

I oppose the land swap in Haddam which is contained in House Bill No. 1196.

My name is Margaret Wilson, and I have been one of the representatives from Chester on the Connecticut River Gateway Commission for 13 years as well as a member of the Chester Land Trust for 20 years and the Nature Conservancy for longer than that.

The preservation of open space is important because once it is developed, it is gone forever, and these particular 17 acres were bought by the state of Connecticut in order to keep them undeveloped. This is proven in the deed for the land. The Connecticut River is an important resource for Connecticut, attracting tourists and others who come to admire the lack of development along a good part of its banks. These particular 17 acres can be seen from the Goodspeed Opera House across the river and hence enhance the attraction of that site.

Finally, it would set an unfortunate precedent for the state of Connecticut to turn over a piece of land which it purchased for conservation purposes to those who want to develop it. In the future land owners who might want to sell or donate open space land to the state would be reluctant to do so because they would know that the state can not be trusted to maintain it as open space. It is a fact that over time, a huge majority of people does not regret the preservation of open space, eg. Central Park, the Grand Canyon and more.

I hope that the state legislature takes these and other objections to the swap into consideration. Once open space has been developed, it is forever gone as open space.

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