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Conservation and Development Appropriations Subcommittee

Public Hearing February 20, 2013

I appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony regarding funding levels for state park and conservation programs proposed in the Governor's FY 2014-15 Budget.

As a Board member of one of the Friends groups, I have first-hand experience with the critical funding needs of our state parks, the immense benefit our park jewels offer for the public, and the vital economic role our state parks play in CT's economy. The Governor's proposed budget would eliminate funding necessary for safe operation of the state parks, by cutting the allocation for seasonal workers who maintain the park buildings and grounds and services necessary for visitor safety and enjoyment.

It is an unfortunate irony that the proposed cuts would come just as CT begins the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the state park system. What should be an opportunity for recognition of the role the state parks play in recreation and environmental learning for our residents-- as well as a their strong economic role in CT tourism bringing in visitors from neighboring states and around the northeast--may instead become a source of embarrassment if some parks are closed and others face deteriorating facilities.

At a time when CT has failed to recover from the Great Recession as quickly as hoped, it makes no sense to turn our backs on the jobs and the revenue provided to the state through the operation of our parks. Or when state residents still struggle economically and have faced higher taxes, it sends a negative message to cut funding for the state's most beautiful lands to which all can enjoy access.

I hope that the General Assembly will act to keep our state parks open and functioning in a way to make CT proud during this 100th anniversary season.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Rivard

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