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Testimony of Clare Cain, Trail Stewardship Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Legislation before the Environment Committee on March 15, 2013	Support/ Oppose
RAISED S.B. 1015: AN ACT CONCERNING THE NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL.	Support with Change

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.

Raised S.B. 1015:

On behalf of CFPA, I wish to submit testimony in support of S.B. 1015, An Act Concerning the New England National Scenic Trail. We are fortunate in Connecticut to host not one, but two national scenic trails. The Appalachian Trail was designated by Congress in 1968 and more recently, the New England Trail (NET), in 2009.

What we admire about this legislation is that it clearly articulates the State's support for the NET. Despite winding through a highly urbanized and increasingly developed portion of the state, the NET remains a uniquely rugged and quiet corridor of land.

This bill takes decisive action in the face of increasing pressure from commercial and residential land developers. It actively encourages our friends at the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to assist CFPA in our trail protection and conservation work on the NET. The legislative language acknowledges that there are real challenges associated with stitching together and maintaining a continuous 110-mile trail in our relatively small state. But with DEEP as a more committed partner, we are at less risk of losing sections of this nationally significant and much-loved recreational resource.

This legislation also coincides with the State's initiative to broaden its nature-based tourism. The bill demonstrates the State's conviction to protect our natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values. For this, we in the trails community are grateful. It sends a consistent message about how the State wants to see its two national scenic trails protected and celebrated.

The only change we would recommend is that the words “eminent domain” be removed from line 6 of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill, and I would be pleased to address any questions you may have.