



Seven Islands Land Company

Testimony in opposition of LD 125

An Act To Prohibit the Aerial Spraying of Glyphosate and Other Synthetic Herbicides for the Purpose of Silviculture

March 2, 2021

Seven Islands Land Company

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and distinguished members of the ACF Committee. I am Hannah Stevens, a resident of Glenburn and Land Use Director of Seven Islands Land Company. I am speaking in opposition to LD125.

Seven Islands Land Company manages approximately 820,000 acres of family-owned commercial timberland in northern and western Maine and has held dual certification under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) since 1995.

Along with others, Seven Islands took part in a third-party audit performed by SCS Global Services in 2019. This audit was a result of an ACF committee resolution, and the resulting report concluded that “Overall, there is a consistently high level of compliance with applicable BPC regulatory requirements and pesticide label law,” and that “The State of Maine regulatory framework, within which aerial application of herbicides in forest operations takes place, is functioning as designed.”

For Seven Islands, herbicide is one of many silvicultural tools which we use to promote healthy, productive forests. It is targeted and narrow in its scope, with specific desired outcomes. Aerial herbicide, at which this bill is directed, is used on Seven Islands land base primarily for management of diseased beech trees as well as to encourage the growth of desired softwood species.

The majority of American Beech trees in Maine are affected by beech bark disease which leads to cankering, early mortality, and low beechnut (mast) production, which is an important food source for wildlife. Seven Islands’ policy is to retain healthy beech when possible to increase the number of genetically resistant trees. Diseased beech trees are prolific sprouters and if left unmanaged, will outcompete more productive and longer-lived species such as sugar maple and yellow birch. This decreases the overall biodiversity, long-term forest products viability, and carbon sequestering ability of the stand. Aerial herbicide is the most effective tool to reduce the competition caused by poor quality, diseased beech, and an extremely effective way to improve the health, vigor, and productivity of these sites.

As a result of the budworm epidemic of the 1970s and 1980s, many formerly pure softwood stands have regenerated into a mixed wood condition, with early successional hardwood and other species competing with the more desirable and historically dominant spruce and fir component of these stands. Aerial herbicide is used to promote the growth of the young spruce and fir trees, “releasing” the softwood in these

stands by removing competition, letting sun reach the young trees, and giving them a jumpstart to grow at a faster rate.

In 2020, aerial herbicide application was done on 0.2 % of Seven Islands' acreage. It is only applied under optimal weather conditions during the time of year when it will be most effective on the targeted species, usually in late August/early September. A stand requiring treatment will be sprayed once or twice over the course of its growth cycle, to reduce competition as it's being established, and then is left free to grow without further herbicide treatment. It only needs that head start to promote the desired dominant species, and others will fill in behind it, attracting wildlife that depend on these transitional, early successional stands.

There is no doubt, aerial herbicide treatment is expensive. The topography, rocky and uneven ground condition, and remoteness of many of these stands make aerial application the most suitable method. We judiciously use this very important tool when other options will not provide the preferred result. The jumpstart in growth is an early benefit, but the crucial result is realized in the years to come, with healthier, more productive, resilient, and climate beneficial forests, that benefit our rural communities.

I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 125.

Thank you for your consideration.