

Weekly Review of Legislative Agenda

1/23/12 through 1/27/12

Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

LD 1798 - LURC Update: The LURC study commission's recommendations were drafted into LD 1798 and made available on Jan. 26th. A public hearing will be scheduled in mid February and we will notify membership when a date is scheduled. A copy of the bill is available on the MFPC website.

LD 1689 – Resolve, To Exempt Maple Sugarhouses from the 1,000-foot Setback Requirement of the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission

The ACF committee is considering an exemption to the 1,000 foot LURC setback requirement. The requirement is proving costly for the maple sugar industry, particularly in areas with difficult geography. The committee voted ought to pass as amended on Jan. 26th.

Energy, Utilities, and Technology

LD 1644 – An Act to Expand the Availability of Natural Gas to Maine Residents

This bill sets rules for the issuance of bonds for energy distribution projects involving natural gas as well as minimum and maximum capital reserve requirements. A work session is currently scheduled for Jan. 31st at 1:30pm.

LD 1706 – An Act to Protect Maine's Biomass and Forest Products Industries by allowing Biomass Generators to Enter into Short-Term Contracts

MFPC is participating in discussions and coordinating with other associations, but we don't believe this bill has broad support at this time. A work session is currently scheduled for Jan. 31st at 1:30pm.

Environment and Natural Resources

LD 1648 – An Act to Clarify the Site Location of Development Laws Regarding Exemptions for Previously Developed Sites

Current law states that developments "in existence, authorized, licensed or under construction prior to specified dates are exempted" from site law. This bill states that modification to such developments, specifically military bases, remain exempt and will not trigger full site law. The bill was tabled.

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

LD 1613 – An Act to Strengthen the Relationship between Land Users and Landowners

This bill was tabled after discussions led by SWOAM suggesting the IF&W work with the Attorney General's office to determine the extent of landowner liability under different circumstances. Sen. Saviello suggested stakeholders study it themselves rather than burdening the IF&W and AG.

LD 1652 – An Act to ensure a Reliable Funding Stream for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Sen. Raye requested the bill be tabled and a subcommittee be formed to make proposals by March 7th

Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development

LD 1383 – An Act to improve the process by which Logging Contractors Hire Legal Foreign Workers

This bill deals with the hiring of Canadian Bonded labor and has been tabled. We are participating in discussions on alternative approaches and we will keep the membership posted of future developments and request your help as the issue unfolds. The bill was approved for an extension on Jan. 26th.

LD 1665 – Resolve, To Direct the Department of Economic and Community Development to Convene a Task Force to Bolster and Expand Exports of Maine Products and Services

Commissions a study to determine the most effective means to increase Maine's value added exports. A work session has been scheduled for Jan. 31st at 2:15pm.

State and Local Government

LD 1596 – An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Discontinued Town Ways

This bill deals with allowing municipalities to place restrictions on discontinued town ways which are classified as public easements. The committee acknowledged the complicated nature of this issue and has decided to establish a study group. The study group will consist of 7-9 members with representatives from the forest products industry, small woodlot owners, snowmobiles, municipalities, and effected residents of Maine.

Taxation

LD 1470 & LD 1138 - An Act to Ensure Harvesting of Timber on Land Taxed under the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law Program

Senator Raye introduced this bill to address growing industry and municipal concerns that land in tree growth, particularly on the coast, is not being harvested as intended under the law. We are working with SWOAM and MMA to make reasonable modifications to the current law. The bill has been granted an extension and likely be taken up the week of Jan. 30th

Transportation

LD 1367 – An Act to Restore Maine's Secondary Roads

This bill seeks to create a fund dedicated to secondary road capital investments. Funds would be raised through cost saving measures at the DOT and an increase of fees on items such as vanity license plates. This bill has been granted an extension and awaits a second work session.

LD 1617– An Act to Ensure the Alignment of Truck Weight Limitations on the Interstate with Those Allowed under Federal Law

This bill would allow the DOT to adopt rules to ensure the new 100,000 lb interstate federal truck weight limit correctly implemented. While intended as a housekeeping measure, there has been discussion of a broader bill and we will continue to monitor.