



May 7, 2019

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The Honorable Martha Fuller Clark, Chairwoman
New Hampshire Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
State House, Room 103
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Senator Fuller Clark:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Amendment #2019-1737 to HB 183.

As you know, we are a 118 year old land trust whose mission is to protect the state's most important landscapes while promoting the wise use of its renewable natural resources. It is the second part of that mission statement which most directly connects us to New Hampshire's forest-based economy. We own over 55,000 acres of forestland in 185 reservations. About 38,000 of these acres are in active forest management. Each year, we host an average of 8 to 12 timber harvesting operations. During our most recent fiscal year, we harvested 2.05 million board feet of saw logs and 25,000 tons of low grade wood. Please note that 74% of what we harvest is low-grade wood. Given those numbers and the fact that the state's biomass plants serve as a main market for the low-grade wood, SPNHF strongly supports efforts to strengthen those low-grade wood markets.

The Forest Society, like other private forestland owners, needs markets for this wood. However, when wood and wood-chip markets take a downturn, it becomes difficult to maintain the conditions that allow us to support and promote the other benefits that sustainable forest management provides. The current reality for the private forestland owners is that the strength of those markets is tied to the operations of the State's six independent biomass energy plants.

We believe the amendment to HB 183 will help these plants remain economically viable. Ensuring these New Hampshire-based sources of power generation continue to operate is in and itself an important policy goal. However, what is also important is that as they resume their operations, the markets on which loggers, landowners, and wood processors rely for their low-grade timber are sustained. When we maintain these markets, we strengthen the economic contributions the wood industry makes to our state.

The Forest Society is committed to advancing the resilience of New Hampshire forests and the health of the forest products industry. The resilience of natural systems within forests support our quality of life; markets for forest products support sustainable forestry, which in turn helps make the natural systems within forests resilient. The weakening, or worse the termination, of existing energy markets for low-grade wood will undermine a century of progress in restoring the resilience of New Hampshire forests.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Thank you as well for the support the Committee has provided to the forests and forests products industry in our state.

Sincerely,

Matt Leahy, Public Policy Manager
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests