



16 Meriden Road
Rockfall
Connecticut 06481-2961

3/28/2012

Attn: Judiciary Committee

RE: *SB 445, An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Land*

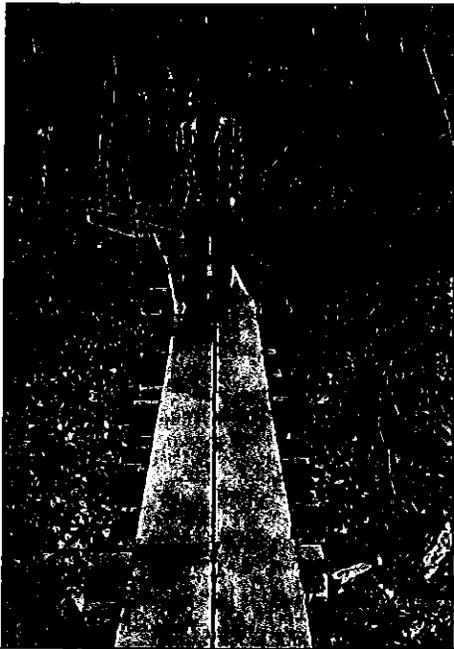
My name is Clare Cain. I am the Trail Stewardship Director for the Connecticut Forest & Park Association. I am responsible for oversight of 825 miles of the blue-blazed hiking trail system in Connecticut. I don't know how familiar you are with our trails, but they cross all manner of property types. We're fortunate to work and depend on willing landowners, both private and public, to host our trails. Without their support and willingness there is no way we could possibly build our trails to access and connect the wonderful, wild places that they do.

If you hadn't heard, the buzzword in the trails community these days is "connectivity". We could not possibly achieve the connectivity that we do without being able to reassure owners that they are protected under the Recreation Liability Statute. If we make our municipalities skittish about potential exposure to personal injury lawsuits, then we seriously compromise the ability for trail connectivity between our town open spaces and forests, and linking our downtown communities with parks, schools and preserves.

On these 825 miles of trails we maintain, we utilize countless wooden structures (see back of page) to span waterways and wetlands. These structures are industry standard when spanning wet areas, whether you are in a national park, a state forest or on a protected piece of town open space. Use of these structures in the trail universe is part and parcel with the science of sustainable trail design and maintenance. This common methodology could be put at risk under this newly proposed version of the statute. These "boardwalks" or "wooden walkways" are so integral to responsible stewardship and trail design that to pull them from this law seems completely arbitrary and irresponsible. If I have to tell towns that host our trails that we can't maintain the portions of trail on their property to the highest standard because they may be exposed to lawsuit... well, we're not able to do our job, the resource isn't being protected and the relationship with the owner is potentially jeopardized. The result being possible relocation of miles of trail (*Note: today traditional boardwalks are rarely built with wood, but are constructed with a stronger, longer-lasting recycled, composite material*).

In trails our biggest challenge is dealing with erosion. It is my job to take water and runoff very seriously because they pose the biggest challenge to healthy, long-lasting trails. Now we're faced with a law that threatens to severely erode the protection for our municipalities (who host over 40 miles of our trail system). Last year we took a huge step forward by including municipalities in the coverage afforded to state and private landowners who willingly allow recreational access on their lands. We closed the loophole. We stitched up the wound. We now have a law that is on par with other states. We've just begun to get our stride back, don't cut us off at the knees now. What a loss, what a shame that the state's most connected backcountry, trail system and state-designated greenway could be splintered. Let's not let litigation replace reason. I ask you to oppose S.B. 445.

Sincerely,
Clare Cain
Trail Stewardship Director



Trail boardwalk, Timberland Park, Guilford



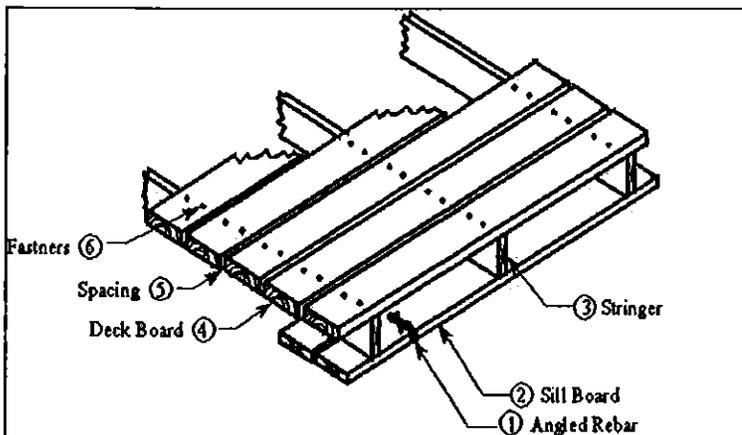
Trail boardwalk, Bicentennial Park, Berlin



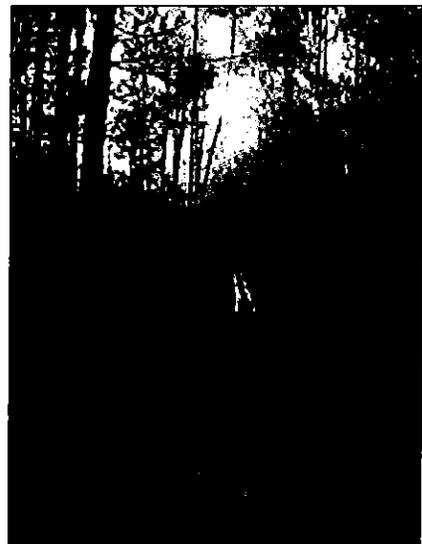
Hiker footbridge, Gluffrida Park, Meriden



Typical hiker footbridge



Trail boardwalk cross section



Typical trail bog bridge