

**TOWN OF TRUMBULL
CONNECTICUT**



DATE: February 18, 2014

TO: Sen. Ed Meyer and Rep. Linda Gentile, Chairmen, and Members of the Committee on the Environment *via email*

RE: Public Hearing on Senate Bill 70, AAC The Preservation of Lands Under the Control of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture

We and the undersigned write in strong support of Senate Bill 70. The Town of Trumbull's Conservation Commission, as well as many other respected groups involved in conservation (e.g., Audubon Connecticut, Connecticut Forest & Park Association, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Sierra Club Connecticut Chapter and Rivers Alliance) seek effective protections for lands purchased by, or donated to, the state as open space for the enjoyment of the public and the preservation of natural resources. In the past 15 years, these public lands frequently have been the object of proposals to transfer title or and/or change use for purposes not compatible with conservation values. Occasionally, these efforts have been successful. More often, they have been turned aside, but at the expense of time and effort by public agencies, already stretched thin, and/or by members of the public, who understandably chafe at the need to fight for what is arguably already theirs.

Recent research has shown that state-owned lands, especially those in the Recreational and Natural Heritage Trust Program, have no legal protection, nothing in the land records, to prevent conveyance to another owner or for another use, including private development. Two years ago, Public Act 12-152 AAC the State's Open Space Plan called on Connecticut DEEP to develop a strategy for preserving lands of high conservation value in perpetuity. Since then, numerous legal and logistic concerns have impeded progress. **Senate Bill 70 makes explicit that the state has the right and the responsibility to protect, for the public, lands acquired and held for their high conservation value**, including state forests and parks, wildlife management areas, and endangered habitats. Many of these properties contain or abut precious, high-quality waters.

We thank you for raising this bill, and urge you to pass it. We would be happy to lend our support in any way. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Mary Ellen Lemay, Chair

/s/ Scot Kerr,
/s/ Dale Parsons
/s/ Joanne Parsons
/s/ Jim Sullivan
/s/ Donald Watson

The Town of Trumbull Conservation Commission