



October 17, 2019

Dear Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture,

The New England Society of American Foresters (NESAF) is a collection of nearly 800 natural resource professionals spread across the six New England states. Our mission is to be responsible stewards of the forests of the region while meeting society's vital needs. We are keenly aware of the need for constant education of our members and the general public about forest-related issues. It is our role to advance the forestry science, education, technology, and practice of forestry in our region. We also understand the perilous implications of climate change and its effects on New England's and the world's forests.

We have been intently tracking the proposed legislation in Massachusetts that would curb the ability to thoughtfully manage the state's forest resources to deliver multiple benefits to the Commonwealth's citizens. NESAF strongly opposes such legislation which limits the professional judgement and management options of the employees of Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in managing the state's lands. Massachusetts' public forests include a broad array of ecosystems and landscape types, successional stages (age classes), management objectives, historic origins and legal mandates; and as such require management guided by professionals. The state's mandates are already more "conservative" than other landowner groups and as such further restrictions imposed by legislation are not productive to the overall health of the forest resource in Massachusetts and New England.

If the legislative intent is to find ways to mitigate climate change, then we suggest instead of restricting management and harvesting of lands by legislative mandate, other steps could be taken that would more productively address this situation. Our first recommendation would be to promote more conservation of forestland to ensure keeping forests as forests, hedging against conversion to non-forest uses so that these forests remain healthy and productive and contributing to both carbon sequestration and storage. The second major step to consider is the promotion of building more structures with wood, forest products that will continue to store carbon and avoid the unseen carbon costs of manufacturing and shipping concrete, steel, and other building materials.

NESAF believes and supports responsible forest management as the primary means for maintaining and restoring resilient and sustainable forests and for providing financial returns from managed public lands. NESAF believes that managed forests on public lands provide renewable, recyclable, and biodegradable forest products necessary to sustain functional ecosystems and meet societal material needs. Conserving lands, keeping forests as forests, and managing them well are our best protection against climate change.



NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY  
OF  
AMERICAN FORESTERS

Representing the forestry profession in New England  
[www.nesaf.org](http://www.nesaf.org)

Scientific and social analysis shows that responsible harvesting using Best Management Practices (BMPs) is an effective mechanism for maintaining and/or restoring healthy, diverse forested landscapes that provide robust and mutually supportive complements of environmental, economic and social values. When planned and supervised by foresters with input from the public and other resource specialists, responsible timber harvesting supports, often enhances attributes such as fish and wildlife habitat, improved water quality, reliable water supplies and recreation. Managing forests to provide diverse conditions locally and across the landscape allows for adaptation to a changing climate and provides a level of resiliency to events and issues attributed to climate change such as weather, fire, or invasive species.

A strong worldwide demand exists for forest-related products used by our contemporary society. This demand can be met by harvesting here in the U.S., or elsewhere. If we reach beyond our local forests, the result is an increase in harvesting from other ownerships, regions, and countries, that typically have far less stringent environmental standards or are much less productive (i.e., more acres must be harvested for similar yields). Moreover, the fossil fuels expended to ship those materials to the northeastern US further increase the concentration of greenhouse gases we are striving to mitigate. Alternatively, the demand can be met by other materials, principally steel and concrete. These materials pale in comparison to the benefits of forest products in terms of embodied energy/carbon emissions (Glover et al. 2002) and sustainability. Further, these alternatives have no capacity to filter particulate emissions, are expensive to recycle and slow to biodegrade, all major economic/environmental costs to society. Good practices on public lands can serve as an example of what can be accomplished through truly sustainable forest management, showcasing one of the many reasons why harvesting of forests on public lands should not be curtailed, but instead encouraged.

We are happy to be a resource for the Committee as they continue to consider these topics and would gladly provide scientific research references and access to professionals throughout New England to assist in the analysis of the implications on limiting all forest management activities on state-owned lands. In that vein I suggest you visit the following link: <http://masswoods.org/caring-your-land/forest-carbon> to read an excellent publication outlining the carbon cycle and considerations regarding management's impacts on forest carbon stocks. We believe that forests are a major part of the equation in addressing the climate crisis, but blunt regulation for a very complex topic is not the appropriate approach.

Thank you,

*Julie Renaud Evans*

Julie Renaud Evans  
Chair, New England Society of American Foresters

*Mike Fleming*

Mike Fleming  
Massachusetts Representative  
and Policy Chair