

Testimony in Opposition to LD 993
“An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine”

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Peter Triandafillou

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and distinguished members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Peter Triandafillou, and I live in Orono. I am retired from Huber Resources Corp (HRC) based in Old Town. I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 993.

LD 993 puts too much control over forest policy on private land in the hands of too few people, needing only a handful of votes to make recommendations to the Maine Forest Service (MFS). While the bill aims to increase public participation in the functioning of the MFS, it in fact bypasses the usual process of public hearings and work sessions that are used to inform the public on proposed policy and to inform the MFS of the details of often very technical policy proposals.

MFS, along with all agencies, frequently convenes groups of experts and citizens to discuss and refine proposed policy changes. Of the many possible examples, I will cite three that are important. I am confident in my perceptions because I served on all three panels.

The Outcome Based Forestry program is managed by the MFS and participating landowners. The program has an expert panel to advise it on the performance of participants and help ensure the success of the program. Our deliberations on the panel are complex, and require review of very private data.

MFS took on the task of creating statewide standards for water quality protections in forestry operations. The process was informed by a group of forestry professionals, conservationists, and other stakeholders to make sure the new standards provided protection of water resources and met the needs of both small and large landowners in all parts of the state.

With the probable reemergence of the spruce budworm in Maine, MFS formed the Spruce Budworm Task Force to discuss and propose policy changes to bring the planned response of an infestation up to modern standards. The task force was composed of multiple stakeholders, including private landowners, conservationists, UMaine, and others.

In all cases, the subject matter is technical and complex, and ill-suited to the deliberations of a politically appointed panel. In addition, existing panels can be activated and retired as needed by the MFS. The Advisory Board created by LD 993 is a permanent body. I see little reason to burden MFS and forest landowners with another layer of bureaucracy. The Advisory Board created by LD 993 adds friction to MFS's functioning and is completely unnecessary.

I urge you to reject LD 993. I apologize for being absent for this hearing, but I had a previous engagement out of state. Thank you for your time.