



February 11, 2011

The Honorable Steve Cassano
The Honorable Linda Gentile
Chairs, Planning and Development
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Cassano and Representative Gentile:

As the Chief Executive Officer of Eastern Mountain Sports and the Chair Elect of the Outdoor Industry Association's Board of Directors I am deeply concerned about the diminishing close to home recreation venues in the markets we serve. My company and the Outdoor Industry Association are actively involved with multiple alliances which include state parks, forests and conservation groups both at the state and national level. We are proud to have a long standing relationship with the Connecticut Forest and Park Association.

Eastern Mountain Sports has been a contributor to the economic landscape in Connecticut since 1979. We currently operate 7 stores in the state of Connecticut and employ roughly 125 people.

It is rarely understood at the state and national level what the true economic impact is of outdoor recreation. The Outdoor Recreation Economy contributes \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy and supports nearly 6.5 million jobs. In New England, the Outdoor Recreation Economy contributes \$22, 941 million and 271,196 jobs. In today's difficult economic environment our fear is that we will seek short term solutions at the expense of longer term economic advantages.

Of course, there are many other side affects to a national trend that increasingly puts less and less emphasis on healthy and active outdoor lifestyles. Consider that today's youth spends roughly 7 hours a day behind an electronic screen of some kind and 4 minutes a day recreating in the outdoors. Obesity is rising at alarming rates and it is estimated that in the United States we spend over \$200 billion annually on obesity related health care problems. While close to home recreation that gets folks outdoors isn't the only answer it is certainly a step in the right direction.

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Access to outdoor venues in recent years for families, young people and outdoor enthusiasts has increasingly become more elusive rather than more available. It is for this reason that we strongly urge the passage of S.B. 43, S.B. 90, and H.B. 5254. Expanding the Recreational Land Use Act will send a clear message encouraging both towns and municipal entities to keep their lands free and open for all. By restoring recreational liability protection to municipalities, the current access barriers surrounding our close to home recreation areas would be effectively eliminated.

It is my understanding that these bills is scheduled for a hearing Monday, February 14, 2011. I strongly urge and respectfully request that this letter be submitted in testimony as my support and my company's support for the passage of S.B. 43, S.B. 90, and H.B. 5254.

Thank you,

Will Manzer
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Eastern Mountain Sports

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