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Testimony in Support of LD 121

"An Act To Include Brush And Yard Debris In The Definition Of "litter""

Distinguished members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

Weyerhaeuser is submitting this testimony in strong support of LD 121, giving law enforcement the ability to protect landowners against the dumping of brush and yard waste on their private property.

Weyerhaeuser owns and sustainably manages almost 840,000 acres of timberland in Maine. Our timberlands are third party certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standards and support healthy wildlife habitat, clean water, and the capture and storage of carbon, while providing abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation. The majority of the public who use our property are respectful of the fact that they are using private land. However, we do face issues with damaging and illegal uses including illegal dumping. In such cases we rely on Maine's Forest Rangers, Wardens and local law enforcement to investigate and enforce the law.

Last year on our timberland in the Moosehead district, we discovered an area where brush and yard debris had been routinely dumped. Weyerhaeuser alerted the Regional Forest Ranger who visited the site in response to our complaint. Unfortunately, since the material dumped was not included in the definition of "litter" the Forest Ranger was unable to pursue an investigation that could result in charges for illegal dumping.

Dumping of brush and yard debris is more than just disrespect or an eyesore. Often this dumping occurs in truck turn-around areas or log landings associated with our forest road network. These areas are used intermittently for logging operations and removal of piles of brush and yard debris adds time and cost to the operation. Additionally, we regularly find that invasive plants such as Japanese Knotweed, Common reed grass and honeysuckle are becoming established on our property from the brush and yard debris. Invasive plants can have a severe negative impact on regrowth of native tree species, as well as negatively impacting our native flora and fauna. Weyerhaeuser is committed to addressing invasive species on our timberland and, therefore, incurs additional cost to mechanically and chemically treat these plants.

We thank Senator Black and Representative Bunker for submitting this bill to protect private landowners and our forest resource from the effects of illegal dumping by including brush and yard debris in the definition of litter and ask you to join them by voting "ought to pass" on LD 121.

Thank you,

Chris Fife