



Seven Islands Land Company

**Testimony in support of LD209 (Proposed Section U)
An Act Making Unified Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the
Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain
Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025**

January 21, 2025

Hannah Stevens, Seven Islands Land Company

Senators Rotundo and Talbot Ross, Representatives Gattine and Pleucker, and members of the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Hannah Stevens, I am a resident of Glenburn and represent Seven Islands Land Company. I am testifying in support of LD 209, Part U, which proposes the transfer of \$2,000,000 from the General Fund to provide one-time funding to address the management and early intervention of Spruce Budworm.

Seven Islands manages approximately 820,000 acres of family-owned timberland in northern and western Maine. Our company was incorporated in 1964 to professionally manage a land base which has been under Pingree ownership since 1841. Since the devastating and widespread damage from Spruce Budworm in the 1970s and 1980s, landowners and managers, State agencies, and forestry research professionals have learned from that outbreak, adapted and managed the post-outbreak forest, and developed monitoring tools to be better prepared for the next budworm population increase.

The next one is now here. Untreated, budworm has shown to kill 84-97% of balsam fir, and 30-66% of spruce in three-years' time.¹ The last outbreak destroyed seven million acres of fir and spruce in Maine, resulting in a negative economic impact in the hundreds of millions of dollars. One provincial neighbor, Quebec, currently in the midst of a budworm epidemic themselves, chose to use a minimal intervention approach. There are now over thirty-three million acres affected there², and treatment cannot keep up with the outbreak. New Brunswick, on the

¹ "Spruce Budworm in Maine 2019-2024" presentation by Maine Forest Service – FRA Forestry Forum Meeting

² Maine Spruce Budworm Taskforce, Executive Summary, 2023 update
<https://www.sprucebudwormmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-SBW-Executive-summary-03162023.pdf>

other hand, is using an Early Intervention Strategy (EIS) which detects hotspots and treats them early. They have successfully decreased the population of budworm 60-80%.

Seven Islands and other landowners and managers across the State have been monitoring the budworm population -- we now have hotspots in areas that we manage along the Quebec border -- and defoliation has begun. The acreage affected on our land base and others, is growing more quickly than expected, and the time for action is now. Close monitoring allows a very targeted approach, but only if treatment is done early when the budworm is feeding in known locations, and the population can be prevented from increasing to epidemic proportions. We have the data, now is the time to implement.

Funding for treatment is a collaboration between private landowners, federal, and state sources. Part U proposes \$2,000,000 from the General Fund surplus to be used to address early intervention of Spruce Budworm. Early treatment is expensive, but doing nothing, or trying to catch up later, is exponentially more so. This funding is critical to the effort to maintain the health of the forest, and failure to act quickly will be detrimental to much more than just forest landowners. Forest industry jobs by the thousands, wildlife habitat, water quality, carbon sequestration potential, and recreational opportunities would all be negatively affected by an outbreak, while wildfire risk would increase with so many standing dead trees. Not acting now would mean an estimated \$794 million economic impact.³

This effort is collaborative and coordinated, as it must be. Individual landowners cannot stop an outbreak -- the budworm has not heeded any of our boundary lines, unsurprisingly. The Maine Forest Service, the University of Maine, private landowners, conservation groups, and our federal delegation are working together to act swiftly. We urge you to join the effort with your support of the funding outlined in Part U.

Thank you for your consideration.

³ https://maineforest.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/SBW_full_report_web.pdf