



April 29, 2021

**Re: Support LD 1549 – An Act to Establish the Maine Forest Advisory Board**

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

Thank you for this opportunity to express our support for LD 1549.

We have a family farm in Township D Range 2 WELS, Aroostook County. We have been farming for 45 years and like many many farms, half of our acreage is woodlot which we harvest for our own use and for commercial sale.

It is apparent that the leadership of Maine Forest Service suffers from the scourges of insular thinking and revolving doors. As a result, too often MFS illegitimately substitutes the interests of large and powerful industrial landowners for the public interest they are entrusted to protect. A wisely-structured Maine Forest Advisory Board would reestablish a balance of statewide interests and help to make sure that important perspectives of Maine citizens, small woodlot owners and such concerns as the environment and wildlife receive their proper attention.

Numerous examples exist that attest to the value of this kind of stakeholder Advisory Board. On the State level there is the Marine Resources Advisory Board. One example on the national level is the National Organic Standards Board. There is no doubt MFS would gain improved performance if citizens could be given the ability to provide structured input.

We strongly support LD 1549 and urge you to pass it.

Thank you.

*Caleb & Jim Gerritsen*

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