

Comment in support of SB-70, An Act Concerning the Preservation of Lands Under the Control of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture

Dear Senator Meyer and Representative Gentile:

I strongly support the enactment of SB-70. The recent attempt to convey open space land along the Connecticut River in Haddam to a developer and the proposal last year to use part of a State Forest for a shooting range that could have been located on less sensitive open space land illustrate the need for strong controls on the conversion of land acquired because of its high conservation value to purposes that are inconsistent with the protection of Connecticut's open space resources. I have worked with the Branford Land Trust since 1996 to protect open space in Branford, and the proposed Haddam land swap raised strong concerns within our community by calling into question whether our open space is really protected "in perpetuity", as we have represented it to be. For decades, Connecticut taxpayers have strongly supported the acquisition of open space areas by the State, municipalities, and land trusts. It's critically important that the taxpayers can trust that land acquired for open space with their tax dollars will continue to be maintained for the purposes they intended. Please do all that you can to move this bill forward to enactment during this legislative session.

I would like to make one specific recommendation about a minor point in the wording of the bill. Subsection (b) begins "Twenty-one percent of the state's land area shall be held as open space land.", while subsection (c) states "the goal established in subsection (b) of this section [is] to have at least twenty-one per cent of the state's land held ... as open space". Since the text of subsection (b) could be interpreted as capping the amount of open space land at twenty-one per cent of the state's area, I request that subsection (b) be amended to include the words "at least", consistent with the text of subsection (c).

Thank you and the rest of the Environment Committee for proposing this important bill and for your efforts to fully protect Connecticut's open space resources in the future.

Sincerely,

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