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Re: HB 5369
HB 5370

March 4, 2014

Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
Staff Office State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue, Room 506
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Committee Members:

I am contacting you today with regard to the state of disrepair that has befallen our state parks and forests. I have used these parks extensively since moving to the state in 1978, and I have personally witnessed deterioration of both their physical condition as well as the impact of reductions in staff.

But I have another perspective to offer beyond that of a park user, one that comes from my work life.

I'll begin by asking: If I could present our state government with a study that proves we could increase state park revenues by 10% to 20% through improved staffing, signage, and upkeep, there are officials who would probably be interested.

Ironically, that is exactly the kind of statement I am able to make in my work as a residential landscape designer. I am able to call on research that shows that attractive, well maintained spaces sell for 10% to 20% more than surrounding properties that lack the same level of design and maintenance.

Will this same phenomenon carry through to public spaces? I cannot prove it. I think that everyone in this room knows that others have provided credible research that shows the state parks and forests are positive economic contributors, even in their current condition.

In any event, my comparison is not a sales pitch—but rather a way of sharing what many in the

At the very time in history when the health of our air, waters and pollinator depends more and more on publicly owned land, let's not continue to pull back from these assets. These lands were in many cases donated and in other cases purchased at taxpayer expense. They were given to the public in trust—yet current practices undermine the assets they could be.

Finally, I would like to voice my support for the recommendations of the PRI:

1. The Parks Division should perform regular reviews of all park resources and annually track park performance through the development of a Results Based Accountability report card
2. The Parks Division should measure three key areas: attendance, safety, and customer satisfaction.
3. A portion of park-generated revenues should be appropriated to the Parks Division, contingent upon demonstration of park performance through the RBA process described in point 1. The division must develop a plan for use and distribution of this increased funding. Any appropriated park-generated revenue should not supplant existing General Fund monies.

Many thanks for this opportunity to voice my opinion.

Sincerely,



Kathy Connolly