Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

Testimony in Opposition

LD 350, "An Act Regarding the Operations of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife"

March 9, 2026

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Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and distinguished members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. My name is Krysta West. I live in Readfield, and I am here today to testify on behalf of the Maine Forest Products Council in opposition to LD 350, not because we oppose the concept of a collaborative process, but because the process outlined in LD 350 is duplicative of recent or existing structures with duties that were largely already addressed by the very recent LD 1308 stakeholder process.

As you know, the consensus recommendations outlined by the LD 1308 working group focused on a few specific priorities including enforcement, education and outreach, roles and responsibilities, funding sources, importance of existing programs, public lands and other topics requiring additional discussion.

Page 13 of the report recommends reviewing and updating the membership of the Landowners and Land Users Relations Advisory Board to "Ensure the Board includes balanced representation from across the spectrum of landowners and land users. This statutorily established Board (2015) should be used as an **ongoing forum** to continue discussions, monitor emerging issues, and advance the recommendations outlined in this report."

As a standing committee, this format provides continuity and the opportunity for continued dialogue between landowners and recreators as issues emerge.

Page 15 of the report says that this board has "demonstrated longstanding effectiveness in addressing conflicts, facilitating communication, and promoting responsible recreational behavior. The Advisory Board, in particular, plays a statutory role in evaluating landowner- land user issues, advising on policy, and ensuring that diverse perspectives are incorporated into decision-making."

Just last week, this committee supported LD 2221 to represent a broader segment of stakeholders on the advisory board to include a representative of an ATV club and others involved in outdoor recreation. This is an important change that will help this advisory board provide more value in the discussion of ATV size, weight, environmental impact and other relevant factors moving forward.

The makeup of the LD 350 taskforce is highly duplicative of LD 2221 *and* LD 1308, and the duties outlined have also largely been addressed.

Sec. 4. Duties. Resolved: That the task force shall:

1. Discuss creating an ATV trail system with consideration to ATV size, weight, environmental impact and other relevant factors;
    a. **These issues are addressed throughout the entire LD 1308 report**.
2. Discuss construction and maintenance standards for Maine's ATV trail system;
    a. This has been addressed with LD 19 CA-B.
3. Create a plan to enforce compliance of trail construction and maintenance standards by the State, including discussion of third-party inspections;
    a. This discussion could easily be addressed through the standing advisory board.
4. Create a communication and outreach plan for the Maine ATV trial system to include a focus on landowner considerations designed to educate the public on responsible ATV operations;
    a. Public education was a focal point of the LD 1308 report with specific recommendations that should be implemented, and are included in LD 19 CA-B.
5. Discuss ATV registration requirements based on size, width, weight and/or value;
    a. This has been addressed with LD 19 CA-B and LD 276. This discussion should also include the need to increase registration fees to cover the cost of operating and maintaining the ATV trail system, increased fines for violations and the alternative court system put forward by the LD 1308 report and included in LD 19 CA-B.
6. Discuss adequacy of funding for the oversight, construction and maintenance of the Maine ATV trail network.
    a. The LD 1308 working group already did this work and put forward a number of potential funding sources in the report. Some of these recommendations are included in the LD 19 CA-B report.

When the current size restrictions went into place in 2020, there were roughly 350 "oversized" ATVs registered in Maine that were grandfathered. We just heard an estimation last week from ATV Maine that we now have between 10,000-15,000 oversized ATVs registered illegally because ATV dealers have largely disregarded Maine's regulations, regulations that have enabled a network that is the envy of our region. A network that these very same dealers put nothing into.

Also last week, DIFW provided statistics on the number of violations that have been addressed related to oversized ATVs since 2024. Of the potentially thousands of illegally registered machines, only ***seven*** summonses have been issued since 2024 and out of that seven, ***less than half have resulted in a conviction***. This disparity is a major, multi-faceted problem that must be addressed before any discussions about liberalizing our regulations move forward.

For these reasons, we encourage you to vote "Ought not to pass." Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.