



April 11, 2017

The Honorable Richard Barry, Chairman  
House Science, Technology and Energy Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 304  
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Dear Chairman Barry and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to register the Forest Society's support for SB 129. As you know, we are a 116- 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 that most directly connects us to New Hampshire's forest-based economy. We own 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 eight to 12 timber harvesting operations. For our fiscal year ending on April 30, 2016, we treated about 400 of those acres, harvesting 1.4 million board feet of saw logs and 15,000 tons of low grade wood. Given those numbers and the fact that the state's biomass plants serve as a main market for this wood, we strongly support efforts to strengthen these markets.

We believe the changes SB 129 proposes will benefit the state's biomass power plants. Increasing the Class III REC values means these plants can remain economically viable. As they continue, and hopefully expand, their operations, the markets that loggers, landowners, and wood processors rely on for their low-grade timber are sustained. When we maintain these markets, we strengthen the economic contributions the wood industry makes to our state.

Just as importantly, maintaining the markets for low-grade timber reinforces our ability to protect our state's iconic forest landscapes. Careful timber harvesting can result in the creation of younger forests, thereby increasing the age and size class diversity of our landscape. It is also often used as a method of meeting other goals for management including the creation of wildlife habitats, maintenance of plant biodiversity, and promotion of recreational opportunities. However, this proper stewardship of the land comes with a cost to the landowner. The legislation before you will help address that challenge.

In closing, we believe a policy that provides incentives for landowners to care for and maintain their lands will provide an economic return and help ensure the biological richness of the state. SB 129 leads us to that outcome. Its passage is a key step towards ensuring our forests continue to play a central role in the overall quality of life that makes New Hampshire so unique. Thank you again for this opportunity; I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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