

To the Connecticut State Appropriations Committee:

Today we are facing the biggest crisis for open space funding in many years. Governor Dannel Malloy's newly released state budget proposal for fiscal year 2016-17 plans damaging cuts to the state budget for state parks and future acquisition of open space.

The proposal includes:

\$2 million cut from the state parks budget of \$12 million. Cuts in recent years have already pared the parks' budget to bare bones. Worst hit by the proposed cuts will be the seasonal summer staff, which is likely to be reduced to about 180 from 550, forcing some parks to close.

\$13.5 million cut in 2015 from the Community Investment Fund with a further \$27 million cut proposed for 2016, basically zeroing it out. This is the fund that has enabled us—in part—to purchase the Merritt Family Farm, the Sheep Farm, Candlewood Ridge and now, Avery Farm. If this fund is no longer available to protect land, water and wildlife in Connecticut, the loss would be incalculable.

Crippling of the state Council on Environmental Quality, a crucial environmental watchdog office that is effective because of its independence. The governor proposes moving the CEQ into the Office of Legislative Management, where it is likely to lose both its clout and possibly its staff.

We urge you to restore these cuts in Governor Malloy's proposed budget.

sincerely,

Joan Smith
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