



OUR CLIMATE COMMON

**Testimony of John Hagan  
Before the Maine Legislative Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
April 17, 2025**

**LD 1529, An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural Resources Statewide**

Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:

My name is John Hagan. I'm a forest ecologist with the nonprofit Our Climate Common. We conducted research over the past two years that resulted in mapping and quantifying late-successional and old-growth forest (LSOG) in the 10 million acres of unorganized townships in Maine. This new map, which uses publicly available remote sensing data, tells us how much LSOG forest we have, precisely where it is, and how fast we're losing it.

Late-successional and old-growth forest is important for a healthy forest ecosystem and for maintaining biodiversity. In parts of the world where LSOG forest has been greatly diminished, species associated with old forest have become threatened or endangered, an expensive and entirely avoidable situation. LD 1529 is an opportunity to avoid this situation in Maine.

In our 2024 report we estimated that only about 3-4% of the landscape is in a late-successional or old-growth condition today, and that we're losing it at about 2% per year.

Having spent most of my career doing biodiversity research in the working forests of Maine, I can say with some authority that, from a biodiversity perspective, Maine is extraordinarily fortunate that nearly half the state is managed by commercial forest landowners. Because of commercial forestry, Maine is a place of *global ecological significance*. We all often take this for granted.

However, with our new map, we now know that we're losing LSOG forest in the unorganized townships. It's a societal question as to how much LSOG "we" want and how we want it distributed. Our new map facilitates a conversation that we could not have before.

I'm strongly in support of LD 1529's goal of producing a plan to conserve LSOG forest in Maine.

In the same way both environmental foundations and commercial forest landowners funded our mapping project, I hope we can all come together, work together, support this bill, and come up with a practical plan to conserve LSOG forest before it's gone and the question of saving it becomes moot.

In these hyper-polarized times, we can show there's another way to chart Maine's forest future, through collaboration, respect, and understanding of our many different and legitimate forest values. Developing a plan for LSOG conservation will give us an opportunity to show a new way of working together.

Thank you.