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Testimony Nether For Nor Against LD 814 to Restrict Killing of Coyotes

Honorable Members of the IF&W Committee, Chairs Senator LaFountain and Representative Landry. My name is D. Gordon Mott. I am a private landowner in Lakeville, Penobscot County. As a Maine licensed Forester in private practice I have assisted Maine forest landowners for the past 41 years. Together with my wife Virginia, we raised three coyotes in captivity beginning in 1979 at the request of US Fish and Wildlife Service for 17 years – and we kept sheep. We have some approximate objective knowledge of Maine coyotes and landowners' interests. I am testifying neither for nor against LD 814.

On the one hand, I find this proposal to be one of the most rational and appropriate proposals to come along in the last forty years. The excessive permission that allows intrusion night and day by armed hunters on private property for nearly 9 months of the year for \$4.00 that was put in place in the beginning when coyotes in Maine were viewed with alarm and fear, has permitted unacceptable intrusions around private residences and camps throughout the State in all of this time. It is still going on. Our camps and residences can be approached night and day by hunters where hunting is allowed unless posted. Coyote hunters probably have more generous and liberal rights to prowl armed on private property than law enforcement which needs reasons to be dealing with crime.

We have come to value coyote as a predator where deer damage our private and commercial vegetable crops, where mice harbor ticks with Lyme and other human health organisms and coyotes join with foxes, hawks and other predators to reduce mouse populations, and where coyotes help keep feral cats under control, for examples. We have also learned that coyote hunting has no impact on either coyote numbers or deer populations. Habitat and winter conditions are the principal determinants that define deer abundance. Coyote litters expand to respond to low populations.

There are problems when individuals have the unchecked right to enter private property at night and when hunting can go on daytime all spring and summer season. I know of thefts in the night on private property where the armed intrusion took place under the guise of the \$4.00 permit. I know of intrusions by camera through the bathroom and bedroom windows at a residence under the guise of being there night hunting. I had a pack of coyote dogs let loose on the public road along our property in fawning and general wildlife reproduction season that went in and disturbed everything on the private land.

The only recourse available to the landowner who does not want hunter intrusions night and day for 9 months of the year is to post the property. It costs landowners in time and money for signs and paint far more than it costs the hunter for the licenses. And when posted, all other hunters are barred for all seasons, including normal bird and game seasons, from using the posted land in daytime. So are the hikers, birdwatchers, travelers to the Great Ponds,

- persons and groups who are welcome to come and enjoy the natural private forested landscape. There is no partial posting available – it is all or none.

And then, there really is the other side. On some lands coyotes will always be an undesirable animal in the same way porcupines and raccoons are for some. Owners suffer real emotional loss when coyotes kill pet dogs and cats in their yards. Landowners don't want coyotes mating with their female dogs in heat – as they will. Landowners treasure the young vulnerable fawns that we enjoy watching grow. Some landowners want to protect them for both viewing and in order to support increasing deer populations for their hunting. Feral barn cats are treasured to keep mice away from stored feed. Chickens and ducks require protection. Shepherds and landowners who have sheep that are not protected by a guard animal need to be able to kill predators including coyotes and bears all year. And some people simply do not want the animal to be on their property without the right to kill them.

I am sure you well understand there are these two sides of the situation as I do. This wildlife law now heavily favors the hunting side and burdens the privacy of landowners for increasingly doubtful biological management reasons.

I urge that you take this opportunity to protect the interests of all landowners. The current one-sided interest of the hunters to be able to go wherever they wish armed, night and day on unposted private property for 9 months of the year needs to be righted. We all own all the wildlife, not just the hunting minority in our population. Many of us own and pay for most of the land that grows the wildlife and provides the opportunity for hunting. Wildlife is our public resource and private landowners deserve respect and regard for their contributions to the wildlife economy. And an end to the current policy of wholesale intrusion by hunters on private land for no good biological reason other than to satisfy the appetite of those who want to kill coyotes, in my opinion.

I know well that I am pushing string by asking you to please take this opportunity to finally bring fairness for both sides. If you would simply require that those who want to enter private property night and day for three quarters of the year to hunt, must ask the owners of the private land to give them permission to use their property, there will be no need for posting. Ordinary hunting can go forward freely in season, landowners will be granted the privacy and security in ordinary seasons that is their absolute right, and landowners who want or need to kill coyotes on their own land or where they are given permission will be free to do so as they now can.

Please simply and fairly require that coyote hunters must ask landowner permission to hunt on private property for 9 months of the year..

This bill can be simply amended as follows:

1. Day season. There is an open season for hunting coyotes 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset in all counties of the State only on land where written permission has been obtained from October 1st to September 30th. ~~March 31st. A person may not hunt, chase, pursue or kill a coyote by any means 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset from April 1st to September 30th.~~

And:

2. Night season. Notwithstanding the prohibitions in section 11206, there is an open season for hunting coyotes 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise the following day in all counties of the State only on land where landowner's written permission has been obtained, in each wildlife management district from the first Monday following the end of the muzzle-loading-only deer hunting season established under section 11404 in the respective wildlife management district to August 31st ~~from December 16th to March 31st. A person may not hunt, chase, pursue or kill a coyote by any means 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise the following day from April 1st to December 15th.~~

That is, things remain the same except that rights are extended to landowners to manage hunting on their lands in any fashion including the proposals in LD 814 simply by requiring that permission must be asked for this kind of hunting on private property.

With appreciation for your attention.

If there will be no change, I urge concerned private property owners who might be reading this to take back their land rights by posting it.

Thank you for your consideration,



D. Gordon Mott



One of our two sets of twins