

To the members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee,

My name is Janet McMahon. I live in Waldoboro, Maine. I urge you to support LD 1529 – An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural Resources Statewide.

For more than 40 years, I have been working as an ecologist for public and private landowners and organizations throughout Maine – from the Allagash to Kittery. During this time, I've observed profound changes in Maine's forests. During a recent ecological assessment of the Allagash River Waterway, I flew from Augusta to the St. John and then back along the east side of Baxter State Park. The changes are stark. Whether in the north Maine woods, or in lands near where I live, the forest has become much more homogeneous and simplified, regardless of stand type, elevation, or wetness. Due to short rotations (generally less than 60 years), the forest no longer has time to become a forest. Entire layers are missing, such as a well developed canopy, super canopy pines and spruce, and the moss layer. I now rarely see plants that were once common in ground vegetation. Stands of saw timber (>16") are rare except on conserved lands, and there often aren't enough large snags and big downed wood to support owls, marten, and many other wildlife species. The soil organic layer is becoming thinner and decomposes more quickly, which means it stores less carbon. In addition, riparian zones often don't have enough shade trees, small intermittent stream channels and vernal pools are impacted by heavy machinery, and slow growing cedar stands are being opened up too much, and no longer feed cold water into streams used by brook trout and other coldwater species. These changes are leading to flashier streams and warmer water temperatures, as well as encroachment by invasive plants that make it harder for forests to regenerate.

The implications for the long-term forest productivity and native biodiversity of Maine's forests are significant. I often work with foresters and loggers, many of whom share my concerns, and most would like to do things differently, but can't afford to wait for forests to grow older. With only 3% of the north Maine woods in a late-successional or old growth condition, we can't wait to address these problems and have to figure out ways for landowners to manage for or conserve older stands with larger trees. LD 1529's stakeholder group is an excellent way to do this and is critically needed to not only help maintain native plant and animal populations, but to maintain and enhance productivity on working forest lands and make Maine's forests better able to withstand and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Having late successional/old growth be a project category for LMF is another important and overdue change.

I also urge you to support adding qualified lakes to the remote pond category – we have an opportunity that could be lost within a matter of decades. Each of the four parts of LD 1529 will lead to a healthier and more diverse forest. These are actions Mainers will not regret and they will serve us well long into the future. Again, I strongly urge each of you to support this bill.

Thank you very much for reading this.

Janet McMahon
Waldoboro
LD 1529

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Thank you very much for your consideration.