



Conserving Connecticut. Connecting people to the land.

16 Meriden Road
Rockfall, Connecticut
06481-2961

T 860 346-TREE

F 860 347-7463

Email: info@ctwoodlands.org

www.ctwoodlands.org

Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Legislation before the Environment Committee on March 22, 2013	Support/ Oppose
H.B. 5830: AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN "ADOPT A PARK" PROGRAM.	Oppose
H.B. 5412: AN ACT CONCERNING DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY.	Oppose

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly every year since 1897 on issues such as sustainable forestry, state parks and forests, trail recreation, natural resource protection, and land conservation.

On behalf of CFPA, I testify in opposition to two bills – H.B. 5830 and H.B. 5412.

H.B. 5830 is both unnecessary and potentially invites conflicts of interest to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

This bill is unnecessary because there are already organizations, collectively known as "Friends of" groups (e.g. the Friends of Hammonasset), which have been founded over time to support and essentially "adopt" State Parks. 24 of these volunteer-based, support organizations have been founded so far, have taken various forms, and support State Parks in many ways. DEEP does not have to control the groundrules for how these Friends groups organize and support the Parks. Ample models exist, and each "Friends of" organization works because it is founded by passionate volunteers. In 2012 alone, "Friends of" organizations had 6,900 members and donated over 75,000 volunteer hours which along with financial contributions added well over \$2 million to the Parks.

The topic of encouraging corporate sponsorship of State Parks is a tricky one. We believe guidelines for doing this should be spelled-out first rather than be loosely directed by legislation. Of primary concern is the potential for conflicts of interest stemming from DEEP's regulatory/enforcement role. For example, if a corporation that may be having problems with an air quality permit makes a contribution to the State Parks through a foundation or another direct means, the temptation could be for the Department to find ways to look favorably on that "supporter of the Parks." Should corporations have "naming rights" and be able to put forward "Gillette Castle State Park: brought to you by Gillette"? We do not suggest that DEEP wants to do either of

these things, but we would be more comfortable supporting legislation that spells out its intentions much better than H.B. 5830 currently does.

We are opposed to **H.B. 5412** because it goes far beyond the efforts of Raised S.B. 915 – An Act Authorizing Bow and Arrow Hunting on Sunday Under Certain Circumstances, which we support. Our position on Raised S.B. 915 follows and we believe the limited approach contained in it is most appropriate at this time:

1) There is great scientific evidence that Connecticut's forests are not regenerating properly in areas where deer populations have grown beyond the carrying capacity of the land. In these areas, particularly where there are many private landowners with relatively small landholdings, bow hunting is the best option to accommodate safety and multiple recreational uses simultaneously.

2) CFPA would not support legislation in support of Sunday hunting if it were extended to state lands, or to forms of hunting beyond bow and arrow based on the scientific evidence that we have seen to date.

3) We appreciate the provision included in the bill that would provide a 40 yard buffer from hunting for trail users on private lands. About 50% of the blue-blazed hiking trails traverse private lands and this is an important consideration that would likely add to the peace of mind to owners of property that include trails and of trail users in areas that may allow Sunday hunting in the future.

We would likely feel differently about H.B. 5412 if it left the Sunday hunting prohibition in place rather than proposing to remove it on line 74 of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill, and I am glad to respond to any questions you may have.