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

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Position
RAISED BILL 5408: AN ACT CONCERNING TREE TRIMMING.	No Position

Co-Chairs Duff, Reed, and Members of the Energy & Technology Committee:

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut (1895). CFPA has offered testimony before the Legislature on issues such as sustainable forestry, state parks and forests, trail recreation, natural resource protection, and land conservation for over 115 years.

Today, I am here to testify on Raised Bill 5408, but I note that CFPA has not yet developed a position on this bill because we imagine it may change significantly depending upon the final decision rendered by PURA in docket #12-01-10 (“PURA Investigation into the Tree Trimming Practices of Connecticut’s Utility Companies”) which is still open.

At this early stage, I want to register my interest in the subject matter of Raised Bill 5408 and make a few points for the record:

1. As a recommendation from the Governor’s Two Storm Panel, DEEP appointed a State Vegetation Management Task Force (Task Force) consisting of representatives from the electric and telecommunications utilities, municipal tree wardens, private arborists, department of public works representatives, conservation organizations, and forestry experts from DEEP, the Ag Experiment Station, the Department of Transportation, and the USDA Forest Service. This Task Force presented its recommendations on this matter in its Final Report published in August, 2012. I served as the chair of this Task Force and believe the Final Report represents a model for the collected expertise being involved when considering an important topic such as the management of street and roadside trees that both impacts and benefits citizens directly in so many ways.
2. As a follow-up to the Task Force report, members of the Task Force united to negotiate Section 60 of Public Act 13-298 last year. We believe 13-298 has merit and deserves an opportunity to show that it can work.
3. As mentioned above, PURA is working on its final decision for docket # 12-01-10 that should consider Section 60 of 13-298.
4. If the final decision of 12-01-10 requires that there be additional legislation on this important issue, I hope that you will involve the Task Force in providing input and expertise to help shape a well-rounded outcome.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be glad to respond to any questions you may have.