

## Lou Mansolillo

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**From:** MARGARET PARSONS <mpkayak@cox.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 27, 2025 6:52 AM  
**To:** House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
**Subject:** Old Growth Forest Protection Act H5294

Margaret Parsons  
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February 26, 2025

House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
RI Legislature  
State House

RE: Hearing for the Old Growth Protection Act H5294

Dear Committee,

Why is Rhode Island the only New England State that allows logging in State Forests?

Our forests need protection! As a retiree that hikes 4-5 times a week in Rhode Island's forests and management areas, I have seen devastation over the past 10 years from severe storms related to climate change and insect infestations such as spongy moths and beech blight aphids. Old growth forests actually do better as the oldest trees, sometimes referred to as mother trees, offer protection through their underground networks to younger trees, warning them of pest infestations and providing needed nutrients. This occurs across species.

Currently there are no laws in Rhode Island protecting rare and old species. Our DEM policy of clearcutting to create hunting habitat is misguided and decreases forest diversity as well as raises the risk of wildfires. I have witnessed awful clear cuts in Arcadia Management Area where nothing is spared, most recently another 195 acre parcel with no land remediation! It is bad enough that we are allowing clear cutting to develop solar farms, but clear cutting for logging profit on State land is short sighted and ill advised and not based on any sensible forest management practices.

Old growth forests contain more biodiversity and store more carbon than an average Rhode Island forest. This is why I support the Old Growth Forest Protection ACT 2024 H7293 S2299 which would create the first state law in Rhode Island's history to protect our remaining state open space and forests and promote a healthy biodiverse forest that is more resistant to climate change.

The quality of life and the air quality in Rhode Island is dependent on healthy forests which store carbon emissions and provide a respite from modern life. This was never more necessary than during our recent pandemic, when the mental health of our residents suffered greatly and our forested land helped many of us preserve our mental health.

This bill would create a new Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program, which would designate protected forests and monitor and protect the biodiversity of our State.

Please pass the Old Growth Forest Protection Act to finally create state laws to protect our public forests and bring Rhode Island Forest Protection up to par with other New England States! Please stop the clear cutting of forests on state owned land and bring back the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program!

Sincerely,  
Margaret Parsons  
West Greenwich