

January 26, 2022

Representative David Bennett
Chair, House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence RI 02908

Re: The Nature Conservancy Requests H 7066 on Old Growth Forests be held for further study

Dear Chairman Bennett,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 7066, which would create state and local requirements for the protection and preservation of old growth forests located on public lands. As you know, The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to preserving the land and water on which all life depends. In Rhode Island, we steward more than 10,000 acres of protected land and are one of the largest land-owners in the State. We've partnered with DEM and other conservation organizations to protect tens of thousands of additional acres of forests and open space across the State.

While we support the overall goals of this legislation as we understand it – to help protect important forests across the State – we respectfully request that this bill is held for further study. As a science-based organization, we would want to see that definitions of old growth forest be made in a process that includes local experts – including the RI Land Trust Council, DEM, the Woodlands Partnership, and others. We also recognize that the legislature created a Conservation Commission in the last session, which has only recently been constituted. This would be an appropriate question for that Commission to discuss.

The Nature Conservancy does not believe that managing forests will necessarily cause deforestation. Active management can be an effective tool to ensure the health of a forest – particularly with the effects of emerald ash borers and other pests causing tree loss in many areas of the state.

We are grateful for your work to protect the forests of Rhode Island and appreciate all you do for the environment. We respectfully request that this bill is held for further study and that the Conservation Commission and others are able to dedicate time and resources to this matter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sue AnderBois
Climate and Energy Program Manager

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Working in more than 70 countries, we are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans, and helping make cities more sustainable. Here in Rhode Island, we have 4,000 members, and we steward more than 10,000 acres of protected land while maintaining 78 miles of public walking trails.