

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and before the summary and inserting the following:

‘**Sec. 1. 36 MRSA §581-H** is enacted to read:

§ 581-H. Right of first refusal

In accordance with this section, the State has a right of first refusal on the sale of significant forest land. The right of first refusal under this section is a right to purchase the significant forest land on the same terms and conditions as offered by a purchaser.

1. Purpose. It is the intent of the Legislature to further the purpose of this subchapter by acquiring, so far as is practicable and appropriate, significant forest land that is being sold, to ensure the protection of this economic and recreational state resource.

2. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Department" means the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

B. "Purchaser" means a person that has offered to purchase significant forest land. "Purchaser" does not include the owner of the significant forest land's spouse, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, sibling, half-sibling, stepparent, stepgrandparent, stepchild, stepgrandchild, stepsibling, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, guardian, former guardian, domestic partner, the half-sibling of a person's spouse or the spouse of a person's half-sibling.

C. "Significant forest land" means forest land in this State held by any landowner other than the State, or any political subdivision of the State, that:

(1) Exceeds 5,000 acres;

(2) Is subject to taxation under this subchapter; and

(3) Is not owned by, or held in trust by the United States or by any other person or entity for, any federally recognized Indian tribe in this State.

3. Information regarding prospective sale. An owner of significant forest land, prior to accepting an offer from a purchaser to buy the significant forest land, shall supply to the department on a form provided by the department information that identifies the significant forest land, the terms

and conditions of the proposed sale and other information required by the department. The owner may not complete the sale until receiving notice under subsection 4 that the State is not exercising the right of first refusal.

4. Notice; determination. Upon receipt of information pursuant to subsection 3, the department may notify the Governor and the Legislative Council of the information and the amount of funds that would need to be made available to purchase the significant forest land. If the department is provided adequate funding by the executive or legislative branch to make the purchase within 10 business days of the receipt of the information, the department shall exercise the right of first refusal. Within 10 business days of the receipt of the information, the department shall notify the owner who provided the information whether the State is exercising the right of first refusal.

5. Terms of purchase. If the State exercises a right of first refusal under this section, the State shall purchase the significant forest land on the same terms and conditions as offered by the purchaser.

6. Designation as nonreserved public land; classification and management. Property purchased by the State pursuant to this section is nonreserved public land subject to the requirements of Title 12, chapter 220, subchapter 3. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, purchase of the property by the State under this section does not change its classification under this subchapter. The Bureau of Parks and Lands within the department shall manage the property in accordance with this subchapter and, using funds appropriated for that purpose by the Legislature, shall make payments in lieu of taxes in an amount equal to the amount that would be paid by a private landowner to the assessor.

7. Sale of property to other purchaser. If the department does not exercise the State's right of first refusal to purchase the significant forest land within 10 business days of the receipt of the information pursuant to subsection 3, the owner may sell the significant forest land to any purchaser.

8. Rules. The department shall adopt rules necessary to carry out this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are major substantive rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.'

SUMMARY

This amendment, which is the majority report of the committee, replaces the bill. The amendment establishes the State's right of first refusal regarding property that is more than 5,000 acres, subject to the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law program and not owned by or held in trust for a federally recognized Indian tribe in this State. The right of first refusal does not apply if the purchaser is an immediate family member. An owner who receives an offer must notify the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry of the proposed sale and the terms and conditions of the sale. The department may notify the Governor and the Legislative Council. The department has 10 business days to obtain funds to make the purchase. If the State exercises its right of first refusal, the property is nonreserved public land subject to the requirements of the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 12, chapter 220, subchapter 3 and does not change its classification under the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law. The Bureau of Parks and Lands within the department must manage the property in accordance with the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law and, using

funds appropriated for that purpose by the Legislature, must make payments in lieu of taxes in an amount equal to the amount that would be paid by a private landowner to the assessing authority. If the State does not exercise its right of first refusal, the owner may sell the property to any purchaser. The department is required to adopt major substantive rules to implement these provisions.