



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER  
22 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

AMANDA E. BEAL  
COMMISSIONER

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,  
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**IN SUPPORT OF LD 2063**

*An Act to Clarify the Laws Governing Disclosure of Wood Processing Data*

**January 8, 2024**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Patty Cormier, and I am the Director of the Maine Forest Service (MFS) which resides within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF). I am speaking on behalf of the Department in favor of LD 2063, *An Act to Clarify the Laws Governing Disclosure of Wood Processing Data*.

This bill would authorize MFS to share wood processor data it collects as part of its statutory mandate with the Northern Research Station of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. As the most forested state in the nation, the data that we share with the USDA, and likewise, the information and research that becomes available to us through these partnerships, is of utmost importance as we navigate forest policy, forest health, and forest product markets. Unfortunately, unlike other states, Maine is prevented from sharing robust data sets due to the the confidentiality requirement in statute.

Wood processor data are reported to MFS by individual mills that process roundwood throughout Maine as required by statute. The individual data sets are currently designated as confidential in statute. The confidential data include volumes, species, types of wood products, the county of origin, and any personally identifiable information about forest products suppliers to the wood processor. The bill would allow MFS to enter into a confidentiality agreement with the USDA Forest Service to limit public disclosure to aggregate data that do not reveal the activities of an individual person or firm.

In turn, this bill would enable the USDA Forest Service to include information about Maine's forest products industry, based on MFS wood processor data, in its Timber Products Output reports, as it has done for many other states since 2018. Previously, the USDA Forest Service only conducted occasional research on the industrial use of roundwood in various states. The Timber Products Output program now sends its own surveys to mills to attempt to capture this information, but responses have been inconsistent. The bill would eliminate the burden on wood processors of duplicate surveys from the state and federal agencies. It would also highlight Maine's forest products industry in federal reports, in which Maine currently is a blank spot on

HARLOW BUILDING  
18 ELKINS LANE  
AUGUSTA, MAINE



PHONE: (207) 287-3200  
FAX: (207) 287-2400  
WEB: [WWW.MAINE.GOV/DACF](http://WWW.MAINE.GOV/DACF)

the map (see appendix). As USDA Forest Service continues to build this program, the comparative health and size of Maine's wood products industry demonstrated in federal reports could generate additional private sector investment interest. It could also increase the potential for public sector funding to support further innovation.

This bill narrows the scope of a previous bill regarding disclosure of the data in response to concerns from the industry. MFS has been assured by the USDA Forest Service of its willingness to enter into a confidentiality agreement that provides protection of private wood processor data that is equal to or greater than what the state currently requires. Similar protections for nondisclosure of shared data with USDA Forest Service already exist in the Forest Inventory and Analysis program, which MFS administers jointly with the USDA Forest Service. Finally, the bill creates substantial penalties for disclosure or misuse of this information.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions now or at the work session.

Appendix:

*The USDA federal website provides aggregate data for wood processors by state/region. Maine was not included in the 2018 analysis (shown here) due to Maine's confidentiality restrictions. In subsequent years USDA-FS has conducted their own surveys that are largely duplicative of Maine's mandatory reports, and will be reporting based on incomplete data for subsequent years.*

### Forest Inventory & Analysis TPO Data Reporting Tool



The USDA Forest Service Forest Inventory & Analysis program supplies annual updates that provide a brief overview of forest resources in states based on an inventory conducted by the FIA program in cooperation with each State forestry agency

**Pick a state or counties along with the year of interest** and the core tables will be generated for you. Use the back button to navigate back to the map to choose another state. Use the download button to obtain your own copy of the tables that interest you.

