



# Maine Forest Products Council

*The voice of Maine's forest economy*

## Companies represented on the MFPC Board

American Forest Mgmt.  
Baskahegan Co.  
BBC Lands LLC  
Bradbury Forest Mgmt.  
Columbia Forest Prod.  
Cross Insurance  
Family Forestry  
Farm Credit East  
Fontaine Inc.  
H.C. Haynes  
Huber Resources  
Innovative Natural  
Resource Solutions  
J.D. Irving  
Katahdin Forest Mgmt.  
Key Bank  
LandVest Inc.  
Limington Lumber  
Louisiana Pacific  
Maibec Logging  
ND Paper  
Nicols Brothers  
Pingree Associates  
Pixelle Specialty Sol.  
Pleasant River Lumber  
Prentiss & Carlisle  
ReEnergy  
Richard Wing & Son  
Robbins Lumber  
Sappi North America  
Southern Maine Forestry  
Stead Timberlands  
TD Bank  
Timber Resource Group  
Timberstate G.  
Wadsworth Woodlands  
Wagner Forest Mgt.  
Weyerhaeuser

## Testimony opposing LD 1549 An Act to Establish the Maine Forest Advisory Board

May 6, 2021

**Patrick Strauch, Executive Director**

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, I am Patrick Strauch from Exeter, Maine, and the Executive Director of the Maine Forest Products Council (MFPC). I represent Maine's forest product industry, which contributes more than \$8 billion to the state's economy, and creates more than 33,000 direct and indirect jobs.

LD 1549 proposes creating a large administrative structure to deal with the 10-year forest action plan required by the federal government. But based on subsequent testimony, my sense is that this bill is a reaction to a challenging legislative session. It's not designed to solve any resource management problems, but to assert greater legislative control over the executive body on policy positions.

The Council appreciates the interest of the committee in Maine's private forestlands. But the fact is that these are private resources, and the State has no authority to assume management as suggested in LD 1549.

We respect the authority of the Legislature and the executive bodies of Maine government and will assist in any endeavor designed to promote collaborative solutions to identified policy issues. From our perspective, the structure of the proposed board in LD 1549 – with only one commercial forest landowner representative – under-represents the private land resources to be overseen. Additionally, the decisions of the board would be determined by a majority vote. This approach is fraught with inequities for the regulated community.

I have been involved in a variety of issues that required a stakeholder focus in the past 20 years: Governor John Baldacci created task forces that focused on wood pellet and biomass markets; forest recreation; wind power, and Keeping Maine's Forest (a group that is still active.) Governor Janet Mills invited members of the industry to serve on the Maine Climate Council and the Economic Recovery Committee. These have been productive endeavors that focus on solving identified challenges.

There have been many ongoing collaborative efforts that have yielded significant results. A recent example is the Forest Opportunity Roadmap (FOR/Maine) project. This has been a very successful collaboration among industry, community, trade associations, university and both Maine and federal government representatives. As a group we have worked to regrow Maine's economy and the legislature

has provided support for recommendations endorsed by FOR/Maine like reinstating the biofuels tax credit and establishing the biochemical tax credit. Building codes have been changed to encourage the increase the use of mass timber construction methods (Cross Laminated Timber) and authorization of \$750,000 in Maine Technology Asset Fund and Maine Technology Institute (MTI) funds for forest products innovation grants.

It has been suggested that this model could be folded into a Governor's Advisory Council, which would be similar to models used in Minnesota. However, these discussions are premature and do not represent the position of the FOR/Maine Executive Committee. In fact, current discussions are to work towards continued funding of Phase III to enable continued progress in market recovery efforts. The Minnesota Forest Resources Council was created in 1989 to address how much timber should be cut on public land. Their efforts lead to better communications between the industry and federal, state and local agencies.

However in Maine, private forestry economy interests are well represented by functional trade groups with a long history of collaborating effectively with each other and the state. Statewide commissions are commonly formed on an ad hoc basis to discuss and explore specific forestry-related concerns with good results. There is no need to establish one with a permanent charter and budget.

Maine is fortunate to have healthy, productive forests, with 8.3 million acres – the largest percentage in the nation – certified by third-party auditors as sustainably managed.

In summary, MFPC opposes LD 1549 because:

- The rationale for LD 1549 is not clearly stated and seems overly broad in response to the federal reporting process.
- Creates a legislative structure in conflict with the executive authority that will tend to politicize policy discussions and result in a diminished voice of landowners, loggers and mills on important natural resource issues.

We urge you to vote **Ought Not to Pass on LD 1549.**