

TO: House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife

FROM: Vermont Woodlands Association

RE: H.233—an act relating to protecting working forests and habitat

DATE: April 25, 2017

Chairman Deen and members of the Committee:

The Vermont Woodlands Association, an organization of approximately 800 forest landowners, has been a member of VNRC's Forest Roundtable since its inception and salutes its work on forest fragmentation. Audubon Vermont's detailed submission is impressive. However, as an organization representing private woodland owners, VWA is concerned about the scope of this legislation and its impact on our forest landowner members.

VWA's members are intimately connected to the crucial importance of forest blocks, not only for wildlife habitat and connectivity, but also for maintaining a sufficient size that makes it economically possible for timber harvesters to perform the forest management required under the Use Value Appraisal program (current use).

However, our members have grave concerns over how Regional and Town Planning Boards choose forest blocks. A landowner's assets may be severely reduced by placement in a designated forest block.

The Vermont Woodlands Association feels that more education regarding the importance of forest blocks should be provided before more regulation and that forest landowners need to be informed if their holdings are under consideration.

We hope H.233 will be carried over to next year so there will be more careful scrutiny of its implications.

Sincerely yours,

Put Blodgett, President

Vermont Woodlands Association