



Maine Professional Guides Association

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Testimony of Don Kleiner Executive Director Supporting LD 142 An Act To Give the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Rule-making Authority To Establish a Bear Season Framework and Bag Limits

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative Landry and distinguished members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. My name Don Kleiner, I live in Union and am the Executive Director of the Maine Professional Guides Association.

When I introduced myself to this committee, I mentioned the North American Wildlife Model and specifically your role in that model setting broad policies for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to achieve. This bill would change current policy giving management authority for bears to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and take it out of your hands.

When the current laws were established there was concern with what we all perceived to be a small and declining bear population. Today we are faced with the opposite of that concern. A healthy and growing bear population. We need to not only encourage more participation in the hunt (our primary tool for reducing the population) but we need to increase the harvest. A level of management that we feel would be best accomplished by the Department and not the legislature.

The language in the bill was developed as a compromise between several interested parties last spring. Passed by this committee but never enacted by the full legislature.

As with any compromise there are aspects that are not perfect in our view. The suggested resident fee structure does not fairly represent the value of this important big game animal. If the Department should add the extra week at the beginning of the season allowed in this legislation the pre-bait season start is set and would become three weeks instead of the current month. Uniform statewide seasons, limits and opportunity for different methods of hunting are critical to our members' success statewide; we will work with the Department to ensure that is the case. There is also concern that if we meet the harvest goal in a season that the season may be closed early, an untenable situation for our small business membership.

Even with these concerns we support giving the Commissioner and the Department full management authority and encourage your support for LD 142.

Thank you very much and I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.