



Maine Dairy Industry Association

In Opposition to
Tuesday, April 20, 2021 1:00 PM

L.D. 1033 An Act To Allow Sunday Hunting on Private Property with the Written Permission of the Landowner

L.D. 1054 An Act To Allow Hunting on Sundays with Written Consent on Private Property

L.D. 1212 An Act To Allow Sunday Hunting North of U.S. Route 2 from the New Hampshire Border to Bangor, North of Route 9 from Bangor to the Canadian Border and within That Portion of the White Mountain National Forest inside the State

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Senator Dill, Representative Landry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

Maine Dairy Industry Association (MDIA) is the agricultural trade group that represents all of the Maine cow dairy farms who are shipping milk for drinking or food production. Most of our farm families also grow the hay, corn, alfalfa, and other cover crops that are used to feed their animals on the **over 700,000 acres of fields and forests** directly under their stewardship. Most of these farm families have a long tradition of allowing public access on their farms' land for hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, ATC riding, and other outdoor recreational activities.

Our farms and the dairy businesses that support those farms provide **over 4000 jobs in Maine**. That's more than \$150 million in payroll. We contribute **over half a billion dollars (\$570,000,000) in annual economic activity** – primarily, but not exclusively, in rural communities in all corners of the state. And we contribute **over \$25 million in state and local taxes** that pay for schools, roads, local government services, emergency responders and IF&W state wardens and biologists.

MDIA supports Maine's hunting tradition. Our farmers are part of the large network of private landowners who have a history of allowing the public to **use their land free of charge**. And whether they allow free access or require written permission – either way, our farmers feel a responsibility for those who are present on their land for any reason.

Dairy farming is a 365-day-a-year activity. Cows need to be milked every day, at least twice a day. Dairy farmers do not get large amounts of “down time”. **When there are members of the public on farmlands – especially those who are not affiliated or familiar with the farms – the farmer is essentially “on call”. They do not get any rest time. Except for Sundays. And now these bills are seeking to take their limited “day of rest” or time for alternative activities on the farm away from them.**

In reality, public access comes with a big cost for farmers. People unfamiliar with agriculture or the specifics of certain agricultural enterprises can inadvertently cause damage to fields, feed piles or silos, and other natural areas by driving or tramping through ecologically sensitive areas. There is the cost clean-up involved with items abandoned/left behind/dumped on farmland – though the sporting community is not often the culprit of such egregious behavior. There is the potential for liability if a member of the public travels through a hazardous area (either due to natural terrain or because of the agricultural equipment or activity going on in that area). This impacts

insurance costs and exposes the farm to potential litigation. If this were another state other than Maine, this alone might be a reason for farmers to restrict access. Thankfully, Maine's tradition of mutual respect between our residents mitigates this potential danger. However, before and especially during the COVID pandemic, we have seen a significant increase in people moving to Maine from other states. And Maine is a sporting destination for our unspoiled nature and offers a great opportunity for hunters from around the world to come and recreate or hunt here. Not all of them understand the unique historic balance of responsibilities between Maine's landowner community and the sportsmen who use their land.

Bills to expand the hunting seasons to allow Sunday hunting have been around for decades. Each year the proponent of the legislation find new and creative ways to carve out special exemptions for this expansion, like only in certain areas of the state, or only on certain types of land, or with special types of permission. **Instead of respecting and appreciating the opportunities that are being offered by farmers and other landowners on 6 out of every 7 days, or 86% of every week, with each creative variation of Sunday hunting, the hunting community is pushing for greater control over the activities that will occur on someone else's land.** These special circumstances are unenforceable – as IF&W wardens and law enforcement have testified in past hearings. And the proponents of those special carve-outs are missing the point. **Private landowners in Maine make up a huge proportion of the land that is accessible and used for hunting now. By continuing to push for hunting on Sundays, they are biting the hand that feeds their sporting industry.** And farmers are frustrated.

MDIA urges you to vote Ought-Not-to-Pass on LD 1033, 1054, and 1212 and allow Maine's private landowners to continue to have 1 day a week when they can be in control of the activities on their own land.

Thank you for your time today and I would be glad to provide additional information or answer any questions at the work session.

Julie-Marie R. Bickford
Executive Director
Maine Dairy Industry Association