

Maine Sporting Camp Association (MSCA)

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Testimony in Support of L.D. 1991

An Act related to the Electronic Tagging of Big Game to The Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW)

February 28, 2022

Senator Dill, Representative Landry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW), my name is Wade Kelly, and I am Vice President of the Maine Sporting Camp Association (MSCA) and I also operate the Tylor Kelly Camps in Allagash. The MSCA represents almost 50 sporting lodges from the Rangeley Lakes Region to Lubec and from Belgrade to Allagash. More locations in Maine than Hilton or Marriott.

This Bill does not eliminate tagging stations. It just provides another option.

MSCA's initial support for the concept of electronic or telephonic tagging was to reduce risk of spreading Covid-19 at in-person tagging stations. Uncertainty about the spread of Covid-19 continues. Importantly, in January it was revealed a large percentage of deer in Pennsylvania and New York are involved in the transmission of Covid-19. Although a lot more needs to be learned about this, I wonder how tagging stations will react? Is it advisable for a variety store cashier to put their hand in the mouth of a deer to remove a tooth for a biological sample? And, then return to the cash register and check out 200 people buying beer, milk, cigarettes, and gas? What would Dr. Shah think about a State Agency mandating such a process?

With that being said, the amendment to the first bill on this topic last year, L.D. 1213, discussed giving additional authority to the Department to allow wild game processing facilities, hunting outfitters and other appropriate hunting related businesses to apply to be selected as registration agents and to waive requirements established in the department's rules for registration stations to operate for a minimum number of days per week or a minimum number of hours per day or to satisfy restrictions related to location. MSCA is in favor of legislation to establish this authority.

The following are other reasons MSCA supports the concept of LD 1991:

1. Big game tagging must be made easier and less costly to hunters in time and travel. An alternative is needed to spending hours and hours in a truck going back and forth to a tagging station. This is not good for the environment. The exhaust emissions and fuel costs are significant.
2. The option reduces the time to get large animals like bear and moose into a cooler. Thus, lowering the risk of tainted meat, cross contamination, and wasteful repeat trips from cooler to tagging station and back.
3. Lines at tagging stations are a serious problem when tagging bear and moose especially if the weather is hot.

4. Public safety is enhanced since hunters are less likely to speed on route to get to a tagging station before closing time. The total outdoor experience improves.
5. Guides can quickly move on to the next client or other tasks rather than be detained for hours and hours escorting a client to the tagging station. Thus, generating economic stimulus from revenues for combination hunts for bear or grouse.
6. Flight and travel connections are easier to manage without the need to work around tagging station hours or to take a time-consuming detour to get to a station. Non-resident hunters can spend more time in the outdoors.
7. With some species, this option removes a time-consuming barrier to hunting. We heard about this when dealing with a 20-pound turkey. Imagine the challenges with an 800-pound moose and fewer tagging locations.
8. The requirements for data collection, submission of biological samples, or the return of bands or radio collars are unchanged. No empirical data was provided implying a negative effect of electronic tagging on wildlife management or law enforcement. Only antidotal statements by persons with conflicted interests. Some believe compliance with tagging requirements would increase. Although not the intent of this bill, many states tag completely by telephone or online.

MSCA understands the concerns of staff biologists. However, we are in a world of data overload and the cost to the public to gather data – some of which is never used - must be considered. Moreover, new tools are becoming available for use by biologists like drone surveys, automated intelligence (IA), aerial and satellite imagery, smart game cameras, and more. This bill correctly increases the urgency for the Department to adopt futuristic and inevitable protocols and adapt to the new online world.

The MSCA urges you to support the Bill.

Thank you.

Wade Kelly, Vice-President

*The Maine Sporting Camp Association (MSCA) was founded in 1987 by a group of camp owners to preserve the sporting camp's uniqueness in the State of Maine. By working closely with other groups and exchanging ideas and information, the members of MSCA continue the tradition of providing high quality recreational experiences to individuals and their families, a quality experience that visitors will remember long after they return home. The MSCA is a 501C (6) non-profit organization that is led by a board of directors. **Maine Sporting Camp Association** 126 Western Avenue, Box 153, Augusta, Maine 04330, Phone: (207) 888-3931 Email: info@mainesportingcamps.com; Website: www.mainesportingcamps.com*