

HB 6557



Thompson Trails Committee  
P.O. Box 899  
N. Grosvenordale, CT 06255

March 28, 2011

To the Connecticut General Assembly,

The Town of Thompson Trails Committee requests that the Connecticut General Assembly fix the Recreational Liability Statute to legislate strong safeguards to provide immunity against personal injury lawsuits for municipalities that 1) allow free access to their land for recreational use, and 2) use reasonable care in maintaining it for non-motorized recreational purposes.

It is particularly important in our town, which contains Connecticut D.O.T. and D.E.P. owned land with trails, U.S. Army Corps of Engineering recreational land, and borders two other states (Massachusetts and Rhode Island) with connecting trails. Liability protection for municipal land will enhance access and safe parking opportunities and make us good partners with other agencies.

The existing Statute (Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 52-557f et seq.) provides strong liability protection for private landowners and private corporations such as utilities, and it includes liability protection for municipalities that was supposed to be equally strong when it was passed in 1971. However, court interpretations of the statute (in cases such as Conway v. Wilton and the May, 2010 jury award of \$2.9 million to a mountain biker injured at the MDC Reservoir in West Hartford) have made it clear that the statutory immunity against liability for municipalities is not strong enough.

Fixing the Recreational Liability Statute is critical to protect and encourage municipal landowners to make open space accessible to the public for approved recreational use. Increasing outdoor recreation opportunities in Connecticut promotes public health and brings in tourism dollars.

Sincerely,

Karen Durlach  
Chairperson, Thompson Trails Committee  
Town of Thompson