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

Legislation before the Transportation Committee on February 20, 2013	Support/ Oppose
PROPOSED BILL 166: AN ACT INCREASING FINES FOR THE UNAUTHORIZED OPERATION OF ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES ON MUNICIPAL OR PRIVATE LAND WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE LAND OWNER.	Support Concept
PROPOSED BILL 5183: AN ACT REQUIRING THE REGISTRATION OF ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES.	Support Concept

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 submit testimony supporting the concepts put forward in Proposed Bills 166 and 5183. All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are the most vexing problem today facing the blue-blazed hiking trail system -- 825 miles of trails in 88 towns maintained by CFPA volunteers. In general, ATVs tear-up trails, are dangerous to other trail users (hikers, dog-walkers, wildlife enthusiasts, etc.), and often trespass in areas where ATVs are incompatible with the land and the wishes of private, municipal, or state landowners.

Because of the damage that ATVs cause on trails, wildlife habitats, etc., CFPA has been consistently opposed to permitting ATVs on State Forests, Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, and other lands of high conservation value. It is important to note that CFPA would not support either of these bills if they became vehicles for legislation that would also require the establishment of ATV trails on sensitive state properties.

CFPA has been a long-time supporter of truly Universal Registration of all ATVs with no exceptions. CFPA has also supported increased fines in instances where ATVs are being used illegally. These concept bills appear to share similar goals with our position.

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