

**REPORT BACK ON  
L.D. 609  
PROVIDED BY THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**DATE OF HEARING: February 9, 2016**

**L.D. TITLE: " An Act To Provide an Incentive to Nonresident Landowners Who Own More than 250 Acres To Keep That Land Open for Hunting"**

**SUBJECT: A second report back to the Committee regarding incentives for landowners to keep their land open for hunting.**

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Duchesne and honorable members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Tim Peabody, Deputy Commissioner at Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. I am here today to provide the Department's proposal for LD 609.

The current bill proposes that the Department provide nonresident landowners with a minimum of 250 acres with a reduced rate license if the land is kept open for hunting. The Department opposed this initiative last session due to the complexities surrounding implementation. We last spoke with you on January 12, 2016 and asked the Committee to allow the new board members of the Landowners and Sportsmen Relations Advisory Board [LSRAB] to consider the issue. The group met on January 22, 2016. This proposal was discussed and Tom Doak who was elected to chair the board is here today and can offer some of the considerations that were discussed at the meeting.

The Department has reached out to landowners with its current landowner relations program, coordinated by Game Warden Corporal Rick LaFlamme. This program has a proactive approach through education and also a reactive approach conducted through enforcement and responses to landowner complaints.

The landowner relations program and the Department have heard a resounding theme from landowners whether they are residents, nonresidents, non-consumptive or consumptive users; that they want respect and a thank you for allowing access. We have heard this from individual landowners, representatives of landowner groups, and through the landowner relations program addressing landowner complaints. There certainly is no one, easy, fix all that can ensure respectful use of private property with the hope that those landowners will continue to allow access. However, the landowner relations program in the last year and a half has created several options and provided tools to help educate the public about the theme "RESPECT OUR LANDOWNERS" and to enforce violation of landowner laws. Here are a few that are eliciting very positive responses from landowners.

**Proactive Components:**

- The department is and will continue to strengthen the message, "Respect your landowners." This is done through safety course training to new outdoor users (10,000+ / year), messaging through social media, department prints and staff communication with the public;
- Training provided to staff to communicate consistently from among wardens, biologists, license agents, and anyone who represents our department or the Maine Forest Service;
- Warden service staff attended over 600 speaking engagements;
- Had multiple articles in newspapers across the state published on landowner relations program as well as advertising the landowner appreciation day through a radio talk show;

- Produced and published the first ever LOR appreciation print (5000) copies free to landowners that support recreating on their private property. Next year's prints are already in place;
- A public service announcement during hunting season that stressed the priceless privilege to have access to private land for recreational use;
- Produced over 100,000 signs free to the landowners of Maine to resolve and help with problems: Access by permission, ATV, snowmobile, no dumping, safety zone, motorized vehicle, information signs;
- Ongoing meetings and discussions with large landowner groups in Northern Maine including North Maine Woods, Irving, Plum Creek, Prentiss and Carlisle and American Forest Management to resolve current issues and work on species management and recreational use on their lands;
- Assisted in securing an ATV trail in southern Maine, on State of Maine land with regional biologist and warden service staff. This effort eliminated land abuse on military facility, (gate, signs, work detail)
- Updated department website /and publishing updates on Facebook regarding the program
- Organized and executed the Landowner Appreciation Banquet 150 + attendance;
- The landowner relations program provides 100,000 trash bags per year to land users and sporting groups to pick up trash on private land as a courtesy.

### **Reactive Components:**

- Response to landowner complaints are and will continue to be dealt with diligently;
- Gear bags with proper tools necessary to handle landowner abuse and complaints are provided to all wardens and forest rangers, these have signs, tools, locks, chains, cables, game cameras, range finders and equipment to catch violators;
- Warden Service staff answered and responded to over 500 landowner based complaints;
- Landowner appreciation day is a statewide trash pickup day on privately owned land, coordinated through the landowner relations program, involving many sportsmen's and landowner clubs, schools, land user groups and individuals as a big thank you to landowners.

Other options that the landowner relations program and the department foresee would be great steps forward in building the relationship with landowners with support from the LSRAB are to:

- Provide training to other municipal, county and state law enforcement to enable them to handle complaints in the same manner or contact warden service if they are uncomfortable in dealing with the situation.
- Provide a public relations/ grass roots approach from department staff initially (eventually trying to have an outdoor program in schools) to instill an "attitude of gratitude" from our next generation of land users to our landowners, beginning at a young age, through public relations programs at the middle school levels.

In closing, we are not convinced that offering one particular incentive to one delineated landowner as LD 609 suggests would make a difference and perhaps may even make a stronger divide amongst landowners. While we know there are varying motivators for a landowner to allow access we feel that going to the root of the issue by educating and changing the land user attitude is the real key to fostering a positive connection between landowners and land users. In conjunction with working to educate the land users and enforcing violation of laws, the department has a goal to offer a wide variety of options to landowners that will demonstrate respect and say thank you.

I thank you for your time and am available for any questions that you may have.