



Maine Professional Guides Association

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Opposing LD 1991 An Act Related to the Electronic Registration and Tagging of Big Game

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative Landry and distinguished members of the committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. I am Don Kleiner I live in Union and am representing roughly 1000 guide members of the Maine Professional Guides Association each of them a Maine based small business.

The small businesses I am speaking for today depend on sound wildlife management, based on the best science available. Consistent seasons and harvest goals make planning ahead possible for our members. Maine people have endorsed the careful scientific management of wildlife populations in two statewide referendums. Recognizing the quality of the science and systems used to determine seasons and bag limits.

Electronic tagging is indeed available in many other states, and we hear from members that the data produced from these systems is of a far lower quality than our current system resulting in less precise management. Putting our businesses at risk in this manner is simply not acceptable and we ask you to oppose this bill as written.

Our recent discussion indicated that there is little support among our members for electronic tagging of moose or bear. The feeling being that these populations are too valuable and the management systems so important that the perceived gain would not justify the risk.

You have another bill before the committee today on the electronic tagging of turkey. It seemed to our group that this may prove the way to test the validity of an electronic tagging system for Maine. In a short time, we will have an idea of the compliance levels with an electronic system and the quality of the resulting data. That information will give us an indication of the validity of an electronic system for other species before we move forward. Helping us to balance carefully the ease of an electronic system for successful hunters while maintaining the current level of information integrity as an input into the management system which is critical in our judgement.

That is not to say that we do not recognize the difficulties presented by the current system. We understand that it can be difficult for some successful hunters to find a convenient tagging station. We also believe that there is still considerable opportunity in the current system for broadening the kinds of businesses that might become tagging stations. Perhaps additional guide operations, sporting camps or even butcher shops could become tagging stations. We think that encouraging the Department to do additional work in this direction makes sense. The possibility of electronic tagging needs more attention and thought before a wholesale change that risks what we are currently doing well is changed.

For that reason, I encourage you to not support LD 1991 as written.

An organization of professional guides dedicated to promoting a quality, ethical outdoor experience.

We are supportive of the process outlined in LD 1992 as a test program for electronic tagging that will give us a way to measure the success of the idea without putting other important management systems at risk.

Thank you very much for your consideration in this discussion. I look forward to answering any questions that you might have.