

Weekly Review of Legislative Agenda

1/30/12 through 2/3/12

Legislative Action Alert:

LD 1785 – Game and Wild Turkey Hunters Be Accompanied by Guides Licensed in the State

MFPC would like to encourage members to attend the public hearing for this bill on Wednesday Feb. 8th at 1pm. LD 1785 repeals the requirement that out of state (Canadian) hunters hire a licensed Maine guide. The current requirement has been having a detrimental effect on hunting and tourism in the North Maine Woods and is hurting efforts to prevent access fee increases. Please RSVP to Sue at 622-9288 if you plan on attending so we can keep an accurate headcount.

LURC Update

LD 1798 – An Act To Reform Land Use Planning In The Unorganized Territory

The LURC study commission's recommendations were drafted into LD 1798 and the public hearing is scheduled for February 16th at 1pm. We are working on summarizing the current legislation and copy of the bill is available on the MFPC website.

We look forward to seeing you in Augusta!

Legislative Review:

Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

LD 1739 - An Act to Change the Regulation of Forest Activities

This bill is an attempt to streamline regulations. It transfers responsibility and authority for forestry activities in the unorganized territory established in the LURC reform process. In this bill the MFS will administer timberland harvesting in shoreland areas and in protection districts. The bill also allows the Maine Forest Service to adopt procedures for the placement of "woody debris" in rivers and streams to provide additional habitat. We are in favor of this bill and awaiting work sessions.

LD 1740 – An Act to Remove the Repeal Date for Outcome Based Forestry

Outcome based forestry creates a different regulatory environment that is an alternative to a prescriptive regulation. This allows landowners to use creative and flexible principles to achieve objectives. We think it is important to be able to apply and test this option. It has been suggested that the repeal date be pushed further into the future to give land managers more confidence in the program. We are awaiting work session.

LD 1741 – An Act to Streamline the Paperwork Requirements of the State's Forest Practices Laws

This bill has several pieces aimed at assisting the MFS. MFPC is supportive of moving from a biennial report to an official report every 5 years. Based on MFS staff experience, the MFPC agrees with the switch from a per cord measurement to a 2 acre harvest criteria. MFPC supports deletion the unnecessary language requiring the MFS to notify towns of a change in use and since this section of the law was enacted there have been less than 5 instances (out of 40,000) where a town notification was required.

Energy, Utilities, and Technology

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. We will continue to monitor.

Environment and Natural Resources

LD 1683 – An Act to Provide Funding to Operate the Dolby Landfill in the Town of East Millinocket

This bill seeks to find funding for the Dolby Landfill. The work session for this bill is scheduled for Wednesday Feb. 8th at 2pm.

LD 1718 – An Act to Improve Maine’s Capacity to Produce Low Cost Renewable Energy through Hydropower.

Though we support the concept of this bill it doesn’t have broad support. We will continue to monitor and update after the first work session on Feb 7th at 1pm

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

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. We are currently waiting to be updated on any subcommittee progress.

LD 1242 – An Act to Restore the Deer Herd in Certain Wildlife Management District in Maine

Committee discussion on this subject showed great frustration. Ideas about new advisory and study groups went in circles and the bill was finally tabled. We continue to monitor.

Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development

LD 1725 – An Act to Strengthen the Unemployment Insurance Laws and Reduce Unemployment Fraud

This bill seeks to tighten unemployment rules and thresholds for expanded work search. While we support the majority of this bill, we have concerns about new thresholds and will continue to monitor.

Taxation

LD 1470 – An Act to Ensure Harvesting of Timber on Land Taxed under the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law

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 have been working with SWOAM and MMA to make reasonable modifications to the current law. Proposals so far include having the MFS do an audit of coastal properties to determine the extent of the problem. Confidentiality of management plans is a major concern and currently the taxation committee is waiting on bill language.

LD 1138 – An Act to Prevent the Unnecessary Expulsion of Landowners from the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law

This bill establishes new rules designed to prevent unnecessary expulsion and increased fines for abuse under tree growth. It would also require landowners to sign legal attestation that their intent is to grow trees for commercial harvesting. It passed committee unanimously and we are waiting for final language review.

For more information on any legislation please contact Jon Metrick at 622-9288.