

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am writing in support of the Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914, which would create the first law protecting public forests and biodiversity in Rhode Island's history. Rhode Island is the only New England state with no such protections.

This Act will help prevent destruction of Rhode Island's precious forests. Deforestation destroys ecosystems and causes loss of biodiversity. Deforestation destroys vital habitats for millions of species at a time when we are in the midst of mass extinction of countless species. Forests produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. Destroying forests thus accelerates climate change. Deforested areas are more vulnerable to severe droughts, floods and uncontrollable wildfires. Deforestation permits invasive species to take over.

The Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914 would preserve Rhode Island forests by:

- Creating 46 natural area preserves in Rhode Island to protect rare state-owned forests including Old Growth Forests and Natural Heritage Areas where rare and endangered species live.
- Prohibiting clearcut logging on all state-owned land including logging practices that involve removing most of the trees from a forest. Selective logging management where some trees can be cut, but not too many to retain the tree canopy, would still be permitted in forests that are not Natural Area Preserves.
- Require environmental review by Natural Heritage Program scientists before public state logging operations.
- Bring back the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program after 19 years to once again protect rare and endangered species. Currently, no state agency is doing this important work since supporting gaming species is a higher priority to the Rhode Island DEM than protecting native biodiversity because of the money DEM gets from hunting licenses.

Please pass the Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914, so Rhode Islanders can always have these extraordinary, irreplaceable old natural forests and be able to enjoy their ecological benefits.

Sincerely,

Lynn E. Taylor MD

12 Clarke Rd. Barrington, RI 02806

letaylormd@gmail.com