

4/16/25

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, my name is Eugene Mahar. I am a Maine licensed Professional Forester; a small landowner; resident of Hermon; and the Forest Resources Manager - Maine for LandVest, Inc. I am writing you in opposition of **LD 1529 *An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural Resources Statewide.***

I have 25 plus years in the forest industry and in my current role as Forest Resources Manager for LandVest, Inc. I represent and have management responsibilities for over 1 million acres of forestlands in the state of Maine covering a wide range of ownership sizes and management objectives, many of which have elements of late successional and/or old growth forest attributes in various forms found in these forestlands or will be impacted by lakes classifications. This bill is unfounded and will have unintended consequences.

It's counterproductive to enact legislation that includes definitions of "late successional" or "old growth" (LSOG) forests without input from Maine's foresters and landowners. Most foresters will tell you that they recognize LSOG when they see it, however defining it is difficult and will cause much debate particularly as presented in this bill.

Maine's landowners have spent millions on conducting research to protect, enhance, and promote our forests for both private and public benefit. Recent landowner funded research in Maine is helping to identify areas that contain late successional/old growth attributes within Maine's forests, but due to the limitations of the methodology utilized in this research, it fails to completely identify the full amount these areas as it does not take into full consideration all of the different forest types and conditions in the vastness of Maine's forests. More work needs to be done, and this bill will be detrimental to the process underway to further our understanding of these forest attributes.

In addition to defining late successional and old growth forests in statute, which opens the door for unnecessary regulation, this bill would circumvent the Comprehensive Land Use Planning process at the Land Use Planning Commission by forcing the adoption of rules regarding land use districts and standards to reclassify potentially hundreds of lakes and ponds within the UT without public comment and participation in the process. This reclassification may result in the loss of public access to some of these lakes, as landowners could be forced (and bear the costs) to block existing roads.

Thank you for your consideration as this bill will cause more harm than good. I respectfully ask you to vote ought not to pass on **LD 1529 *An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural Resources Statewide.***

Respectively submitted,

Eugene Mahar

Hermon, ME