



COMMUNITY ♦ ADVOCACY ♦ KNOWLEDGE ♦ LEGACY

Board of Directors

Tom Allen
President

Seth Sprague
1st Vice-President

Jennifer Dann
2nd Vice-President

Jeff Williams
Secretary

John Melrose
Treasurer

Doug Baston

Kyle Burdick

Hannah Carter

Jim Clair

Mark Doty

Richard Nass

Paul Sampson

Chapter Leaders

Si Balch

Larry Beauregard

Ernest Carle

Jim Ferrante

Jason Hilton

Lauren Ouellette

Merle Ring

Andy Shultz

Andrew Smart

Jeff Williams

Testimony of Tom Doak

Executive Director

Maine Woodland Owners

In Support of LD 121

“An Act to Include Brush and Yard Debris in the Definition of “Litter”

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Tom Doak, Executive Director of Maine Woodland Owners speaking today in support of LD 121, “An Act to Include Brush and Yard Debris in the Definition of “Litter”.

When you first saw this bill, you may have thought, why is this needed? It seems pretty much common sense that you should not be dumping anything, including brush and yard waste, on someone else’s land, without their permission. Unfortunately, this isn’t always the case.

A few years ago, the definition of litter had to be amended to include offal, essentially animal parts, because they were being dumped on private landowners’ properties. And now, there are issues with brush, yard debris, and other organic waste.

Here are a couple of issues related to brush and yard waste: First, surveys of landowners in Maine show that the number one reason woodland owners cite for restricting public access to their land is the result of illegal dumping of some type. With 90% of woodland in this state owned by private landowners, the public depends on that access to these lands for many outdoor recreational activities including: hunting, bird watching, snowmobiling, ATV riding and a host of others. The majority of private landowner keep their land open for public use, but illegal dumping puts this access at risk.

Second, yard waste and debris can contain seeds of invasive plants and the unwanted dumping of this material can easily spread them. A classic example of how easily this can occur is with Japanese knotweed, commonly known as “bamboo”. If you drive along the countryside and see an isolated patch of knotweed, it’s a good bet that it originated from being dumped there in debris, clippings or soil. Once established knotweed is extremely difficult to control.

Adding brush and yard debris to the definition of litter will give landowners and enforcement officials a tool to address illegal dumping.