

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Agriculture to which was referred Senate Bill No. 101
3 entitled “An act relating to the conduct of forestry operations” respectfully
4 reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the bill be
5 amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu
6 thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. 12 V.S.A. chapter 196 is added to read:

8 CHAPTER 196. VERMONT RIGHT TO CONDUCT FORESTRY
9 OPERATIONS

10 § 5755. FINDINGS

11 The General Assembly finds that:

12 (1) Private and public forestlands:

13 (A) constitute unique and irreplaceable resources, benefits, and
14 values of statewide importance;

15 (B) contribute to the protection and conservation of wildlife, wildlife
16 habitat, air, water, and soil resources of the State;

17 (C) provide a resource for the State constitutional right to hunt, fish,
18 and trap;

19 (D) mitigate the effects of climate change; and

20 (E) result in general benefit to the health and welfare of the people of
21 the State.

1 (2) The forest products industry, including maple sap collection:

2 (A) is a major contributor to and is valuable to the State's economy
3 by providing jobs to its citizens;

4 (B) is essential to the manufacture of forest products that are used
5 and enjoyed by the people of the State; and

6 (C) benefits the general welfare of the people of the State.

7 (3) Private and public forestlands are critical for and contribute
8 significantly to the State's outdoor recreation and tourism economies.

9 (4) The economic management of public and private forestlands
10 contributes to sustaining long-term forest health, integrity, and productivity.

11 (5) Forestry operations are adversely impacted by the encroachment of
12 urban, commercial, and residential land uses throughout the State that result in
13 forest fragmentation and conversion and erode the health and sustainability of
14 remaining forests.

15 (6) As a result of encroachment on forests, conflicts have arisen between
16 traditional forestry land uses and urban, commercial, and residential land uses
17 that threaten to permanently convert forestland to other uses, resulting in an
18 adverse impact to the economy and natural environment of the State.

19 (7) The encouragement, development, improvement, and continuation of
20 forestry operations will result in a general benefit to the health and welfare of
21 the people of the State and the State's economy.

1 (8) The forest products industry, in order to survive, likely will need to
2 change, adopt new technologies, and diversify into new products.

3 (9) Conventional forestry practices, including logging, transportation,
4 and processing of forest products may be subject to unnecessary or adversarial
5 lawsuits based on the theory of nuisance. Nuisance suits could encourage and
6 result in the conversion of forestland and loss of the forest products industry.

7 (10) It is in the public interest of the people of the State to ensure that
8 lawfully conducted conventional forestry practices are protected and
9 encouraged and are not subject to public and private nuisance actions arising
10 out of conflicts between forestry operations and urban, commercial, and
11 residential uses.

12 § 5756. DEFINITIONS

13 As used in this chapter:

14 (1) “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and
15 Recreation.

16 (2) “Conventional forestry practices” means:

17 (A) forestry operations;

18 (B) a change in ownership or size of a parcel on which a forestry
19 operation is being conducted;

20 (C) cessation or interruption of a forestry operation or a change in a
21 forestry operation, including a change in the type of a forestry operation;

1 (D) enrollment in governmental forestry or conservation programs;

2 (E) adoption of new forestry technology;

3 (F) construction, maintenance, and repair of log landings, logging
4 roads, and skid trails;

5 (G) visual changes due to the removal, storage, or stockpiling of
6 vegetation or forest products;

7 (H) noise from forestry equipment used as part of a normal forestry
8 operation; or

9 (I) the transport or trucking of forest products or of equipment on, to,
10 or from the site of a forestry operation.

11 (3) “Forest product” means logs; pulpwood; veneer; bolt wood; wood
12 chips; stud wood; poles; pilings; biomass; fuel wood; maple sap; or bark.

13 (4) “Forestry operation” means activities related to the management of
14 forests, including timber harvests; removal, storage, or stockpiling of
15 vegetation or timber; pruning; planting; lumber processing with portable
16 sawmills; reforestation; pest, disease, and invasive species control; wildlife
17 habitat management; and fertilization. “Forestry operation” includes one or
18 both of the following:

19 (A) the primary processing of forest products on a parcel where a
20 timber harvest occurs; and

1 (B) the primary processing of forest products at a site that is not the
2 harvest site, provided that:

3 (i) the person conducting the forestry operations owns or has
4 permission to use the site for the forestry operation;

5 (ii) the forestry operation complies with all applicable law; and

6 (iii) only portable, non-permanent equipment is used to process
7 the forest products at the site.

8 (5) “Timber” means trees, saplings, seedlings, and sprouts from which
9 trees of every size, nature, kind, and description may grow.

10 (6) “Timber harvest” means a forestry operation involving the
11 harvesting of timber.

12 § 5757. FORESTRY OPERATIONS; PROTECTION FROM NUISANCE

13 LAWSUITS

14 (a) A person conducting a conventional forestry practice shall be entitled to
15 a rebuttable presumption that the conventional forestry practice does not
16 constitute a public or private nuisance if the person conducts the conventional
17 forestry practice in compliance with the following:

18 (1) the Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water
19 Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont as adopted by the Commissioner; and

20 (2) other applicable law.

1 (b) The presumption under subsection (a) of this section that a person
2 conducting a conventional forestry practice does not constitute a nuisance may
3 be rebutted by showing that a nuisance resulted from:

4 (1) the negligent operation of the conventional forestry practice; or
5 (2) violation of State or federal law during the conduct of the
6 conventional forestry practice.

7 (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the authority of State
8 or local boards of health to abate nuisances affecting the public health.

9 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

10 This act shall take effect on passage.

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13 (Committee vote: _____)

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Senator _____

16

FOR THE COMMITTEE