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February 22, 2013

Senator Duff, Representative Hurlburt and members of the Appropriations Conservation and Development Subcommittee, my name is Dawn McKay and I am a resident of Suffield.

I submit this testimony in support of refilling and making permanent three forester positions in the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Forestry Division. These positions are vital in order to protect the jobs and revenue generated by this segment of our state's timber industry.

Currently, there are only 18 full-time foresters within the Forestry Division and the last time a permanent forester position was added was in 1996. Retirements and staff attrition continue to impact the Division of Forestry and currently almost half the foresters are eligible to retire. The field foresters assigned to manage over 170,000 acres of state-owned land has dropped from 11 in 1996 to now only 6 in 2013.

Two years ago the Forestry Division was able to secure funding to hire 3 additional foresters. The funding source used for these three foresters has now come to an end and these positions will be lost and the foresters given lay-off notices. Lost with these positions is the Forestry Division's investment in two years of training for these foresters, the new technology these individuals have brought to an aging Division, the ability to manage the state forests as an economic resource and the loss of tens of thousands of dollars in forest products sale revenue.

The Forestry Division is charged with working with cities and towns to manage their urban forests (the trees along the roads and highways, the residential neighborhoods where we all live and work) in order to assess and improve the ecosystems of the trees that are most closely associated with people in Connecticut. The Urban Forestry Program, where the work of one of the forester positions will be lost, will also lose its ability to help our struggling cities to manage the debris from storms, detect and prevent the spread of two very destructive insects that are poised to destroy our forests and further depress the sale of "Connecticut Grown" products associated with the timber industry.

I ask that you carefully consider the implications of the loss of these three foresters. Each forester that manages state lands generates an average of \$90,000 annually for the General Fund through planning and harvesting trees and forest products. These foresters bring more money into the general fund than they cost to employ. The

fifteen-year historical data on the management of state forests shows that foresters can generate revenue of nearly \$1,000,000 every ten years. The elimination of these positions also means that public requests cannot be met, recreational value of our forests lost, invasive species problems left unchecked and it will reduce the ability of cities and towns to manage their trees during storms.

I ask that you add the necessary resources the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection budget to keep these three foresters that are so critical to the environmental health and quality of life that we value here in Connecticut. I ask that you invest resources in these positions because they will increase revenue for the General Fund, create additional agricultural private sector jobs in the timber industry, provide critically needed technical assistance for our struggling cities as they manage storm damage from trees and urban forests and enhance our "Connecticut Grown" marketing for local products. Providing funding for these positions is a small cost relative to the revenue they will generate and the positive and important impact they will have on Connecticut's state, municipal and private forests.

Thank you for your thoughtful and considerate deliberation.

Yours truly,

Dawn M. McKay