

DATE: February 9, 2016
TO: House Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources Committee
FROM: Put Blodgett, Bradford landowner and Tree Farmer
RE: H.789

The Vermont Woodlands Association has not had time to consider H.789, hence I am testifying solely on my behalf.

I instinctively cringe when more governmental regulation is proposed, but in this case, I remember an adage told me by a friend a few years ago: "Failing to plan is planning to fail".

Over the last few years, Vermont has been losing forested acreage. On a percentage basis of forested cover, the Green Mountain state now ranks fourth, after Maine, New Hampshire and West Virginia. Sprawl, both commercial and residential, is fragmenting our landscape into parcels too small to support forest management and wide-ranging wildlife.

A variety of wildlife requires a variety of habitat—ranging from openings to edge habitat, to early-successional forests to areas of mature trees. This requires well-managed timber harvesting. The expense of moving equipment, creating a landing and a truck road to it, and the radiating skid trails preclude this management on small parcels.

While many small parcels in a block can create wildlife habitat, it is more difficult to manage for the purpose of wildlife or sustainable timber harvesting. Large timber holdings can provide the connectivity for wildlife and a wider gene pool for survival.

It bothers me greatly that town and regional planning boards can designate certain areas for development and other areas for agriculture or forestry and the resulting enhanced value for those areas designated for development and the decreased value of agriculture and forested areas for those owners.

But, the greater, long-term good for the state, its citizens, and the visitors so important to its economy, require that sprawl and forest fragmentation be curtailed.

Therefore, I support H.789 in concept.

Two minor points:

1. On page 4, line 16—I would suggest adding "and forest" following "food"
2. On page 8, line 17, perhaps "it" should be inserted after "which"?