

1/28/2025

Testimony in support of LD 39 by James L. Robbins

Dear Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee,

Good afternoon. My name is James Robbins. I am a former owner of Robbins Lumber Inc. My three children now own and run the company. I am now retired but am here today representing them. We own two white pine sawmills – one in East Baldwin, Maine and one in Searsmont, Maine. Also, in Searsmont we have an 8.5-megawatt power plant and an operation where we paint lumber. We have been in business since 1881. We now produce 50 million board feet of white pine boards per year and employ 200 people.

As sawmill and power plant owners we are very concerned about how forest carbon projects will affect our future wood supply. Almost every project either slows down or stops the harvesting of wood. Carbon credits are purchased by large companies, both foreign and domestic, who emit carbon pollution and then purchase carbon credits so they can claim to be carbon neutral and look good to the public and their shareholders. In my opinion this just gives them a license to pollute more. For example, if they want to emit (pollute) a million tons of

carbon, they buy a million tons of carbon credits to offset it. Meanwhile, they are tying up the Maine woods. The trees here in Maine don't grow any better because some company from California or France bought the carbon credits and the companies don't change what they are doing.

The only entities who benefit from these carbon credits are the companies buying them to make themselves look good and the landowners who sell them. No jobs are created. However, when a well managed forest is harvested there is a huge multiplier effect. The landowners, foresters, loggers, truckers, sawmills, papermills, and companies that supply them all benefit.

I am not worried about those who sell carbon credits and are still going to manage their forests sustainably. However, I am worried that large companies may come to Maine and buy huge blocks of carbon credits and seriously reduce our timber harvests. For example, a French oil company, Total Energies, is investing \$100 million dollars in carbon credits in ten U.S. states including Louisiana, Kentucky and New York. They have committed another \$725 million dollars to carbon offsets globally including wetlands and forest preservation. Aurora Sustainable lands manages 1.7 million acres of forest and has significantly reduced timber harvest to create long term carbon sinks. Here is a quote from their

CEO Jamie Houston “Historically, harvests were based on creating the highest timber revenue. Now harvests are based on creating a multidecade carbon sink on all of these properties.”

The forest products industry is a tremendous asset for carbon sequestration. When you harvest a tree and build with wood you are locking up that carbon. It is critically important that when carbon credits are sold it is not done so at the detriment of harvesting timber. We would all be wise to look at the mismanagement of the western forests. Instead of their forests being a valuable asset they have allowed their forests not to be harvested, and now tremendous amounts of carbon are being released through devastating forest fires.

I worry that if these big projects start coming to Maine that it could have a devastating effect on the wood supply for our paper mills and sawmills.

I hope you will vote in favor of this bill to create a forest carbon project registry. We need to know what is going on.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions.