

Ms. Diehl,

Please accept these comments related to H355, regarding licensure of foresters in Vermont.

I am writing to express support for forester licensing in Vermont and to comment on the Qualifications for Licensure in H-355.

I have practiced forestry in Vermont since 1993. I am currently Fountains Forestry's Area Forester for New England. I am a licensed forester in New Hampshire and Maine, and a SAF Certified Forester. I took the SAF CF exam last fall.

I support forester licensing in Vermont for the following reasons:

1. I believe licensing will provide a standard of professional practice, which will improve the forestry services available to landowners in Vermont. Harm may result when unqualified and dishonest individuals conduct work typically practiced by foresters. For instance, harm may result when unqualified and dishonest individuals provide forestry consultation, and offer administration of forest management activities, as a front for unregulated harvesting including the liquidation of immature resources. I believe that the forest resource is sufficiently important to the economy and character of Vermont, and individual forests are sufficiently important to their owners, to warrant a high degree of professional practice.
2. This standard of professional practice will also serve to educate the public on the benefits of sound, science-based forestry.
3. I believe licensing will provide a standard of professional ethics on which the public can rely when engaging a forester.
4. I believe State government will also benefit, as the Department of Forest Parks and Recreation can rely on professionally credentialed foresters to verify practices, rather than relying solely on County Foresters for verification.

I would also like to comment on the Qualifications for Licensure described in H355. I suggest considering alternatives to the SAF Certified Forester exam, as the primary benchmark for licensure. I took and passed the SAF CF exam last fall and, while I consider it to be a good, comprehensive exam of national forestry knowledge, and suitable for SAF, it is not, by itself, a suitable standard for a practicing forester in Vermont. The SAF CF exam covered such topics, in detail, as plantation establishment and economics, the Public Land Survey System used in the central and western part of the country, and issues related to the US Forest Service. I have no criticism for the SAF CF exam to serve its intended purpose, but I don't believe it makes a suitable standard for a Vermont license to practice forestry. I believe a more suitable exam would be a set of questions related to Vermont forestry issues: Current Use, AMP's, Boundary Law, Heavy Cut, how to work with Town ordinances, and Act 250.

Thank you for accepting these comments.

Sincerely,

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