



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 House Bill 5415– AN ACT CONCERNING THE AIR LINE STATE PARK TRAIL**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Raised House Bill 5415 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE AIR LINE STATE PARK TRAIL. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP supports the further development and extension of the Air Line Trail State Park along the historic “Air Line” railroad bed across the eastern half of our state. What was formerly a principle means of transportation between New York and Boston from the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has now become a popular recreation path accommodating multiple user types, including hikers, bikers, equestrians and more.

DEEP is committed to further acquisitions and development projects that will increase the utility of the Air Line Trail State Park for our residents. However, we are concerned that the language proposed in this bill will have the potential to cause confusion. The proposed language before you in Raised House Bill No. 5415 is based upon a statute that was originally crafted in the 1920’s to guide the state’s involvement, along with the National Park Service, of the Appalachian Trail in northwestern Connecticut. More recently the language was used for the national New England Trail. This proposed language is better suited to guide the development of a trail that is owned by the federal government and private landowners, not a trail that is owned already by the State of Connecticut and managed by the DEEP. The Commissioner of DEEP already has sufficient authority to acquire lands and develop trails along the Air Line. The proposed language in Raised House Bill No. 5415 may cause significant confusion as to which statute would govern the Commissioner’s authority and is unnecessary to accomplish the stated goal.

While we do have concerns with the proposed language of Raised House Bill No. 5415 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE AIR LINE STATE PARK TRAIL, we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee and proponents of this bill to discuss further and to advance our shared goal of further expansion, protection and development of the Air Line Trail State Park.

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](mailto:Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov) (or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or [Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov) ).