



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – March 7, 2014
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Interim Commissioner Robert J. Klee
Presented By Deputy Commissioner Susan K. Whalen

Raised Senate Bill 314 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE HERITAGE PARK ADVISORY BOARDS

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Raised Senate Bill 314 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE HERITAGE PARK ADVISORY BOARDS. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP supports the further development of the concept of a “heritage park” after discussions with legislators and community leaders in the New London and Groton area. A large group of stakeholders in the area has been working over the past months with each other, legislators, the Department of Economic and Community Development, and the Yale Urban Design Workshop to develop a framework for a community-based Thames River Maritime Heritage Park, incorporating a wide array of cultural and historic sites on both sides of the Thames River. Fort Trumbull State Park in New London, and Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park in Groton are important elements of the local fabric of tourism destinations, and we are anxious to play a role in the development of this project if it comes to fruition.

The language of the proposed bill revisits statutory language that was created many decades ago when a string of state owned and managed heritage parks across the state was envisioned. With the passage of time, enthusiasm and financial support for that direction has waned, and new models of local and regional cooperation are actively under exploration.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee and proponents of Raised Senate Bill 314 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE HERITAGE PARK ADVISORY BOARDS to discuss further and to advance our shared goal of a Thames River Maritime Heritage Park which includes participation by all the local, regional and state stakeholders.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP’s Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov (or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).