

To Chair of House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

I fully support H 5294 and would like to see it come up for a full house vote and pass the full house this year.

It simply cannot be overstated the importance of the last remaining old growth forests in RI, and these forests must be protected from logging, clear cutting, or any cutting at all.

- We must protect RI old growth forests. These can never be replaced once they are destroyed.
- Old growth forests contain biodiversity that humans should leave alone. Biodiversity has rights that should be respected.
- Disturbing and/or cutting old growth forests will kill and destroy native habitat and wildlife that will never be replaced.
- Old growth forests capture huge amounts of carbon. This capture capacity would be lost when large, mature trees are cut down and destroyed. Tons of new carbon will enter the atmosphere if cutting old growth forests is allowed.
- Don't touch my (our) old growth forests and leave them in their natural state. RI residents current and future don't want these forests cut down, don't want logging, and want these last few remaining old growth forests to remain wild and intact in perpetuity.
- Increase the penalties to (\$10K) for first time and (\$50K) for subsequent offenses. It's entirely possible that loggers / extractors will rather pay the lower fine in the existing bill and just do clear cutting.

I support the natural heritage program which is a great way to manage these forests and pay respect to the cultural value these lands have to past, existing and future generations.

Trees are a known commodity to be cut and sold, and commercially abused. It takes decades / centuries for old trees to reach maturity. It only takes a few minutes to cut them down. There are other forests where trees could be harvested in a sustainable way, but old growth forests are not the place to cut.

Trees do necessary things to keep our towns and planet habitable. It's in all of our best interests to let trees continue doing their work. This is not a difficult concept to grasp. John Campanini (long time director of the RI Tree Council) summed things up very well saying, "We need a rational approach to protection that respects our trees". It comes down to respect for trees and for the tremendous benefits they serve when they remain alive, thriving and upright in the ground. Let's take more leadership action to protect old growth forests in RI. Our kids and future generations expect this from us.

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