



To: Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
100 State House Station
Cross Building, Room 214
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Senate Bill 613 - Protection of High Value Natural Resources
Statewide

Position: Oppose as Currently Drafted

Date: April 17, 2025

Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,

My name is Fred Bird, and I am the Northeastern States Manager for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). I write to respectfully express our concerns with Senate Bill 613 which would direct Land for Maine's Future Board to give preferential consideration to late successional and old growth forests in land acquisition projects where sustainable forestry and wildlife habitat improvement practices would be prohibited.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

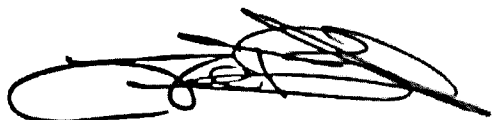
We recognize that late successional and old growth forests are underrepresented in the state and support goals to conserve them, however, we have concerns with the strict prohibition in the bill against "timber harvesting and other activities" in these stands. While we understand that the intent to limit human impacts in late successional and old growth forests is to support their perpetuity, the result of a blanket bar against management in these stands would create difficulties for their long-term conservation. Insects, disease, natural disasters, invasive species, or anthropogenic influences may warrant adaptive management intervention to remove non-native species, improve stand vigor, and/or treat various threats that jeopardize their long-term viability. For example, if a late successional or old growth forest is impacted by a stand-clearing disturbance (e.g., windthrow,

ice storm, etc.) and native species are outcompeted by non-native species as the stand regenerates, then the prohibition against management would be a hindrance to restoring the stand to its original species composition. We, therefore, recommend that the bill be amended to allow for the use of science-based sustainable forest management practices to provide management flexibility to support forest health and further the goal to conserve late successional and old growth forests.

Additionally, we encourage you to consider the importance of maintaining management flexibility to support species that depend on early successional forests, including game species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. As stated in the Maine Wildlife Action Plan, for example, "In southern Maine, the loss of early successional habitat through forest maturation and development has resulted in a 75% to 80% decline of suitable habitat for New England Cottontail...The lack of shrublands and young forests in southern Maine has not only endangered the New England Cottontail, but also poses a threat to several Species of Greatest Conservation Need birds associated with scrub-shrub habitat."¹ Young forests and other early seral habitats are critical for supporting a wide range of species during important stages of their life cycles, and we encourage you to consider the effect that this legislation would have on the species that benefit from disturbance and the habitat created through sustainable forest management.

In closing, we respectfully encourage you to reconsider Senate Bill 613 as it is currently drafted. Thank you for considering our comments, and please let us know if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,



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¹ "Maine Wildlife Action Plan - 2015." Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.
<https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/wildlife-action-plan/index.html>