

Via Email env.testimony@cga.ct.gov

General Law Committee
Public Hearing
Friday, March 1, 2013
Testimony in Support of Re: HB-6539
An Act Concerning the former Sunrise Resort Property

Dear Chairs & Committee Members:

My name is Anita McGahee, I reside in Middle Haddam and I support HB-6539 for the following reasons. I feel more than enough time has passed since the purchase of Sunrise Resort (SR) in 2009, for the State of Connecticut to have come to a decision on how to develop this scenic property. The reasons stated by former Governor Jodi Rell for purchasing the property are as follows:

"This acquisition is important because it will not only enlarge state-owned land in the area to 443 acres, it will also protect over 4,700 feet of additional frontage along the Salmon River," Governor Rell said. "For 93 years Sunrise Resort has provided recreational opportunities. Now we are continuing the tradition by providing even more opportunities for families around to state to come here to hike, canoe, kayak and camp."

"Our nationally recognized 'No Child Left Inside' initiative has worked diligently to encourage families to visit our state parks and forests, reconnect with the outdoors and enjoy nature together," the Governor said. "This purchase is a win-win for all involved."

Also in the announcement of January 9, 2009, it states that *buying Sunrise Resort will help protect multiple species, both endangered and of special concern, including two rare invertebrates and four significant plant species. The undeveloped intertidal riverfront of the Salmon River basin fosters Connecticut's most pristine streams, areas that have so far escaped the effects of development and urban sprawl. The river is a top trout stream and a federal Atlantic salmon restoration site.*

"Purchasing Sunrise Resort is a perfect example of the Department of Environmental Protection's Green Plan, which focuses on making more strategic land purchases targeting quality as well as quantity," said DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy. "It also exemplifies the spirit of Governor Rell's Responsible Growth initiative by focusing state resources on the preservation of a unique part of Connecticut's landscape that is rich in natural resources and supports recreational opportunities that have helped define the character of the surrounding community."

The state is purchasing the site from Bob Johnson for \$3.2 million. Approximately \$1.85 million of the funding for the purchase is coming from the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust, a

program funded by the state Bond Commission and administered by DEP to purchase lands to be added to the State Park and Forest system.

The DEP has also received \$1,091,879 in Land and Water Conservation Funds from the U.S. Department of the Interior toward the purchase. Additional funding of \$250,000 came from the George Dudley Seymour Trust, which was created by the noted New Haven lawyer and urban planning visionary to help the state purchase lands for public recreation.

DEP intends to incorporate Sunrise into the adjacent Machimoodus State Park. The DEP anticipates operating some of the resort's amenities in the summer of 2009, including the large swimming pool. A full opening of the resort will require a private partner and capital investment in the infrastructure. DEP is seeking partnership opportunities to reopen the resort for full use in the future.

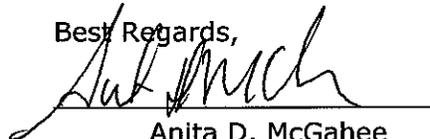
To date, there has been numerous counts of vandalism, and several fires, resulting in the destruction of a historical home, and loss of valuable state property.

I believe the agency's who donated money and of course, the people of Connecticut would appreciate some movement on this project. This is a prime location for outdoor recreation on the Salmon River, beautiful scenic points of interest, and lots of walking/horseback riding trails. With minimal effort, Sunrise Resort could shine again. There is so much history in those hills, and of course, the legendary Moodus noises.

In conclusion, I would like to see the acres of property to be put to better use to serve the public in outdoor recreation. If it is made accessible, it will be used. If it is left unattended much longer, the state of the buildings will decline, so much so that they will have to be torn down.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Best Regards,



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