

To the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Joe Shannon (no affiliation) and I am submitting testimony against H 5344, the "Old growth Forest Protection Act".

I have been studying and working in forest hydrology for over 20 years specifically focused on the response of forests, water, and soils to disturbances such as invasive species, management, and climate change. This bill is misguided, misinformed, and factually incorrect.

The definition of old growth forests is a complex topic and the version presented here is not grounded in science or in historical management of land. Our forests are heavily impacted by past management, ongoing land-use and land-conversion, and future challenges such as land conversion, droughts, and insect outbreaks. If we want to keep the things we value about forests then many areas need intervention to avoid changing to something that none of us would recognize as the forests we value; whether that value is for economic output, the clean water and habitat provided, or aesthetic and recreation enjoyment.

About myself:

I grew up in Warwick and attended the University of New Hampshire and graduated with a degree in Forestry Science in 2006. I performed forest inventory and timber sale preparation for the US Forest Service on the White Mountain National Forest as a seasonal employee from 2006-2008. After that I worked in Minnesota and Michigan studying the effects of forest conversion on streamflow, invasive species on forested wetlands hydrology, and the how the interaction of invasive species and climate change should be accounted for by land managers looking to protect critical ecosystems. During that time I received a Masters of Science in Forest Hydrology in 2011 from the University of Minnesota, and a PhD in Forest Science in 2021 from Michigan Technological University. I returned to Rhode Island in the summer of 2022 and work remotely at a private company that provides a platform to prioritize treatments aimed at reducing the risk of wildfire. In my role as Lead Scientist for Applied Hydrology I am responsible for quantifying the trade-offs between unplanned disturbances like fire and forest management on water quality and water quantity.