



Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, Inc.

February 25, 2025

Honorable David Bennett, Chairman
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
RI State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: H-5294 Old Growth Forest Protection Act - AGAINST

Dear Mr. Bennett and the Committee,

The RI Forest Conservators Organization, Inc. (RIFCO) is a statewide non-profit volunteer organization that represents forest landowners and other forest conservationists. Our mission is the protection and wise use of Rhode Island's woodland resources through education and advocacy.

We are writing to object to the passage of the proposed Old Growth Forest Protection Act. H-5294 seeks to create a new state agency within Statewide Planning that would have broad powers and authority to direct the land management activities of the existing Department of Environmental Management on state lands and all town-owned lands. These powers would go beyond the stated intent of protecting "Old-growth Forests" and is intended to shut down any legitimate and scientifically-sound forestry and wildlife habitat management practices of the state.

Although we forest landowners share in the common goal of conserving Rhode Island's forested lands, we are concerned by what the overall goal of its advocates are, namely, to shut down the active management of our state's forests.

It is our position that all of our forests are worthy of protection from conversion to non-forest uses (keeping forests as forests), and that active management of our state's forests, with protection from disturbance provided for unique natural heritage sites by the existing state agency responsible for the management of our state's resources, is key in providing a wide range of ecosystem services, including wood products, rural jobs and economies, clean water, clean air, recreational resources, wildlife habitat, and both the sequestration and storage of atmospheric carbon.

Respectfully,

William Fortune, President