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Testimony of Tom Doak
Executive Director
Maine Woodland Owners

**In Opposition to LD 1549, An Act to Establish the Maine
Forest Advisory Board**

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 In Opposition to LD 1549, An Act to Establish the Maine Forest Advisory Board.

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

This bill would create a large, permanent advisory group which appears to duplicate existing efforts. It also seems to overlap with the role of this Committee and the Legislature as the policy making body, and it adds confusion to the role of the Maine Forest Service and the Director.

We believe instead of one large permanent group, the more effective way to address forest related challenges and opportunities is through small, temporary groups focused on specific issues comprised of experts and those impacted by those issues. There are numerous examples of this approach working well and efficiently. One that comes to mind is a group I currently serve on; the *Task Force on Creation of a Forest Carbon Program*. That group of fifteen members has a specific charge to develop a voluntary, incentive based program for woodland owners and practitioners to increase carbon storage in Maine. It starting meeting in February, it will finish its work by September 1st. A second example is the group appointed by the Commissioner to advise the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife on the State Wildlife Action plan. That broad group, with broad representation, met over about a year, advised the department, and then disbanded.

We are concerned that a large permanent advisory group will inevitably takes resources away from the Maine Forest Service at a time when frankly, they are already inadequately funded. When needed, the Director or the Commissioner of the department has the authority to convene focused, temporary groups on any topic related to forestry. That model works well. We urge you to oppose this legislation.