

February 4, 2015 Testimony to the House Fish & Wildlife Committee on H.35

I am torn apart by this bill, because I grew up on a dairy farm and was a full-time dairy farmer for fifteen years in the '50s and '60s. Our barn originally had a manure pit for winter storage, but after I purchased some adjoining beautiful Connecticut River bottomland, I had to remodel the barn to milk more cows to pay for the land and the manure pit was eliminated.

Whether safely stored in the pit or piled outside, a winter's accumulation of manure made for a frantic effort trying to spread that amount between the time the land dried out enough to avoid compaction and a corn planting time early enough that would allow sufficient growing season for maturity before the fall frosts.

To lengthen that corn growing season, I resorted to spreading every day, whether rain, snow or 20 below temperatures. I've shoveled out full spreaders when the bed chain froze and broke. And I've lain on my back fixing that frozen steel that was so painfully cold that I almost cried.

And I know what it is like to never have enough money to do things properly.

So, I have contributed my share to the run-off into the Connecticut River. But in those days, before sewage treatment plants, the human pollution was even worse. I learned to swim the crawl with a sweeping motion to disperse the human waste. The Connecticut River was known as the best-landscaped sewer in the country!

But there is no doubt but that we must reclaim the purity of our waters. We all know of the pollution of Lake Champlain and I am daily reminded of the Connecticut River sewer by the remaining effects of the polio I contacted in its waters in 1948.

But to H.35.

Page 27, line 19 through page 28, line 5. This was a part of last year's H.329 and will probably be re-introduced this year, so is it necessary? H.329 had the introductory phase "After providing 30 days notice to the owner". To expect a small forest landowner, who only harvests every 15-20 years, to remember a February 1 Forest Activities Report is unreasonable. To remove them from the Use Value Appraisal Program is harsh and punitive. Up until a few years ago, FPR sent out the forms as a reminder of the deadline. The last week of January this year a county forester complained that while now there are more forestland enrollees in his county, he was receiving fewer activity reports.

If you must keep this as part of H.35, at least include the introductory phase "After providing 30 days notice to the owner".

Page 72, line 8—Definition of “farming” includes “maple sap” under A and “the production of maple syrup” under D. Many in the forestry community maintain that sugaring and its related aspects are forestry, not farming.

Page 80, line 7: I would suggest consideration of the word “sustainable” rather than “continuous”. The amount of forested land in the state is declining, so I find “continuous” not a comfortable choice.

Line 8: “including reforestation”—is this necessary?

Line 9: Heavy cutting already has mandated regulations.

Lines 12 & 13 mention “giving due consideration” “to the rights of the owner”

Line 14 originally stated “Such rules shall be advisory, and not mandatory.” This was in V.S.A.10, &2622.

Line 16 now makes the rules mandatory!

This is a Forest Practices Act by the back door and the very action that is specifically warned about in 2013’s H.131 that repealed Sec. 16b 10 V.S.A. Chapter 87 of the Vermont Energy Act (Act 170) that made voluntary harvesting guidelines mandatory for those enrolled in the UVA program. H.131 specifically mentions VOLUNTARY Forest Health Guidelines. This was also the fear of New Hampshire in its “Good Forestry in the Granite State—Recommended VOLUNTARY Forest Management Practices.

Page 81, line 14: Rules for Heavy Cutting of Timber are already mandated by 10 V.S.A. &2625.

Line 16: Importation of firewood. Doesn’t include logs and pulp.

Line 20: Acceptable Management Practices for Harvesting Timber are already in &2622