



January 16, 2024

54 Portsmouth Street
Concord, NH 03301
Tel. 603.224.9945
Fax 603.228.0423
info@forestsociety.org
www.forestsociety.org

The Honorable Laurie Sanborn, Chairwoman
Committee on Ways and Means
New Hampshire House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 202-204
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairwoman Sanborn and Members of the Committee:

The Forest Society appreciates this opportunity to present these comments regarding HB 1484, legislation relative to current use taxation for certain forested lands. We oppose this bill and would respectfully request the Committee on Ways and Means to find it Inexpedient to Legislate.

As you know, the Declaration of Purpose of New Hampshire's Current Use Program states "It is hereby declared to be in the public interest to encourage preservation of open space, thus providing a healthful and attractive outdoor environment for work and recreation of the state's citizen's, maintaining the character of the state's landscape, and conserving the land, water, forest, agricultural and wildlife resources. It is further declared to be in the public interest to prevent the loss of open space due to property taxation at values incompatible with open space usage."

We believe Current Use has helped to make our state a more vibrant and healthier place to live. Maintaining some of the land base here as open space supports the protection of the state's drinking water resources, air and soil resources, forest products industry, the outdoor recreation sector, and other important aspects of life in New Hampshire.

We recognize that voluntary forest carbon markets have been the focus of criticism, including their possible effect on the forest products industry, and acknowledge the conflicting views on them. However, our concern with HB 1484 is that as it attempts to respond to those criticisms, it will undermine the goals and benefits of Current Use. Ultimately, this program should not be the legislative vehicle policy makers use to address any questions relating to forest carbon markets.

Public policy should not restrict landowners from using forest carbon markets as a tool to help them maintain their forestland. We are concerned this bill will do just that. Most concerning, however, it would not improve the Current Use Program. For these reasons, we would ask you to find HB 1484 as Inexpedient to Legislate.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Matt Leahy, Public Policy Director
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests