

COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**, February 23, 2009

IN SUPPORT of Proposed H.B. No. 5209 AN ACT CONCERNING STATE LAND WHERE HUNTING IS PERMITTED

by **Robert T. Crook, Director**

Although this title infers Hunters, all outdoor recreationalists will benefit from this bill. Generally ALL believe in multiple use recreation on state lands. There is no cost associated with this bill.

Simply put, No-Net-Loss requires that states maintain at least the level of available public hunting land that currently exists. It requires that additional lands be opened to hunting if land that is currently open to hunting is closed. The end result is to assure hunters and others that the opportunities they now have will not diminish.

The goal of No-Net-Loss is to create a base line number of public hunting acres that are always open to hunting, guaranteeing that future generations have the same hunting opportunities that we enjoy today. By preserving Connecticut's public hunting lands, we will allow people to continue to enjoy our outdoor heritage.

The legislation in no way infringes on private property rights, or on the ability of local governments to manage their own lands. It applies only to publicly owned lands.

No-Net-Loss laws have been enacted in Illinois, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, West Virginia and Georgia, and similar legislation is actively being pursuing in other states.

Hunting is a fundamental element of conservation and this bill not only benefits sportsmen and the environment, but business owners as well. Hunters are recognized as the first and foremost conservationists in America. By preserving hunting lands we can ensure hunters will continue to protect wildlife and the environment. Through license fees, federal and special funds, hunters pay for approximately 90% of the budget of DEP wildlife management. Without hunters there would be no wildlife management, and if there were, taxpayers would pay for that which hunters currently pay for and accomplish.

Hunters have always supported wildlife management through licenses, tag fees, and land management to promote managed populations. The results of our financial support and efforts are readily apparent in the diverse and abundant species in the state.

We urge passage to continue proper wildlife management and to insure lands open today to multiple use recreation remain open in the future.

Thank you.