

Dear Committee members,

I am writing in opposition to H 7618, the Forestry and Forest Parity Act, which is nothing more than a Timber Industry Expansion Bill.

If passed, this bill would make it more profitable to clearcut forests for solar and other types of land development, as well as on state-owned land in Rhode Island.

H 7618 would remove the use and sales tax on Forest Product equipment, including, but not limited to, chainsaws, logging trucks, tractors, sawmills, tree harvesters, slashers, and stump grinders.

While some tree companies might claim they don't practice clearcutting, tree service and logging companies that do practice clearcutting will use this bill which makes Logging Equipment Tax Exempt to clearcut forests throughout Rhode Island.

This bill would also expand the zoning of where logging can take place to all zoning districts which will likely include clearcut logging.

It is also not fair to ask the taxpayers to subsidize clearcutting which causes deforestation.

The claim that this bill applies only to small businesses is misleading. A business with 300 employees is not a small business. You can clearcut thousands of acres of forestland and operate numerous sawmills with that many people.

Also, why is there a need to expand the timber industry in Rhode Island? Especially, since the state is currently dealing with a crisis where logged forests are not growing back due to the overpopulation of deer eating the buds from logged tree stumps preventing regeneration, as well as invasive species outcompeting native species and soil degradation after logging, contributing to this deforestation.

[Rhode Island's Large Deer Population More Immediate Threat to State's Forests Than Climate Change - ecoRI News](#)

The destructive logging practices which are the current dominant logging practices in Rhode Island, leads to the destruction of Biodiversity, the spread of invasive species, water and soil degradation, creates a fire hazard through the flammable wood slash left behind, and leads to most of the carbon stored in the forest being released into the atmosphere as air pollution contributing to Climate Change.

[ClimateForestryCommitteeReport_2023.pdf \(harvard.edu\)](#)

According to the **Massachusetts Climate Forestry Committee's 2023 Report** which included scientists such as Forest Ecologists Dr. David Foster and Dr. Jonathan Thompson of Harvard Forest,

"The Committee generally agreed that passive management confers greater increases in carbon stocks than active, and that allowing forests to grow and age is typically best to maximize carbon storage. The Committee strongly agreed that carbon storage is typically greatest in old forests and disproportionately in the largest trees, and that Massachusetts forests can continue to accumulate carbon for many decades if undisturbed."

"... the Committee agreed that is not practical to manage for a narrow window of peak carbon sequestration, and that cutting older forest to create younger forests primarily to enhance the rate of carbon sequestration would be counterproductive."

"The Committee strongly agreed on the importance of the carbon pool in soils. They concluded that the most important way to preserve soil carbon is to allow forests to mature naturally..."

One of the arguments for this bill is that forests affected by the spongy moth causing tree mortality need to be logged to create regeneration and to prevent carbon loss.

[ClimateForestryCommitteeReport_2023.pdf \(harvard.edu\)](#)

However, according to the **Massachusetts Climate Forestry Committee**,

"The Committee found no ecological rationale for salvage harvesting and noted that it usually represents a short term (10-20 year) carbon loss to the atmosphere in comparison to leaving the wood to decay. In most circumstances, it recommended foregoing salvage harvesting and leaving dead wood to realize the habitat quality and biodiversity benefits."

[cbi_495.tex \(harvard.edu\)](#)

This is echoed in the scientific paper, **Preemptive and Salvage Harvesting of New England Forests: When Doing Nothing Is a Viable Alternative**," written by Dr. David Foster and Dr. David Orwig of Harvard Forest.

"Many decisions to harvest before or after a disturbance or to attempt to increase forest resistance or resilience to disturbance and stress are based on the incorrect notion that forest ecosystems are damaged, destroyed, or impaired following major disturbance and that this situation should be avoided or remediated (Maloney 2005). From a functional perspective, however, substantial evidence indicates that northeastern forest ecosystems are extraordinarily resilient and that natural disturbances are inherent and essential processes for ecosystem function."

[Forest-clearing to create early-successional habitats: Questionable benefits, significant costs \(harvard.edu\)](#)

In the scientific paper, **Forest-clearing to create early-successional habitats: Questionable benefits, significant costs,**

“Although a small percentage of the carbon in trees that are cut is stored in durable wood products, in the U.S. about 76% of carbon in trees cut for timber is released into the atmosphere each year ([Domke et al., 2018](#)), with most of it emitted quickly in processing, waste, and short-lived products ([Harmon et al., 1996](#); [Ingerson, 2011](#); [Harmon, 2019](#); [Leturcq, 2020](#)). A logged mature forest stores less than half of the carbon of an uncut mature forest, even if carbon stored in wood products is included in the carbon storage total of the logged areas ([Nunery and Keeton, 2010](#); [Law et al., 2022](#)).”

[State Land Stewardship: Forest Thinning and Timber Harvests | Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management \(ri.gov\)](#)

Regarding logged forests on state-owned land, according to DEM’s website, “harvested trees are often used for wood chips, mulch, and firewood.” These are short lived products which store very little carbon, nothing close to the carbon lost when DEM logged these forests.

The rest of the wood logged from state forests is burned in biomass powerplants according to DEM’s Michael Healey. When wood is burned for biomass, all the carbon is released into the atmosphere as air pollution contributing to Climate Change and creating health risks for people.

Logging trucks emit carbon emissions contributing to Climate Change, so this bill would remove the use and sales tax on a known producer of greenhouse gas emissions.

We should be focusing on protecting our state’s forests and biodiversity, not passing legislation that will contribute to their destruction.

Nathan Cornell

President of the Old Growth Tree Society

Warwick, R.I. 02886