



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Public Hearing – February 13, 2009
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Gina McCarthy
Department of Environmental Protection

**Proposed Senate Bill 264 - AN ACT EXEMPTING CERTAIN DEVELOPMENT AT
STATE-OWNED AIRPORTS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Proposed Senate Bill 264 - AN ACT EXEMPTING CERTAIN DEVELOPMENT AT STATE-OWNED AIRPORTS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS. We do not support this bill for the reasons set forth below.

Since 1971, the state's environmental policy has been, among other things, to "conserve, improve and protect its natural resources and environment and to control air, land and water pollution in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state." Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22a-1. Recognizing the need to lead by example, the actions taken by state agencies must also serve this important policy, which explains why the General Assembly enacted the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). CEPA has been an important tool in assuring that state actions occur in a manner protective of the environment.

The processes developed under CEPA have long required that such actions are carefully evaluated; this evaluation is conducted by the sponsoring agency in the form of an environment impact evaluation (EIE). State actions of a lesser nature that are exempt either through the Environmental Classification Document mechanism of the CEPA process or by special exemption under the statutes are actions or categories of actions that have been predetermined to have the potential for little or no environmental impact. The proposed exemption of a potentially wide range of activities that currently receive scrutiny through an EIE is too risky a step. Furthermore, it is seemingly incongruous that supplemental development at an airport that initially required an evaluation could be significantly altered without further review.

The potential environmental impact associated with expansion at the state's airports could be significant. Many of these airports by nature of their open grassy areas have become important habitat for some of Connecticut's threatened and endangered grassland bird species. The potential impacts related to noise, lighting or expanded hours of operation also merit review. Without the evaluation afforded by the CEPA process, it would be difficult to assess the impacts of allowing expanded development at the state-owned airport, a review contemplated by CEPA.

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We oppose any exemption to the state's CEPA review process; we are especially concerned with the expansive proposal outlined in Proposed Senate Bill 264.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's views on the bill. If you require any additional information, please contact, Robert La France the DEP legislative liaison at (860) 424-3401.