

Honorable Members:

I am writing in support of S.B. 1015, An Act Concerning the New England National Scenic Trail. I am a member of the New England Trail Stewardship Council and I am also a hike leader for a number of outdoor recreation organizations, including the Connecticut Forest and Park Association and the Connecticut Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club, where I serve as chapter chair.

I first learned of the New England Trail (NET) at an informational program in my hometown of Guilford, which hosts the Menunkatuck Trail portion of the NET. This is a trail that literally runs through my neighborhood, so I frequently lead hikes for the public on portions of this trail, including during the weekend of events in June celebrating National Trails Day. I am speaking from experience when I say that this trail is a tremendous recreational resource.

The only change I would request in the bill is the removal of reference to eminent domain. This authority does not appear in federal legislation designating the trail as a national scenic trail.

Because the NET incorporates the Mattabesett and Metacomet Trails and those trails consist, at least in part, of private property, changes in property ownership could require rerouting portions of the NET like any other blue blazed hiking trail in the state. Because it authorizes the acquisition of property for the trail, this bill will lead to a more stable trail route, which will attract more users. More people in the area can only benefit nearby businesses.

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