

Testimony in support of H5294: Old Growth Forest Protection Act

Dr. Hans Scholl, 71 Fales Avenue, Barrington, RI 02806

Date of Hearing: February 27, 2025

To Chair Bennett and the honorable Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I believe that it is important that we retain, or re-grow protected forests that are kept with minimal human intervention—*ideally* these forests should resemble the forests that have covered New England for tens of thousands of years before the arrival of European settlers.

Old growth forests play a vital role as significant ecosystems supporting diverse native species of trees, plants, insects, birds, and animals. These forests are not only home to unique biodiversity but also serve as essential carbon sinks, storing vast amounts of carbon and contributing to climate change mitigation efforts. Clearcutting and destructive logging practices not only destroy these invaluable ecosystems but also release stored carbon into the atmosphere, exacerbating the climate crisis.

I also believe, that there is little disagreement that most of us would love and enjoy to visit and spend time in such a forest, and that most of us would consider it a big loss if these forests would no longer exist. We are already late to protect our few remaining oldest forests. Only one percent of the forests that are left in Rhode Island are over 100 years old, and we have very few state-owned forests protected in their natural state.

To assure that Rhode Island will not gradually lose these forests, I support H5294.

Thank you very much for considering my input, and thank you to Representative Shanley for introducing this important bill.



Dr. Hans Scholl

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