

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

To: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
From: Karen S. Nadeau, Legislative Analyst
Date: May 6, 2021
Subj: **LD 1549, An Act To Establish the Maine Forest Advisory Board**

SUMMARY

- Creates the Maine Forest Advisory Board to advise the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Forestry on a variety of forestry issues and to provide input on the state forest action plan required under the federal Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008.
- Board is directed to submit a report outlining conditions and trends in the State's forests for the Second Regular Session of the 130th Legislature.

Advisory Board –

18 Members: 13 voting and 5 nonvoting

- 4 nonvoting members appointed by the Governor
- 6 members appointed by the Senate President
- 8 members appointed by the Speaker of the House (one nonvoting)
- 3-year terms; Quorum is 10; Required to meet at least 4 times per year

TESTIMONY

Proponents: *Appalachian Mountain Club; Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association; Natural Resources Council of Maine; Trout Unlimited; written only: Maine Association of Conservation Districts, Resident of Waldoboro, Wood Prairie Family Farm, and Acadia Center, Conservation Law Foundation, Maine Association of Conservation Commissions, and Physicians for Social Responsibility Maine Chapter*

- It is critical that conversations around Maine's forests take into consideration a wide variety of factors when making decisions on public policy.
- Maine is the most forested state in the nation – supporting not only an \$8.5 billion forest products industry, but also more than half of the largest globally important bird area in the United States.
- Given the forest's importance, engaging a wide variety of perspectives in evaluating its condition, sharing information and planning for its future makes sense.
- Maine DEP and LUPC each have citizen boards to oversee permitting and rulemaking. For agriculture, we have an Agriculture Water Management Board, Maine Milk Commission, Nutrient Management Review Board and Pull Events Commission. There is no equivalent for the MFS and it shows.

Opponents: *Professional Logging Contractors of Maine; Maine Forest Products Council; Maine Woodland Owners*

- The goal of having Maine forest practices be transparent, informed by experts, and conforming to state-of-the-art procedures is one we share. We do not believe that the formation of a new board that largely duplicates existing and ongoing functions is the best way to achieve these goals.

- PLC is not aware of what this LD is trying to solve; the forest products industry in Maine is amid a reinvention process. Between 2014 and 2016, the total economic impact of the forest products industry fell from \$9.8 billion to \$8.5 billion and more than 5,000 jobs were lost.
- PLC suggested amendment that would create the Maine Forest Resources Advisory Council within the Executive Branch to develop recommendations with respect to forest resource policies and practices.
- Maine Woodland Owners is concerned that a large permanent advisory group will take resources away from MFS when they are already inadequately funded.

NFNA: *None*

INFORMATION REQUESTS:

- Asked of MFS Director Patty Cormier - What was the Forest Action Plan process – who was invited, who participated, how were people notified?
- Asked of PLC of Maine, Dana Doran – examples of other states with dedicated organizations within state government with mission is to work on behalf of the forest products economy.
- Asked of Maine Woodland Owners, Tom Doak – bring back information about the Department of IF&W’s Wildlife Action Plan

NOTES:

The 2008 Farm Bill (further amended in 2014) – USDA Forest Service requires states to complete Forest Action Plans every 10 years as a condition of receiving federal funds to support state forestry programs (Cooperative Forestry Assistance programs). The planning process has 3 components:

- Statewide assessment of forest resources
- Statewide forest resource strategy
- Annual report on use of funds

Maine has integrated the Forest Action Plan process into its existing forest resource planning framework.

PRELIMINARY FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT: *Not yet received.*