mills. And then there are many owners that manage their forests somewhere in the middle of the spectrum.

This combination of older timber in mature forest stands, open forest areas in recently cutover tracts, and middle-aged stands jointly contain many different types of forest habitats which supports a tremendous variety of different wildlife species.

It is well known that North Maine Woods has become a destination mecca for bear, grouse, and moose hunters from all over the country which provides a tremendous benefit to the northern Maine economy. Newly harvested areas provide browse for the regions burgeoning moose population.

Young aspen trees are known as pioneer species that are the first to come into cut over areas, which are highly desired by ruffed grouse.

Raspberry patches provide high protein feed for our black bears and bear hunting has replaced deer hunting as a major attraction for hunters from many states. Bear hunting is the bread and butter for most sporting camps and guiding services located in communities surrounding our northern Maine forest.

Our visitation numbers show that bear, grouse and moose hunters make up nearly sixty percent of total annual use of the North Maine Woods. All of these wildlife species rely on early successional growth provided by cut over and regenerating regions.

We also now have Maine people guiding bird watchers, who travel to northern Maine from other states to find bird species that only exist in the diverse forests within North Maine Woods region.

I believe that the current management methods of the various landowners should be allowed to continue in the interest of maintaining a healthy wildlife population over the millions of acres in northern Maine.

Thank you for your consideration.