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Testimony of Tom Doak  
Executive Director  
Maine Woodland Owners

**In Support of LD 1407, An Act to Provide That a Forestry Operation That Conforms to Accepted Practices May Not be Declared a Nuisance**

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, I am Tom Doak, Executive Director of Maine Woodland Owners, testifying in support of LD 1407, An Act to Provide That a Forestry Operation That Conforms to Accepted Practices May Not be Declared a Nuisance.

Maine Woodland Owners is a statewide, member-supported non-profit organization that advances stewardship of Maine's small woodland resources through the encouragement of sound forest management and the advocating for and supporting of Maine's small woodland owners. We are the only statewide organization dedicated to supporting the interests and serving the needs of these 86,000 woodland owners; those owning from a few, to several hundred, acres.

Our work provides resources, knowledge, and advocacy necessary to promote forest stewardship of those acres. Through our Membership program we provide regular outreach, education and guidance from our staff and a broad network of forestry resources. Additionally, we have a land trust program that has conserved over 11,000 acres of working forestland through acquiring land and conservation easements. We are active managers of the land we own as an

organization. I am a license professional forester and former Director of the Maine Forest Service.

One of our key goals is to help encourage long-term stewardship of woodland. We know that if woodland owners become active in managing their property, they are more likely to keep their land as forested land and producing the multiple benefits that forests provide. These benefits include wood for Maine's forest industry, improved wildlife habitat, clean water, employment opportunities for loggers and foresters, and increasingly there are discussions around the benefits forests and forest management can play in climate issues.

We are concerned with the potential impact of well-intended, but faulty local ordinances and reactions to forest management activities. Cutting of trees and other forest management activities are not always pretty or quiet. As I mentioned, in addition to assisting private owners, we own land as an organization. We have experience in many different towns. While we have generally had good working relationships in communities, in part based on our reputation, we see a myriad of differences in understanding, knowledge, and acceptance of forest related activities. It seems like those differences are likely to get more profound.

There is a law which requires a municipality considering a forest ordinance to consult with the Maine Forest Service prior to adoption. My sense is there are ordinances in existence that were likely not adopted using that process correctly. When I was with the Maine Forest Service, I had personal experience in reviewing and commenting on local ordinances in public meetings. Most of those proposals were driven by a reaction to a local event, and again while well intended, often had little basis in science or practicality.

There has been a Right to Farm Law in place in Maine for many years. We understand that law has worked well for the farming community. We believe this concept is worthy of being extended to woodland owners.

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