

Legislative Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry  
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ACF Committee Chair's Senator James Dill and Representative Margaret O'Neil

TESTIMONEY TO THE AGRICULTURAL, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY  
COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 657 "An Act to Clarify the Law Enforcement Powers of  
the Bureau of Parks and Lands."

March 18, 2021

Dear Senator's Dill and Representative O'Neil and Honorable Members of the Agricultural, Conservation and Forestry Committee. My name is Tim Caverly of Millinocket and I am speaking to support the passage of L.D. 657.

I am an author and creator of Allagash Tails. A small Maine business who has published 10 books about our northern forest. For the last several years my wife and I have been visiting schools throughout New England, where we have presented 300 programs to over 10,000 students to encourage learning about Maine's natural world.

Before becoming a Maine author, I was a former Park Ranger/Manager/Supervisor for the Bureau of Parks and Lands. During my 32-year career, I worked in the following Parks: Sebago Lake, Aroostook, and Cobscook Bay. In 1999 I retired after eighteen years as Supervisor of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, and the Penobscot River Corridor. While employed, I attended several Bureau sponsored Ranger Academy's, where managers and rangers learned about law enforcement requirements and techniques. After one of these trainings, I took an "*Oath to Uphold the Laws of the State of Maine* and became a Commissioned Law Enforcement Officer.

Now retired, my wife and I stay in contact with our former associates to enjoy camping and visiting while at our parks. There we observe firsthand some of the same instances I encountered as a Ranger.

During my work experiences I watched previous Park Directors and middle Division Directors refuse to recognize the numerous public safety occurrences in Maine Parks. To the point that, while rangers received random law enforcement training and were given badges, they were not consistently designated nor allowed to conduct enforcement action. They could inform, educate, and invite compliance, but if there were issues such as illegal drugs, indecent exposure, stalking, theft, OUI or domestic disputes; park managers and rangers only had (have) the option of phoning for outside help. I wish to thank our Park and Lands Director Andy Cutko for his willingness to discuss agency needs and his understanding of the demands placed on field staff.

In 2020 Bureau of Parks and Lands Parks reported there were over 3 million people who visited Maine Parks. Due to Rep. Skolfield's interest, BPL is now keeping records of the public safety

incidents that occurred in 2020. On review, it is interesting to note, that despite many items of interest that are found in the incident document, there are parks for which there were not any episodes reported. It is unlikely with last year's record public use, there were areas that did not experience any types of disruptions. Perhaps those managers were not asked to keep track.

In 2020 AFC enacted legislation to require the Bureau of Maine Parks and Lands to train staff in enforcement. The Department complied with the letter of the law, but not the intent by failing to authorize/designate rangers to deal effectively with incidents.

So, LD 657 "An Act to Clarify the Law Enforcement Powers of the Bureau of Parks and Lands" is necessary and proper to ensure that the dedicated park personnel will receive the commissions, designations to provide rangers with the equipment and internal support to actively enforce Park statutes.

During my career as a Park Ranger, Manager and Supervisor, I was directly involved with or knowledge of the following occurrences on State Park property: possession of endangered species such as a Common Loon. Planting of marijuana, intentionally setting of forest fires, OUI's, domestic disputes, driving to endanger, speeding through campgrounds and playground areas, poaching of fish and game, breaking, and entering of state buildings, arson, dogs off leash and canine's chasing deer and many others.

In my opinion and experience, for the safety of the park visitor and the park infrastructure, Park managers and rangers should have the training, authorization, and support from the Bureau of Parks and Lands to effectively resolve public safety issues as they occur.

My column found in an upcoming April issue of 'The Maine Sportsman' will discuss, an experience I once faced on the Allagash. In that instance, it was not so much the significance of issuing a summons that was important, but the violator(s) understanding I could summons if needed.

Let me know if I may answer any questions and as always, thank you for your interest.

Tim

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