



Sportsman's Alliance of Maine

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My name is Matt Dunlap, and I am the Executive Director of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine. As has been studied and reported for over a decade, wildlife related activity brings more than \$1 billion to Maine every year, and a big part of that is hunting and fishing. Our fisheries, especially Maine's iconic brook trout and landlocked salmon, depend on clean water. Waterfowl, amphibians, raptors and other wildlife need wetlands and vernal pools to nest in and feed, and hunters and fisherman need access to shorelands to hunt and fish. If Maine reduces protections for these areas from overdevelopment, as these proposed bills would, our hunting and fishing heritage we know it in Maine will be put in jeopardy.

Many of the bills we are discussing today would cut protections for forested areas around wetlands, rivers and lakes. These forested shoreland areas help filter out pollution from runoff before it enters the water. These forested areas near waterbodies also provide nesting areas for waterfowl and foraging areas for deer, moose and bear. They are also some of the best places to hunt. Ironically, our relationship with the landowners and managers of these properties has always been excellent, and our current statutes have been informed by their stewardship of these resources. Going backwards now sends a message that resource stewardship is subordinate to economic development, when in fact they are the same thing.

It is not hyperbole to say that if the Legislature dramatically reduces protections for these areas around Maine's waterbodies, wildlife numbers will decline. That's bad for hunting and fishing. We are already facing a collapse of the white-tailed deer population due in part to a lack of wintering habitat; that should stand as a lesson to us regarding wetland protections.

As SAM's Executive Director, I ask the Legislature to help keep Maine's hunting and fishing heritage strong by considering these important issues, and not passing these bills.

Thank you.