



## Seven Islands Land Company

**Testimony in opposition to LD 1529  
An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural Resources Statewide  
April 17, 2025**

### **Seven Islands Land Company**

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pleucker and distinguished members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Ryan Smith, a resident of Levant, and Inventory Manager at Seven Islands Land Company. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in opposition to LD 1529: **An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural Resources Statewide.**

Seven Islands Land Company manages approximately 820,000 acres of family-owned commercial timberland in Maine. We hold dual certification on that entire acreage under both the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) – third-party certifications that we have held for decades. Additionally, the Pingree family, whose forest we manage, partnered with the New England Forestry Foundation in 2001 on the largest U.S. working forest easement, permanently protecting 762,000 acres from development.

Regardless of the intention stated in the bill title, the structure of LD 1529 would have consequences that stand in opposition to its goal. There is no clear consensus on the definitions of old growth, late successional, and transitioning late-successional within the scientific literature. The terms are vaguely defined here and, therefore, do not provide necessary clarity for landowners and managers. There is great potential for these terms to be misinterpreted and defining them in statute would give them unmerited weight. After a years-long process, the US Forest Service recognized that there is still disagreement about how to define “old-growth” as site- and species-specific characteristics are critical for proper evaluation and future conservation efforts.

Furthermore, a regulatory framework on certain forest conditions may effectively diminish the value of those parcels in the carbon market. Carbon projects have a necessary element of “additionality,” meaning there must be climate benefits realized that wouldn’t have happened anyway. If rules or regulations already prohibit harvesting in certain stand conditions, a landowner would be denied the opportunity to participate in a carbon finance outcome and subsequently lose the incentive that can reward them for long-term stewardship of those forests. It would also discourage the enrollment of forests that are not yet in an advanced condition but could become regulated over the typical 40-year project term, undermining efforts to promote the development and preservation of older forests. While LD 1529 may not cross that line yet, it sets the stage for regulation that would negatively impact long-term forest stewardship decisions and work against Maine’s ambitious climate goals. By supplanting valuable and proven market-based mechanisms with burdensome, over-reaching regulations, we risk making the most valuable, carbon beneficial forests ineligible for the very programs designed to protect them.

Seven Islands has long recognized the many benefits of maintaining a diversity of forest conditions and age classes. We are continually investing in the health and productivity of the forest, including

management that promotes that diversity, and it is a critical part of our landowner's stewardship ethos. We have continued to support research that is working to map late successional conditions in Maine. Our third-party, dual-certification requires that we document and manage those stands to maintain late successional conditions, and we are working with the New England Forestry Foundation to develop further, market-based conservation strategies as well. LD 1529 fails to acknowledge the significant contributions made by Seven Islands and other landowners in fostering specific forest conditions. Instead, this bill punishes those whose land base includes these forest conditions or may include them in the future by impacting the value that may be realized through voluntary carbon markets and collaborative conservation efforts.

For these reasons we urge you to vote Ought Not To Pass on LD1529. Thank you for your consideration.