



BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS
NEW ENGLAND

April 18, 2021

Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 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

Dear Senator Dill, Representative Landry, and Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting by supporting land conservation, public access to hunting and fishing areas, fair chase, and the sound management of fish and wildlife and their habitats.

On behalf of BHA's Maine members we are testifying in support of LD 1212. However, to avoid concerns of landowners in border communities and more develop areas, we propose that the bill be amended to only allow Sunday hunting to the unorganized territories and in the White Mountain National Forest.

Public access and opportunity for hunters & anglers are core issues for BHA, and Sunday hunting in Maine directly relates to these tenets. Ten states have eliminated or loosened restriction on Sunday hunting in recent years, leaving Maine as one of only two states in the US that does not allow Sunday hunting. Lack of opportunity is often cited as a reason by many hunters who give up hunting, adding Sundays to hunting seasons would increase opportunities for working-age and youth hunters to become engaged in hunting and conservation.

Sunday hunting would provide more opportunities to hunt, and increased revenues from license sales would help support DIFW's programs. Using data on changes in license sales in states that had eliminated or significantly reduced Sunday hunting restrictions, a 2011 study found that if statewide Sunday hunting restrictions were eliminated over 2,500 additional hunters in Maine would likely have been recruited or retained by 2016, resulting in over \$850,000 in revenue for DIFW.



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Sunday hunting in northern Maine and the White Mountain National Forest would have important economic benefits because many more hunters would travel to these areas if both weekend days were open to hunting. The study *Hunting in Maine: 2013*, which was prepared for the Maine Department of Tourism and MDIFW, reported that the average Maine hunter spent \$1,429 in 2013, including \$554 on travel expenses. Gateway communities would benefit from Sunday hunting when hunters purchase ammunition, hunting supplies, food & fuel, plus the opportunities for additional services by guides, lodges, sporting camps and others in the hunting industry. As of 2016 this would have amounted to an increase in hunter spending of over \$3.5 million annually by the 2,500 additional hunters who would have been recruited or retained over five years if Sunday hunting had been allowed. While these numbers would be smaller if Sunday hunting were only allowed in part of the state, the benefits would nonetheless be significant for gateway communities.

Sunday hunting in the unorganized territories would avoid the concerns raised by private landowners and recreation groups. Groups such as the Farm Bureau and Maine Woodland Owners Association are opposed to Sunday hunting, but membership in these organizations is primarily located in the organized townships. By amending this bill to allow Sunday hunting only in the unorganized territories and the White Mountain National Forest, the concerns of small woodland owners and farmers would be addressed. Likewise, the large size of ownerships and limited number of hiking trails means that the potential for conflicts between hunters and other user groups would be very low.

In sum, allowing Sunday hunting in the unorganized territories and the White Mountain National Forest would avoid the concerns raised by private landowners and recreational groups, while providing resident and non-resident hunters increased opportunity to access Maine's more remote hunting areas would create economic benefits to northern communities and gateway towns and help increase hunter recruitment and retention.

Sincerely,

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