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From: Dennis Webster <dennishwebster@hotmail.com>
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Categories: Red category

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Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am opposed to House Bill 7243, State Forests and Forestry Projects.

While it is clear that the bill seeks funds to hire ten additional DEM employees to "...focus, support, and expand on the department's efforts in the areas of woodlands, forests, and forestry projects" it is not in the least clear just what these "efforts" are. I suspect that the DEM wants to do a lot more logging in State Forests. I oppose this. Rhode Island's State forests are heavily used for recreation, and recreation and logging do not fit together very well.

On March 31 the House Environmental and Natural Resources Committee voted to "hold for further study" House Bill 7914, the Natural Forest Protection Act, sponsored by Representatives Shanley and Shekarchi. This bill would have protected substantial portions of our State Forests from "extractive logging." It is my understanding that the only opposition to this bill was from DEM.

The text of H 7914 contains extensive findings, while H 7243 contains no detail or justification - it just asks for money to hire ten more employees for vague purposes.

So it looks like there are competing bills in the House of Representatives that would have very different impacts on our State Forests, and these bills are being heard by different committees. It seems that better coordination is needed.

I support H 7914, the Natural Forest Protection Act, and am hopeful that it will be taken up again and passed.

Based on what little I can learn from reading H 7243, I oppose it. Please do not pass it.

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