

Dear Committee members, I am strongly opposed to H 5781, which would add 10 Loggers, called Foresters, to the DEM to support increased logging, including likely clearcutting, on state-owned land.

The RI DEM Division of Agriculture and Forest Environment which oversees our state forests does not believe in natural forests. Instead, the foresters in this Division believe that forests are a crop for the trees to be cut down to benefit the Timber Industry.

However, native forests are not farms or tree plantations. They are self-sustaining ecosystems shaped by nature.

The Destructive logging that DEM's loggers practice destroy native biodiversity, causes invasives to spread, pollutes waterways, damages soil, and contributes to Climate Change through the carbon released when these forests are logged and the unused wood debris that's burned in biomass power plants.

This bill would be in violation of the 2021 Act on Climate!

Destructive logging contributes to wildfires from the flammable wood slash left behind after the logging operation, the unnatural openings in the forest canopy allowing more sunlight to dry the forest. Flammable underbrush thrive in these openings in the tree canopy, and more wind is able to blow through the forest as well.

Meanwhile, allowing native forests to be left alone to become Old Growth Forests protects native biodiversity, prevents invasives, improves water quality, protects soil, allows trees to sequester and store carbon, and allows the forest to become naturally more resistant to wildfires.

The archaic destructive logging techniques used by DEM Foresters have already wiped out the native forests in western Europe. We shouldn't allow these loggers to destroy what remains of Rhode Island's natural forests and rare habitats.

These 10 Foresters would also conduct increased prescribed burning on state-owned land which poses the risk of a massive wildfire if the prescribed burn gets out of control.

On May 1st, 2025, a prescribed burn got out of control and caused a wildfire in Cape Cod.

<https://turnto10.com/news/local/story/brush-fire-burns-joint-base-cape-cod-barnstable-massachusetts-may-1-2025>

The largest wildfire in New Mexico's history started from a prescribed burn created by the U.S. Forest Service!

[New Mexico's Largest Wildfire Was Set by the Government. What Are Victims Owed? - The New York Times](#)

There are currently no state laws that protect rare old forests or native biodiversity on public land.

The money that would be used to destroy our state forests through funding these loggers in this bill would be better spent on staffing the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program with scientists to identify, monitor, and protect biodiversity for the state.

The RI Natural Heritage Program hasn't existed since 2007, and Rhode Island needs this program to protect the state's rare and endangered species whose habitats are vulnerable to logging and development.

Please do not pass H 5781, which is just a deforestation bill, and instead support bringing back the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program.

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2022 Aerial Photo of 2020 195-acre DEM Clearcut in the Arcadia Management Area

