

Written testimony provided in support of Raised Bill 70 - AAC THE PRESERVATION OF LANDS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DEEP AND DoAg

I have been involved for over 25 years preserving and protecting Connecticut's land of high conservation value in my role as volunteer and staff with the Town of Lyme and the Lyme Land Conservation Trust. I deeply appreciate Connecticut's State Parks, Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, Farmland and other state-owned open spaces and believe they deserve to be protected in perpetuity as land trust and Town properties are. I strongly support Raised Bill 70 (raised by the Environment Committee) to provide for the permanent preservation of state lands of high conservation value.

The issue of state lands protection received quite a bit of press after the release of the CT Council on Environmental Quality Report, "Preserved But Maybe Not: The Impermanence of State Conservation Lands", published in January. This report strongly makes the case that Connecticut's public lands are not protected and provides several recommendations (including the consideration of a Constitutional Amendment similar to New York's.) I support CEQ's recommendations and the goal of permanently protecting Connecticut's public treasures.

While a Constitutional Amendment would provide the strongest level of protection for State lands, it will take years to achieve. Fortunately, Raised Bill 70 can make an important impact this year in our efforts to permanently protect state lands. If passed in its current form, Raised Bill 70 would do the following:

- 1) Classify lands under the custody and control of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) as "land of high conservation value" unless the Commissioners make a written determination to the contrary;
- 2) Clarify that it is the policy of the State to preserve these lands and their resource values;
- 3) Require DEEP and DoAg to include a conservation restriction in the deed for lands of high conservation value; and
- 4) Make the state land conveyance process more transparent.

Please take whatever actions are necessary to move this bill forward for legislative approval and passage.

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