

Derrick Mason, Moss Hill Farm, 222 Upper Moss Hill Road, Russell MA 01071

Testimony for DOER hearing August 7, 2017

My name is Derrick Mason, from Moss Hill Farm in Russell. Moss Hill is a farm that my family has owned and operated for three, going on four generations, mostly as a 300 acre tree farm. I am active on my town's Finance Committee, and several other regional and community based organizations, focusing on economic development and environmental concerns. I believe I can speak for my extended family, my parents and future generations and for many citizens in my rural community.

Like most of rural Massachusetts, which is most of the geographic area our Commonwealth, we are dealing with some big problems around sustainability. I am referring to declines in our rural population, jobs, economics, tax bases and municipal revenues and public services, our quality of life, school systems, and more. Meanwhile, the divide between rural and urban life styles and basic comprehension, appropriate public policies, regulation and public services grows. Out here, we see mostly wealthy city folks and ivory-tower urban policy-makers as sadly ignorant of our problems and needs.

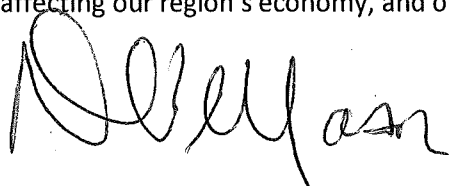
We love and revere our beautiful green countryside, and we will protect it with all our strength. At the same time, we must have the tools and systems and regulations that allow us to access and use our natural resources wisely as a sustainable economic base. Out here, our taxpayers, our entrepreneurs, our town officials, our community service agencies, our legislators know this stuff.

Speaking specifically about forestry, for many years, we have practiced, advocated and struggled to improve our forest management practices and regulations. Once again, we ask that the Commonwealth work with our landowners and tree farmers, our professional foresters, and our timber harvesters to encourage better use of our lowest-grade trees and the encourage removal of trash biomass for fuel. This low-grade forest resource is plentiful, renewable, it is sustainable, it is environmentally correct, it is what our forest improvement and our rural economy all need.

Do I need to belabor the excellent points that many others are making about reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, more jobs for our loggers and foresters, more wildlife habitat, air and water quality, and the other benefits of our forests and tree farms?

Let me just say that my family of dedicated tree farmers owns a beautiful piece of undeveloped open space and forest land. We want passionately to keep it that way. The regulations and management tools that you provide to support or undermine us will be key to our future efforts or our sell-out. A lot of my family is in New York City, Austin, Chicago and LA - because they can get better opportunities and amenities there. What you do about our forest management regulations will encourage them to value our forest land more, or less. You will influence their decisions about the economic viability of our 300-acre tree farm, affecting our region's economy, and our entire state's open space. Please help us.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Mason", written over the "Thank you." text.