

Testimony in Support of LD 209, Supplemental Budget, Part U
Peter Triandafilou
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Distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, and Appropriations and Financial Affairs committees. My name is Peter Triandafilou, and I reside in Orono, Maine. I am retired from Huber Resources Corp, a timber management firm based in Old Town.

Part U of the supplemental budget includes \$2 million dollars in funding for treatment of forest stands infested with the spruce budworm. The funding, along with funding from private forestland owners, will match and make \$14 million of federal funds available for a treatment program.

Although the spruce budworm is native to Maine, it goes through cycles every few decades where population levels dramatically increase, resulting in defoliation and mortality of spruce and balsam fir tree species.

The last large-scale outbreak in Maine occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was in full swing when I arrived in Maine and worked on budworm research at the University of Maine. It is no exaggeration to state the millions of acres of trees died in that outbreak. I recall visiting permanent sample plots where the tally was zero: all the trees in the area were dead and fallen over.

Maine normally avoids large wildfires through a wet climate and active forest management. However, when large areas of spruce and fir trees die, the resulting matchstick pattern of dead and down trees can dry and become a tinderbox. Indeed, there were significant fires in Baxter State Park during that time, and charcoal is common in the forest soils of northern Maine. We avoided large wildfires in last outbreak through timber salvage that removed much of the dead and dying wood. Salvage was possible then because Maine's pulp and paper industry used spruce and fir trees as its primary feedstock. Mills today use a variety of species; especially hardwood, and large scale salvage in a major outbreak may not be possible. Leaving timber stands that die to form dry fuel can leave the door open to significant wildfires. We need only look to our west to see the potential danger of that course of action.

Yet this is what we face. A large outbreak is under way in Quebec, and budworm moths have blown into Maine on westerly winds. The result is a spike in budworm populations on Maine's northwestern border. This spike could easily expand into a major outbreak.

We have two choices. We can wait for a large scale outbreak and salvage what we can. A better option is to target current "hot spots" with treatment to prevent populations from rapidly expanding. This early intervention strategy has a much better chance of containing an outbreak. It is also much more affordable and effective than trying to treat after populations explode.

Our delegation in Washington was able to secure federal funding to help accomplish this goal, and we are very thankful for their efforts. We need to have both State and private funds to provide a match for the federal funds. I urge you to approve this expenditure. It will enable us to pursue a strategy that could literally save much of our forest.

Thank you for your time.