



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Public Hearing – March 16, 2009  
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Gina McCarthy  
Department of Environmental Protection

**Raised House Bill No.6551 - AN ACT CONCERNING STATE FORESTRY PROGRAMS**

---

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding House Bill No. 6551 (Raised) - AN ACT CONCERNING STATE FORESTRY PROGRAMS. This bill proposes two concepts: 1) raising the price of cord wood from \$10.00 to 25.00 per cord and 2) changing the revenue accounting for royalties derived from forestry harvests on state owned land by moving such revenue from the General Fund to the Environmental Conservation Fund.

The Department does support raising the price of cordwood from \$10.00 to \$25.00 per cord. This increase will cover costs associated with this effort, resulting in healthier and more sustainable management of our state forests. Increasing the minimum price per cord from \$10.00 to \$25.00 per cord reflects the current firewood fair market value.

The Department views the homeowner fuelwood program as a valuable public service especially during these tough economic times that is also consistent with sustainable forest management practices. Requests from Connecticut households to cut trees on State forests to heat their homes have increased 300% from 2004 to 2008. This increase is attributable to higher energy costs and more recently the national economic downturn. In January 2009, demand for homeowner firewood permits surpassed all of 2008 by 67% (960 cords to 1600 cords). With this increase in the price of cordwood, coupled with some limited assistance provided by the new Connecticut Conservation Corp (CCC), the Department can meet these demands for cordwood and cover the state's operational costs to the General Fund associated with administering this program.

Assuming that this fair increase in the price of cordwood becomes law, we can significantly improve forest health, age class diversity, and forest resilience against catastrophic weather and forest pests without additional cost to state taxpayers. As indicated in an October 2008 Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies sustainability study of state-owned there is a significant opportunity to increase active forest management conducted by the Division of Forestry. Currently the Division is harvesting less than one-third the sustainable yield.

The Department opposes the second concept set out in the raised bill. This accounting change is not consistent with the Governor's budget which seeks to improve the transparency and operations of the Department's budget as well as raise revenue by enhancing the state's commitment to support the Department at a more consistently and appropriate level through the General Fund. It is also worth noting that Public Act 08-172 revised the operations of the Department's forestry program, the net benefit of this revision cannot be fully analyzed given the short timeframe which this change was enacted.

The Governor's budget supports active management of our state forests and she has proposed reinstating the CCC to further that end. Together, more transparency in accounting through the General Fund and an active CCC can work together to improve sustainable yields from our forests for the benefit of citizens of Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the DEP's view on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact the Department's legislative liaison, Robert LaFrance, at 424-3041.