



## East Haddam Land Use Office

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March 7, 2013

Environment Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT

RE: HB 6539 AN ACT CONCERNING THE FORMER SUNRISE RESORT PROPERTY  
Public Hearing Testimony – March 8, 2013

Chairman Meyer, Chairman Gentile, Ranking Member Chapin, Ranking Member Shaban and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed House Bill No. 6539 “An Act Concerning The Former Sunrise Resort Property”

It is my understanding that this bill was originally started as Proposed Bill No. 5261 “An Act Concerning The Sunrise State Park” with a simple charge as follows “*That the general statutes be amended to require the Department of Energy and Environment Protection to develop a plan for the use of the Sunrise State Park that ensures the safety of the premises.*” I believe this is a standard operating protocol at the DEEP for all property purchases when the properties are reviewed for considered for acquisition. Whether funding is available to move forward on those plans may be another story. But this is not why I am writing.

The present proposed bill is entitled “An Act Concerning the Former Sunrise Resort Property”. The title immediately voids or ignores that fact that the property is now a State Park. The second disturbing part of this proposal is the last sentence. “*Such report shall include, but not be limited to, a description of the status of such property and its improvements and any plan that the department has for the use or the sale of such property.*” Is this bill a start of a slippery slope to sell all State Park and Forest lands? This looks like the Haddam Land Swap all over again and one would think we learned from that fiasco.

This property was purchased with funds from the Recreational and Natural Heritage Fund, the Land and Water Conservation Funds from the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the George Dudley Seymour Trust. All programs set up to preserve and conserve land for the public and not to be sold. (Program descriptions are below) Most State open space purchases are made with these or similar funds that are designated to set aside the property for the preservation and conservation of lands for future outdoor recreational use, wildlife and fishery habitat protection, watershed protection, and historic or cultural preservation and not to be sold at some future date.

The State of Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development calls for the preservation of 21% of the State's land for open space preservation. This goal has not been met so I question why a proposed bill would be sent from the Planning and Development Committee that works against the State's own Plan.

This bill needs to be amended to recognize that the property is Sunrise State Park and the phrase "or the sale of such property" needs to be removed. Otherwise it cannot be supported.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

James Ventres  
Land Use Administrator – Town of East Haddam

Cc. Melissa Ziobron House of Representatives  
East Haddam Open Space Committee  
East Haddam Conservation Commission  
East Haddam Land Trust

**Recreational and Natural Heritage Trust Program** CGS Sec. 23-74. **Recreation and natural heritage trust program. Purpose.** There is hereby created the recreation and natural heritage trust program to: (1) Acquire land that represents the ecological diversity of Connecticut, including natural features such as riverine, montane, coastal and geologic systems or other natural areas, on behalf of the state, in order to ensure the preservation and conservation of such land for recreational, scientific, educational, cultural and aesthetic purposes, (2) acquire land of unusual natural interest as additions to the system of parks, forests, wildlife and fishery management areas, natural areas and dedicated natural area preserves in the state for the beneficial use and enjoyment of the public, (3) acquire land identified as essential habitat for endangered and threatened species pursuant to the program established under section 26-305, (4) offset carbon dioxide produced through combustion of fossil fuels by preserving lands that naturally absorb it, and (5) establish a stewardship account to provide for the maintenance, protection and management of lands acquired pursuant to the provisions of sections 23-73 to 23-79, inclusive, and of the species that inhabit them.

**U.S. Department of the Interior Land and Water Conservation Funds** - The Land and Water Conservation Act, passed by Congress in 1964, established the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to meet the nation's growing desire to preserve natural areas, culturally and historically significant landmarks, and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation.

**George Dudley Seymour Trust Fund** – This foundation provides grants for the purchase of lands within the State of Connecticut with the purpose of serving as town recreational centers. Grants are also made for the preservation of the history of Connecticut, its cities, and towns.