



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
284 STATE STREET
41 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0041

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

Chandler E. Woodcock
COMMISSIONER

Statement of Chandler E. Woodcock, Commissioner, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

September 23, 2013

Just as we were asked ten years ago, once again Maine voters are being asked, "Who should be entrusted with the care of Maine's wildlife?"

Should it be our biologists and wardens, trained professionals with years of experience managing Maine's black bear population?

Or should it be a group of well-funded, out-of-state activists who are more concerned about advancing their agenda than they are the welfare of our own residents, our traditions, and the natural resource economy.

Bear hunting in Maine provides many benefits to the state. It supports jobs and businesses in rural Maine. It provides nearly 5% of the department's annual revenue, funding protections and care for wildlife, citizens and visitors throughout the state. Bear hunting also keeps the bear population at a desirable level, keeping bear/human conflicts at a manageable number and people and property safe.

Ten years ago, this same referendum question, funded by the same national animal rights group was defeated at the ballot box. Now, just ten years later, they are back again, well-funded and once again looking to impose their agenda on Maine.

Please make no mistake, this is not about hunting methods, but a referendum on how we manage and control wildlife in the state.

Hunting and trapping are the primary tools for controlling the size of wildlife populations, and this proposed referendum would seriously compromise our ability to control the bear population by eliminating our most effective tools.

This referendum is not about one method over another, it is about outlawing the most effective methods we have for controlling the bear population. These methods account for over 90 percent of our bear kill annually.

Without removing a substantial part of our bear population each year, the population will grow at a much faster rate, and more bear/human conflicts will occur. These conflicts cost the people of Maine, and can jeopardize your property and safety. Just this month,

a school in southern Maine kept its students in for recess since a bear was seen roaming near the school. Maine averages over 500 bear/human conflicts a year, and if this referendum passes, the number of incidents such as this will grow.

Maine has one of the largest bear populations in the United States estimated at over 30,000, but since they are actively hunted, we do not have the thousands of conflicts that other states have, states that have much smaller bear populations, but much larger bear problems.

Maine's bear management program is one of the most extensive and comprehensive in North America. Our wildlife biologists are some of the most experienced and respected in their field. Their hands-on work and years of experience handling, researching and observing Maine's black bears make them uniquely qualified to manage Maine's bear population.

Our biologists know that if this were to pass, the bear population would rise and we would be unable to control future growth. We would see an increase in the number of human bear/conflicts that would cost the state and residents money. We would have to remove more bears lethally from problem areas. Funds lost from bear hunting would also impact department programs. Statewide, it would result in lost jobs and income for guides and supporting industries in rural areas of the state that already are hurting from the recession.

Maine currently has a healthy, well-managed bear population that allows a variety of recreational opportunities for viewing and hunting with limited conflicts.

This proposed referendum has the potential to impact our economy, safety, and our wildlife populations.

It is for those reasons that Governor LePage and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is opposed to this referendum.

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