

Dear General Assembly members,

I adamantly oppose the proposed conveyance of public lands to towns in this year's Conveyance Act, HB 6998, comprising , in Section 3, over four acres from Silver Sands State Park to the town of Milford, and in Section 8, one hundred acres from the Watershed Forest to the town of Fairfield. I am a Milford, Connecticut taxpayer and registered voter, and I am counting on you to protect and preserve the integrity of our valuable and dwindling green spaces.

I live within a half mile of Silver Sands State Park. The claim that Milford needs special designated parking for residents is bogus. Parking is plentiful and, unlike other town and State Park beaches which exclude lower income visitors with exorbitant fees, it is free for any and all visitors. Even on the hottest summer days there are spaces in the paved lot, and a large grassy area is available for overflow parking at special events, although I have never seen the overflow parking used. The mown grassy overflow areas should remain unpaved, as they provide much-needed habitat for grassland birds, which are in a sharp population decline in our state.

The proposed parking area is near the Animal Shelter which is close to the beach. I have seen vehicles parking along the road by the Animal Shelter when the nearby small beach-side parking area with multiple handicapped parking spaces is full. "No Parking Along Road" signs would take care of that. Any parking lots in that area with improved access to the beach should be open to accommodate ANY special needs visitors, not just Milford residents. Truth be told, it is the town which needs to cede its Animal Shelter land to the state, not the other way around. Chickens, dogs, cats and goats, with their attendant waste, do not belong in the middle of a state park, in a hurricane flood zone, and proximate to the Long Island Sound. I am not alone in my opinion that the Animal Shelter should be moved to create a better State Park.

Furthermore, Milford is not protecting its own wetlands from development, encroachment and litter. Even if I report violations, nothing is done. Do not even think of transferring any of the state-owned land to the town of Milford. Silver Sands State Park habitats should be in the hands of habitat experts-State Park Rangers-not elected officials who tend to only understand land resources as a tax revenue opportunity.

All available habitat areas should be retained and improved. Even though this park is on the site of a former dump, it is ecologically significant as bird habitat, and is a destination for a lot of birding visitors. All decisions should be made with the purposes of improving habitat first, and increasing inclusive public access to recreational and natural resources second, and improving Animal Shelter designated parking NOT AT ALL.

I am also concerned about the proposed transfer of 100 acres of Centennial Watershed Forest land to the town of Fairfield. Again, we need to preserve, protect and improve Connecticut's forests and watersheds, not give them away for development. Habitat is vital for wildlife, but water resources for humans are also compromised by unbridled development. Additionally, the presence of green space in our communities significantly improves the quality of life for residents and coming generations. It is particularly troubling that this plan was hatched without the input of CT DEEP, Aquarion, or The Nature Conservancy, who have authority over this area. That is a red flag that the General Assembly should heed.

Again, the citizens of Connecticut are counting on the General Assembly to safeguard our natural resources for our citizens, our wildlife, and our future generations. Please deny the transfer of the state-owned or managed resources to the town of Milford in Section 3, and to the town of Fairfield in Section 8 of the pending Conveyance Act, HB6998.

Sincerely,

Winifred Wirth
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