



February 18, 2014

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Via email: Env.Testimony@cga.ct.gov
Senator Edward Meyer, Chair
Representative Linda M. Gentile, Chair
State of Connecticut General Assembly
Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Raised Bill 70, *An Act Concerning the Preservation of Lands Under the Control of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture*

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and Members of the Environment Committee:

I write on behalf of the Kent Land Trust, a nonprofit community conservation organization in the town of Kent. The Kent Land Trust strongly supports the Environment Committee's Raised Bill 70 in the General Assembly, "An Act Concerning the Preservation of Lands Under the Control of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture."

Kent is fortunate to enjoy a relatively high proportion of as-yet undeveloped land. A clear consensus in our community believes that this provides an important public benefit and supports additional efforts to conserve our natural resources and rural character.

KLT is responsible for the protection and stewardship of nearly 2200 acres including properties owned in fee simple and conservation easements. The Appalachian Trail and associated federally-protected land runs in a corridor along the Housatonic River here and two widely-known State Parks offer additional opportunities for public recreation. A municipal town park further complements open space offerings. State-owned wildlife management areas, state forest and easement holdings, and privately-held open space supplement this for a total of more than a third of the Town's land area in conservation.

We have studied the CT Council of Environmental Quality's recent report, "Preserved But Maybe Not: the Impermanence of State Conservation Lands", and now understand that the more-than-ten percent of state owned lands in Kent may not be permanently protected as we had previously believed.

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Therefore, we strongly support the CEQ report's recommendations, including those advocating legislative measures to add permanent protection to state land acquisitions.

Raised Bill 70 will:

- 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.

We urge you to encourage enactment of this legislation. It would provide an important step in protecting Connecticut's public treasures. While a Constitutional Amendment, also recommended by the CEQ report, would provide the strongest level of protection for State lands, enacting one will take years to achieve. This bill can make an important impact this year.

Thank you for considering our views in this matter and for all your work to advance land conservation in Connecticut.

Sincerely yours,



William Arnold
President

cc: Senator Clark Chapin, 30th District, *via email*
Representative Roberta B. Willis, 64th District, *via email*
Amy B. Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, *via email*