



To: **Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife**
Cross Building
Room 206
Augusta, ME

Re: **LD 142 – An Act to Give the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife**
Rulemaking Authority to Establish a Bear Season Framework and Bag
Limits.

Position: **Support**

Date: **February 5, 2021**

Honorable Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

My name is Joseph Mullin and I am the New England States Senior Coordinator for the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF). As an avid sportsman and regular non-resident license purchaser who enjoys participating in the many outdoor opportunities that Maine has to offer, I write to you today on behalf of myself and CSF in support LD 142 – legislation that would promulgate rulemaking authority over Maine’s bear season dates and bag limits to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) Commissioner.

Since 1989, CSF has dedicated itself to the mission of working with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus, and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing and shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the conservation interests of America's hunters and anglers.

Pursuing black bears in Maine is a long-standing hunting tradition enjoyed by Mainers and non-Mainers alike. Sportsmen and women travel from across the nation each year just for the opportunity to participate in this experience. As someone who has made the trip up to Maine for the past few years for this very purpose, I can attest to the sheer awe that non-residents hold for the state’s natural resources. This is a testament to the MDIFW’s outstanding work and continued efforts towards making Maine a paradise for sportsmen and women. Thus, affording the MDIFW Commissioner the authority to establish a bear season framework and season bag limits is a natural

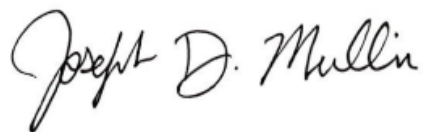
step towards ensuring the conservation of one of Maine's most iconic game species.

Providing the MDIFW Commissioner with the authorities mentioned above is prudent for a variety of reasons. The first and likely most obvious case for this delegation is the fact that MDIFW is in the best position to make sound, science-based management decisions. For over a century, the MDIFW has been the driving force behind Maine's on-the-ground efforts that have resulted in burgeoning wildlife populations. While the authority would be vested with the Commissioner, she would be working alongside a force of highly-educated and widely-experienced staff, which includes a legion of biologists, policy experts, and support and enforcement personnel – all of which will have an instrumental role in determining the appropriate bear seasons and bag limits. Once this framework has been determined, the MDIFW would still be required to publish a notice of agency rulemaking proposal, which would be subject to public comments and testimony at a public hearing. Following this step, the MDIFW would then present its case before the MDIFW Advisory Council, who would ultimately approve or deny the proposed framework. Essentially, while LD 142 would vest the authority for these decisions within the MDIFW Commissioner, she would be leaning on a qualified support team at each step along the way, and would still need to go through the established process that is currently in place.

Additionally, the Commissioner is in a unique position, where she is able to react to changing conditions in real-time. Evaluating the many variables that go towards setting a bear hunting season, and working alongside the inter-departmental staff highlighted above, the Commissioner would be able to shorten or expand the window, relying on current figures and observations. Similarly, the Commissioner is likely the most well-informed individual on current harvest rates and may be able to increase or decrease the bag limit, should there be a need. Rather than going through the legislative process, the Commissioner would be able to take reactionary measures regulatorily, if needed, to nimbly address changing conditions as they occur.

Respectfully, I urge the members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to support LD 142 and provide rulemaking authority over Maine's bear season dates and bag limits to the MDIFW Commissioner. Should you require any additional information on this, or any other sportsmen-related topic, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph D. Mullin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joseph Mullin
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