



**Testimony of**

**Elizabeth Lesnikoski  
Chief Forester**

**Burlington Electric Department**

**Before the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry  
and Senate Committee on Agriculture regarding H. 624, An Act Relating to  
Providing Financial Assistance to the Forest Economy**

**Tuesday March 12, 2024**

Representative Durfee, Representative Surprenant, Representative Graham and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry, my name is Elizabeth Lesnikoski, and I am the Chief Forester for the McNeil Station in Burlington, Vermont. I would like to submit written testimony in support of H. 624, An Act Relating to Providing Financial Assistance to the Forest Economy. I would also like to thank Representatives Sims, Lipsky, Pearl, Rice and Templeman for co-sponsoring this legislation.

Burlington Electric Department is a Joint Owner and the operator of the McNeil Generating Station, a 50 MW wood fired electric generating plant. We operate under a Certificate of Public Good that includes strict wood harvesting standards. I have been in the Wood Procurement position with the McNeil Station since 1983, in the capacity as Chief Forester since 2015. I am a licensed forester in Vermont and New Hampshire and a Society of American Foresters Certified Forester.

Our Harvesting Standards require logging contractors to adhere to Vermont's Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont (AMPs). These include both pre-harvest and post-harvest practices aimed at protecting soils and infrastructure to reduce and/or eliminate sedimentation and phosphorous runoff, during and after harvests. Over the course of my career, I have seen longer mud seasons, shorter winters, and wetter summers. These all result in increased need for more durable logging infrastructure. The more these structures are in place pre-logging the better the water quality and the less post-harvest close out is needed.

These requirements come at a cost to the logging community. This community has been hit repeatedly by mill closures, increased costs of diesel fuel, equipment and insurance, and extreme inflation on parts and supplies. The unencumbered funds from the Clean Water Fund would help this community put in place the required infrastructure needed to be in compliance with the AMPs.

Keeping forests as forests by supporting the logging community is one step in creating a Climate resilient landscape.