

To: Department of Energy Resources Biomass Hearing  
CC: John Wassam DOER.RPS@mass.gov  
Hearing: June 5, 2019, 6:30 – 8:30 PM (Springfield, MA)  
Submitter: Kirstin Beatty, Last Tree Laws Ballot Measure Co-Chair, Holyoke, MA

## **WE SHOULD NOT BE ENCOURAGING LOGGING WHEN FORESTS ARE FAILING TO THRIVE AND ALSO ARE NECESSARY TO PROTECT CLIMATE & WILDLIFE**

My name is Kirstin Beatty, and I am the director and co-chair of Last Tree Laws. We are working on an environmental ballot measure for Massachusetts. I'm positive you received testimony on the health effects of incinerators, the value of forests for storing carbon, and the problems of increased economic incentives for logging or wood pellets.

With respect to wood for biomass, **I want to emphasize that large old trees are disappearing, and our trees are not replenishing themselves.**<sup>1</sup> This is a further reason not to encourage burning wood. Scientists examining rain forest records have observed that **trees are experiencing greater mortality and slower growth; they are not replenishing at a rate equal to losses.**<sup>2</sup> In other words, trees are dying at a greater rate than replacements are born. This is likely occurring in the Northeast as well. **In New England, chestnut, beech, ash, hemlock, and elm are ALL struggling** from introduced pests and pathogens. Research shows **ubiquitous wireless is also a threat that is causing destruction of soil fertility and interference with both calcium intake and photosynthesis**, necessary for energy and growth (See Last Tree Laws for slides).<sup>3</sup>

And of course you know that one old tree may be 70 years or more in the making, but many be easily cut down in a day. In 2018, Brazil cut down over 5000 square miles of forest, an area approximately the size of Connecticut; exporter Ghana in 2018 cut down over 80% of its forest (Global Forest Watch). Trade wars are leading Brazil to cut down even more forest to supply China. And **Harvard Forest reports our region is losing 65 acres a day to development.**

**I want to emphasize that wild, old trees represent healthy genetic stock and biodiversity.** Recently planted trees are more likely planted as monocultures, non-native trees, hybrids, or to reduce fruiting. **Large old trees provide habitat for many different species and provide a greater quantity of seeds that serve as food for wildlife and replenish the forest.** Native tree diversity may support diverse insects. Surviving trees may have traits allowing long life that we should protect.

Instead of logging when trees and wildlife are facing record-breaking decline, we should be protecting forests and forest health. **Loggers have a financial incentive to log large trees, and often ignore species composition, forest regeneration, tree spacing, or wildlife. These large trees are the lungs of the planet, storing carbon, lowering temperatures, and stabilizing our climate.**

Governor Baker suggests he believes in addressing climate risks. He needs to stand behind his claims and be a leader by setting an example to reduce consumption and logging of our forests.

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1 Main, D. (2012 6 Dec) Big, old trees in decline world wide. LiveScience. <https://www.livescience.com/25310-big-trees-in-decline.html>

2 Adriane Esquivel-Muelbert et al. **Compositional response of Amazon forests to climate change.** *Global Change Biology*, 2018; DOI: [10.1111/gcb.14413](https://doi.org/10.1111/gcb.14413)

3 <https://www.lasttreelaws.com/wireless-harms-butterflies.html>