



Date: April 29, 2015

From: Jamey Fidel, General Counsel/Forest and Wildlife Program Director, VNRC

Re: H.355

Vermont Natural Resources Council supports the licensing of foresters in Vermont.

We commend the Office of Professional Regulation for doing a thorough report on the question of whether to license foresters in Vermont. The report explains the myriad values of forests and some of the primary threats to maintaining the integrity of Vermont's forests.

The report also lays out the important responsibilities of forests and emphasizes that "managing forests sustainably requires an understanding of the ecological, social and economic systems necessary to simultaneously maintain forest health and provide the array of benefits" described in the report. It is for this reason that we support a licensing program to help foresters carry out these responsibilities for the benefits of Vermont's forests, and landowners that rely on professional foresters to maintain the health and long-term economic viability of their forests.

Licensing of foresters will:

- Help maintain the credibility of the forestry profession.
- Help landowners by ensuring that foresters have a minimum level of education and qualification for practicing forestry in Vermont.
- Promote continuing education in the forestry field, and help foresters stay informed on evolving best management practices and ethical issues surrounding representing landowners.
- Ensure that foresters understand the applicable regulations that relate to harvesting activities to better protect landowners.
- Provide a basic level of accountability for the profession. For instance, landowners who are harmed by non-professionals posing as foresters will have some level of recourse.
- Will plug a gap in forester licensing in the region. Currently, Vermont and Rhode Island are the only New England states that do not have forester licensing.