

## Testimony of Anne Holcombe before the Environment Committee in support of H.B. 6263

To the Members of the Environment Committee:

As a member of a family that owns both "10 Mill" and PA 490 land in Marlborough, I am here to testify in *partial* support of H.B. 6263.

Both of these programs have encouraged the growth and preservation of forest land in Connecticut. With the enormous growth in property values over the last hundred years, the 10 Mill program has been outpaced, and the most logical move would be to transition people into 490, as was done in the '70's. The creators of the 10 Mill law, in creating the structure to encourage long-term participation, did not anticipate the punishing taxes faced now.

H.B. 6263 suggests one common-sense compromise that would allow property taxes to increase upon the 50-year anniversary in the program, but the property taxes would be capped sensibly at the same per-acre rate paid by forest landowners in the Public Act 490 program. If the property taxes increase beyond the P.A. 490 rate, it would unfairly penalize those who have made a commitment to forest conservation, and possibly have the reverse effect of forcing some to either sell or develop land to pay the bill.

The proposed section allowing transition to PA 490 contingent on a conservation easement being granted is a good idea, but by requiring a permanent easement, it would deprive owners of their property rights long-term. A previously suggested 50-year easement (or longer at the owner's choice) would be in keeping with the original 100-year contract.

I would support HB6263, with the suggested modification. I would also support a transition to PA 490 that included making up back taxes (to the 490 level) from the 1972-73 exit window.

Thank you.

Anne Holcombe