



**Audubon**  
**CENTER BENT OF THE RIVER**

185 East Flat Hill Road Southbury, CT 06488

203.264.5098

**Testimony of Leslie MacLise-Kane, Director, Audubon Center Bent of the River**

**Legislation before the Committee on Environment on March 15, 2013**

**Raised Bill 6542: An Act Concerning the Preservation of Farmland at the Southbury Training School –**  
**IN SUPPORT**

This testimony is in support of the preservation of the farmland at the Southbury Training School as property of important agricultural and habitat value to the State of Connecticut.

The Southbury Training School (STS) has long been an important part of the Southbury Community for both the work it does and the agricultural production off its lands. Southbury is a community that actively supports its farms and farmers. The National Audubon Society, the Southbury Land Trust and the Town of Southbury have all partnered to protect working agricultural lands over the years. All of the partners have long had the goal of protecting the agricultural acreage at the Training School for farming.

However, Audubon and others also realize that the STS property also has very important habitat value as it is an invaluable keystone in a larger open space matrix that includes Audubon's 750-acre Bent of the River Center, Southbury Land Trust properties, Town of Southbury lands and DEEP WMA and Forest lands. The STS property has been nominated as an Important Bird Area and is likely to eventually be included as part of an IBA complex with Bent of the River and other open space lands.

Not to be ignored is the economic value of this property for Southbury and the State of CT. With the proposed structure of this transfer there will be financial gains for both agriculture and tourism in CT. Outdoor recreation – including birding, photography, hiking, etc – add a significant amount to our local and State economy. STS is also a great destination for bird and wildlife viewing and along with these other protected open space areas has the potential to be an important tourism destination and economic asset for for the Southbury area. According to the 2012 report "The Outdoor Recreation Economy" produced by the Outdoor Industry

Association, [http://www.outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA\\_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf](http://www.outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf)

Outdoor recreation is an important economic engine for the US, annually generating:

- 6.1 million American jobs
- \$646 billion in outdoor recreation spending each year
- \$39.9 billion in federal tax revenue
- \$39.7 billion in state/local tax revenue

The National Audubon Society wholeheartedly supports the transfer to the Commissioner of Agriculture. We would like to ensure that the values that make it important to birds are preserved to the greatest degree possible, particularly for state-listed species. We believe this is possible and hope to work with all the partners to achieve the combined goals.