



**Testimony of**

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**Before the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry in Support of LD 736 –  
An Act to Enhance the Ecological Reserve System**

**Tuesday, January 22, 2022**

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Dana Doran, and I am the Executive Director of the Professional Logging Contractors of Maine. The Professional Logging Contractors of Maine (PLC) is the voice of logging and associated trucking contractors throughout the state of Maine. The PLC was formed in 1995 to provide independent contractors representation in a rapidly changing forest industry.

As of 2017, logging and trucking contractors in Maine employed over 3,900 people directly and were indirectly responsible for the creation of an additional 5,400 jobs. This employment and the investments that contractors make contributed \$620 million to the state’s economy. Our membership, which includes 200 contractor members and an additional 100 associate members, employs 2,500 individuals who work in this industry and is also responsible for 80% of Maine’s annual timber harvest.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of our membership in opposition to LD 736 – An Act to Enhance the Ecological Reserve System. The PLC did not come to the decision to oppose this legislation without reservation, but since the legislation was not provided to stakeholders until this past Friday at 5 pm, only three days prior to the public hearing and almost a year after the bill was referred to this committee as a concept draft, we cannot support the approach in this legislation to expand ecological reserves by reducing the amount of timberland managed by the Bureau of Parks and Lands.

As this committee knows, the revenue that funds the Bureau of Parks and Lands is derived completely from timber harvesting; timber harvesting that is conducted annually by our members and many other hard working timber harvesting professionals from the state. Timber harvesting that not only provides the Bureau with operational revenue, but employment and economic activity throughout rural Maine.

Currently, the Bureau of Parks and Lands manages about 600,000 acres of land in the state. 96,000 of these acres have been placed in an ecological reserve and are off limits to timber harvesting.

It appears that the language included in this bill could provide the authority to the Bureau to capture an additional 41,000 acres of currently operable land, on top of the 96,000 acres that have already been placed in ecological reserves. If this is true, it will not only reduce active management of Maine's public forests, but it will also reduce other opportunities for the public to benefit from lands managed by BPL's mandate of multi-use. This should be concerning not only to the hard-working men and women that harvest and transport timber from Maine's public lands but also to other Maine citizens that take advantage of these lands.

Beyond the loss of operational opportunity, it also appears that the legislation before you today was not created through a holistic effort that included the voices of multiple stakeholders nor a public process which has substantiated the need. This is concerning considering the fact that public lands have been the focal point of Commissions and work groups going back to 2014. None of these have discussed nor recommended the addition of ecological reserve lands as carve outs from existing public lands.

For example, I am a member of the Climate Council's Natural and Working Lands subgroup. This group began meeting in late 2019 and completed its work in the summer of 2020. The expansion of ecological reserves was not one of our recommendations. As a Member of the Governor's Forest Carbon Taskforce, which began its work in early 2021, the expansion of ecological reserves was not one of our recommendations. And finally, in 2014, the Commission to Study the Maine Public Reserved Lands, of which the PLC was a member, did not recommend the expansion of ecological reserves.

Thus, without a public process that values the input of stakeholders, especially from those who help manage public land with their hard work and dedication, we cannot support the potential reduction of timber harvesting from Maine's public lands which will be a direct result of the legislation before you today.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the opinion of our membership before you today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.