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Planning & Development Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

February 14th 2011

**RE: SB 43 AN ACT EXPANDING THE RECREATIONAL LAND USE ACT
SB 90 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECREATIONAL LAND USE ACT
HB 5254 AN ACT EXPANDING THE RECREATIONAL LAND USE ACT**

Members of the Committee:

Horse Council would like to thank you for raising these very important bills.

As you know, a recent court ruling in May of 2010 found that the MDC could be held liable for damages relative to an injury sustained by an individual who was riding a bicycle on their property. Damages were awarded in the amount of 2.9 million, which is an enormous sum. As a result, the MDC has given serious consideration to closing its property to the public.

This ruling will have a chilling effect not only for the MDC, but also other property owners' state wide. Currently, individual private landowners are protected from these types of suits if they allow the public use of their lands free of charge; however municipalities are not similarly protected. The bills before you would help correct this disparity and help to keep lands open to the public.

Access to trails and open space is becoming more difficult to obtain, so it is important to preserve what we have and not force property owners to close their lands due to fear of being sued.

Horse Council is joining with other user groups to urge you to strongly **support** SB 43, SB 90 and HB 5254, all of which concern expanding the recreational use statutes.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide comments on this very important issue.

Sincerely,
Amy Stegall
President, The Connecticut Horse Council
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