

Labbadia, Bonnie

From: sheilaconeill@aol.com
Sent: Friday, March 07, 2014 9:13 AM
To: Program Review and Investigation
Subject: raised bill 5370 and raised bill 5369

To the Legislative program Review Investigations Committee

I am writing concerning the state funding hearings for the state parks and specifically Sherwood Island State Park.

Sherwood Island, Connecticut's first park, welcomed Governor Malloy last fall to the banner raising at the entrance celebrating the Centennial of Connecticut's state parks. His remarks include his reminiscences about his wonderful visits as a boy with his family to Sherwood Island. At that time there were at least one hundred seasonal workers and life guards at both East and West beaches. Now only East beach has guards due to lack of funding. There are long lines at the ticket booths as they are not fully funded. More ticket takers need to be hired.

The reality is that with the increase in the minimum wage that can be paid for both seasonals and full time staff, there is great concern as to how to employ enough people to result in a pleasant experience for visitors. Again, lack of funds.

Funds were raised by the Friends of Sherwood Island in a partnership with DEP for the construction of a Nature Center. It serves thousands of families and children with fascinating exhibits, programs and instruction. An intern program was launched by the Friends with matching funds from donors, drawing students from the surrounding towns and cities. It has attracted high school students who are eager to participate in the environmental and educational programs, with applications received every year.

The PR! report supports 25-50% of income should go directly to the parks. The Friends of Sherwood Island believe that a minimum of 50% of park revenue should be returned to the parks; the needs of the Park System, particularly its shortfalls in personnel levels, are so serious that a 100% revenue return should be considered.

The State needs to provide more funding not only for Sherwood Island but to support the Park System.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sheila O'Neill
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