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Environment Committee
Hartford CT

March 2, 2012

Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Connecticut Horse Council urges this committee to support **HB 5262 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF CERTAIN TRAILS AND AREAS FOR EQUINE USE.**

In 2007, the Department of Environmental Protection proposed regulation changes which would have effectively closed access to many of the trails equestrians currently use in our state. After a public hearing, they eliminated this proposal, but only after vocal opposition from the equestrian community.

There have also been other situations over the years, when an existing trail has been suddenly closed to horses for no apparent reason, or when a blue blaze trail has been rerouted. This again, effectively blocks use of trails by equestrians. Frequently this is an accidental or unrealized action, but the result is still the same.

Horse Council advocates polite behavior and sharing of trails among user groups. Unfortunately, with encroaching development and competition for resources, trails can be lost to equestrians.

This bill does not expand trails or create “horse only” trails. What it does do is ensure that trails with historical equestrian use remain open so that riders are not forced out.

It is notable that the Shenipsit state forest is on this proposed list—this trail system is home to the Reddington Rock Riding club. They are celebrating their 50th anniversary this year and their club does much to maintain the trail system in that area.

Again, CHC would like to urge this committee to support HB 5262 in order to protect the heritage of our trails.

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