



Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

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Cross Insurance
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Farm Credit East
Fontaine Inc.
H.C. Haynes
Huber Resources
INRS
J.D. Irving
Katahdin Forest Mgmt.
Key Bank
Kennebec Lumber
LandVest Inc.
Louisiana Pacific
Maibec Logging
ND Paper
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Pingree Associates
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Southern Maine Forestry
Stead Timberlands
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Testimony in Support of LD 732

“An Act to Prohibit Off-trail Operation of a Snowmobile in an Area Closed to Off-trail Operation”

April 24, 2023

Patrick Strauch, Executive Director

Good afternoon, Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. I'm Patrick Strauch, the Executive Director of the Maine Forest Products Council. The Maine Forest Products Council is an organization representing more than 300 member companies from all facets of the forest products industry. We also have more than 8 million acres of dues paying members.

I am submitting testimony today in support of LD 732, “An Act to Prohibit Off-trail Operation of a Snowmobile in an Area Closed to Off-trail Operation.” The Council would like to thank the sponsors for bringing this bill forward.

Here in Maine, snowmobile riders enjoy a vast network of more than 14,000 miles of maintained trails throughout the state, thanks to a cooperative program between snowmobile clubs, municipalities, private landowners and the Bureau of Parks and Lands. Most of these miles are possible thanks to the generosity of private landowners who permit access across their properties, often times with little to no benefit to the landowner. This public access supports a [\\$606 million industry](#) each winter.

As the committee heard earlier this session from the Department, trail usage has risen drastically over the last few years. While the vast majority of trail users are respectful of the private lands they use for recreation, there will always be some bad actors that create problems for landowners, clubs and the State. LD 732 would provide Game Wardens with an important tool to help hold them accountable for utilizing the trail system to access areas that are posted as being closed to off-trail snowmobile operation. Operating a snowmobile in a posted area can lead to financial losses to landowners practicing agriculture or forestry on their lands, threatening continued access to these properties for all riders.

While reviewing this bill, the Council would ask the committee to consider the following:

- As drafted, the burden will be on Game Wardens to prove that a snowmobiler gained access to a closed area via the snowmobile trail,
- If the snowmobiler begins off trail, this law would not apply.
- Clarification is needed regarding how a landowner would post restricted areas. The bill assumes that riders can leave the designated trail unless posted otherwise.

Thank you for your consideration. **We urge the committee to support LD 732.** I would be happy to provide answers to any questions you may have for the work session.