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From: Mary Kelly <marykelly224@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2025 9:49 AM
To: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Subject: Re: H 5294

On Thu, Feb 27, 2025 at 9:32 AM Mary Kelly <marykelly224@gmail.com> wrote:
Greetings to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

I wish to impart to you my reasons that the Old Growth Forest Bill H5294 should be passed into our RI environmental actions.

We are a State often paired with superlatives descriptors,"The smallest," "The most densely populated ", "the State with the longest oceanfront land". But we are also "The only State without a program that protects old growth forests."

We have only 1% of forested land that can be called old growth-perhaps that is another superlative! But , to not have that small concentration protected from logging, is to me, keeping our State in an unfortunate category.

What we can do-and this is not merely a "nice"thing, is to save our unique areas. Biodiversity, as a scientific word ,often causes some eye rolling; it is a concept of interconnected systems. But, if we were to understand what treasure we have in these pockets of life , we would know that our very existence ultimately depends on biodiversity. To that purpose , logging in State forests, should be stopped.

A Natural Heritage Program , to keep our last wild lands free and thriving , is vital.

We recognized this by studying areas wherein rare and threatened plants and animal life was recorded decades ago in natural area preserves. An act was codified, The Natural Areas Protection Act of 1993, and it was ignored, lost to a different point of view of funding for recreation and hunting and logging for profit, rather than preserving , and here we are today , with old mature forests threatened to be lost forever.

We recognize that:

1. Old Growth forests are significant ecosystems for native species. These may be lost forever.
2. Greater diversity exists in old mature forests than in second growth forests.
3. They are carbon sinks, they create misting and bring moisture in droughts. Especially so , with our proximity to coastal winds to the hinterland.
4. Old growth is more fire resistant and able to recover.
5. Public interest is a matter for our consideration to educate the next generations.

The time is now to enact The Old Growth Forest Protection Act H.5294

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