



January 19, 2022

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The Honorable Andrew Renzullo, Chairman
Committee on Resources, Recreation and Development
New Hampshire House of Representatives
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1005, legislation to create a New Hampshire low-grade timber and wood emerging market commission. The Forest Society would like to thank the bill sponsors for introducing this important bill.

New Hampshire's forests are very much part of the New Hampshire advantage. They provide jobs via both tourism and the forest products industry, the state's second and fourth largest economic engines respectively. Forests provide clean air and water, habitat for wildlife, and a rich variety of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Those are among the reasons the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests has advocated for forest protection for since our founding in 1901. It is why we continue to seek to conserve forests in the face of ongoing forest conversion. A forest that becomes a paved parking lot seldom ever returns to forest.

Most of the forestland in New Hampshire is privately owned. Rarely compensated for the natural services their forests provide, landowners can derive income from the sustainable sale of forest products, including higher valued saw logs and lower valued firewood and wood chips (biomass).

For the Forest Society, sustainable management allows forests to remain as forests. We see it as a conservation strategy—a family able to derive income from sustainable forest management of their land is less likely to turn to subdivision and development (forest conversion) to help pay property taxes, fund a college education, or other needs.

That model depends on a vibrant market. More than 65 percent of standing timber in New Hampshire is low-grade wood, which has a limited market. With the decline in paper manufacturing in New England, the markets for law grade wood are under stress.

We believe state policy should aim to find new markets for this resource. Carrying out that policy will address a troubling trend that has seen, according to the 2020 State Forest Action Plan, New Hampshire lose 126,710 acres of forest from 1983 to 2017 or roughly a 2.7%

reduction. By doing so, the state will help to maintain their ability to provide deep scenic beauty, recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat, clean water and a more diverse economy. The establishment of the HB 1005 Commission is a key step to reach that goal.

We would urge the Committee to support the bill. Thank you again for accepting this testimony and for your commitment to our state's forests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Leahy', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matt Leahy, Public Policy Director
Society for the Protection of NH Forests