

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST
LD 544**

“An Act To Eliminate Moose Permits for Hunting Lodges”

Presented by Representative ANDREWS of Paris. (BY REQUEST)

DATE OF HEARING: March 15, 2021

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Bill Swan, the Director of Licensing and Registration at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, neither for nor against **L.D. 544**.

This bill repeals the provision of law that granted moose permits to hunting lodges through a separate chance lottery. Currently, 2% of moose permits each year are allocated to hunting outfitters. A hunting outfitter is defined in law to be a person who operates a sporting camp as defined under Title 22, section 2491, subsection 11 that is licensed under Title 22, chapter 562 and who provides package deals that include food, lodging and the services of a licensed hunting guide. The definition of a sporting camp as defined in Title 22, section 2491, subsection 11 is “a building or group of buildings devoted primarily to the offering of primitive lodging for a fee to persons who want primitive recreation, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing and similar camps”.

The Department currently accepts applications from sporting camps in the month of December and runs the special lottery to allocate the permits in early January. Winners of the permits are notified by mail in mid-January each year. This timing allows winners of moose permits sufficient time to market them to interested customers. The winner of each permit is required to pay the Department \$1500 for the permit with all the money allocated to the moose research fund and thus provides significant funding for some of the moose research that IFW conducts. The sporting camp is then allowed to sell the permit to an eligible hunter. The sale must be for a package deal that includes food, lodging, and the services of a licensed hunting guide. Typically, around 85% of the sporting camp applicants win a permit. The number of permits allocated has been 50, 57, and 62 respectively in the 3 years of 2019 thru 2021 since the current law regarding moose permits for hunting outfitters was enacted.

The Department recognizes that these moose permits which are allocated to hunting outfitters provide a significant economic boost to those businesses, the surrounding rural areas, and to those individual hunting guides who are hired to provide guide services for these hunts.

The administration of this special lottery does place a significant additional administrative burden on the Department. We have managed to get most of the wrinkles ironed out of the process so we can continue to handle this special lottery as it is currently defined in law.

As background, IFW was NFNA the original bill that passed in 2014, Plc 437/ LD 738. In 2017 it was modified within PLc 458/ LD 843. IFW opposed this bill. Then Governor LePage vetoed the bill and the Legislature overrode it during the time when they overrode most bills that the Governor vetoed.

One last consideration if you decide to move forward with this bill is to take a close look at the current law. The Department believes that additional changes would be required in current law to cleanly repeal the law allocating moose permits to hunting outfitters.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.