

John W. McClain

New England Forestry Consultants, Inc.

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Testimony to the Vermont House Agricultural and Forestry Committee on S.101

My name is John W. McClain and I am Vermont Licensed Forester #140.0122372.

My business is New England Forestry Consultants, Inc. We have 2 offices in VT and employ 5 – 8 people here. We also have offices in ME, NH, MA, and NY, with a New England wide range of employees of up to 20. Once attached to the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF), a forest conservation, education and awareness organization that was founded in 1944, in 1997 our firm became a stand-alone employee owned entity. We continue to manage NEFF's 26,000 acres. I have been a member of the Current Use Advisory Board for many years, and its chair for the last 10 or more. I was 1 of 4 founders of the Consulting Foresters Association of VT, and am currently a member of VT Woodlands Association, a Tree Farm Inspector and an Advisor to the board of NEFF. In the past I was Project Forester for the VT LEAP program.

Personally I have been practicing forestry in Vermont since 1977. My client base currently numbers over 600, including individuals, companies, institutions, and families. The total acres under our care from my Randolph office is over 100,000, with ownerships ranging from 10 to 7000 acres in size. From Randolph we cover the entire state, though most of our clients' properties lie from Rt. 4 northward. In recent years we have annually averaged harvests from these lands of approximately 3.5 MMBF of sawtimber and veneer, 1700 cords of firewood and 17,000 tons of pulpwood and fuel chips.

I would like to first thank the Legislature for considering this bill. In this time of difficult and changing markets in the forest industry it is important to remove potential obstructions to our natural woodland resource as a driver in our economy.

Some hindrances I have seen during my tenure as a professional forester include the restrictions placed on trucking and operating hours. While we must be diligent in our need for safety on the roads to protect the lives of our citizens, I believe that in some towns this has been taken to the extreme, with lengthy blocks of time when trucking is not allowed. For winter work sites, the window of operation both daily and seasonally is quite small. We must make the most of our time in order to work sensitive ground while frozen. I am also concerned about the noise factor sometimes proffered as a means to limit operations. In particular, during winter months such as the ones we have experienced now, startup and warmup of heavy equipment is a slow and cumbersome process requiring lengthy time periods.

This must be considered at all times but especially at this time of year. Our operators owe consideration to the neighbors as well, and in my experience have generally given it. In the last 18 months I have had an operation die before it started. As soon as a neighbor saw machines being set up, a threat was made to call the police and file a suit. The operator stopped, moved the machinery off the job and went elsewhere to work. The harvest and thinning as prescribed in their approved Current Use Forest Management Plan has not happened for my clients. The logger involved paid to have his equipment moved twice, for no possible gain or compensation. I think this type of situation will become more frequent if not checked now. This bill is a good means to that end.

I am happy to say that I believe this bill to be one that will benefit our industry and our state. I look forward to its passage. I would be glad, as I know others in the industry would, to be available to answer questions or provide additional information in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

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