

To: The Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

From: Eugenia M. Villagra, 76 Riverview Ave (Noank), Groton, CT 06340

I would like to go on record in opposition to all of the following:

- **The proposed \$2 million cut from the state parks budget of \$12 million.** Cuts in recent years have already pared the parks' budget to bare bones. As I understand it, 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. Neglecting our parks will cost more in the long run in costly repairs.
- **The proposed \$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 the state to help numerous land trust organizations in the state to protect land, water and wildlife. We need to stay the course! If this fund is no longer available to open space in Connecticut, the loss would be incalculable.
- **The proposed crippling of the state Council on Environmental Quality,** a crucial environmental watchdog office that is effective because of its independence. Moving the CEQ into the Office of Legislative Management will likely result in the loss of both its clout and possibly its staff.
- **The proposed improvements in transportation that would reconfigure and widen highways.** I am particularly concerned about backward-looking plans to complete Rt. 11. In 1992, gubernatorial candidate Lowell Weicker supported completing the highway; but, significantly, in 1993 the DOT, citing funding and environmental wetlands concerns, **classified the extension as infeasible**, calling for improvements to other roads in the area instead. Route 11 was postponed indefinitely. If this decision was right then, why not now? Has the wetland "problem" gone away?

I would like to go on record as being in favor of:

- **Improvements to any and all forward-looking forms of public transportation,** including the proposed upgrade to Metro-North Railroad and badly-needed maintenance (rather than expansion) to our existing infrastructure.
- **Conserving land because it is an important investment in the future.** On October 28, 2014, Gov. Malloy stated that "Preservation projects... are fundamental to maintaining our high quality of life, protecting the immense natural beauty of our state, and making Connecticut a great place to live, work and raise a family." I couldn't agree more. Conservation is good for Connecticut.

Please vote in favor of continued conservation to protect our land, water and wildlife, in favor of improvements to public transportation, and vote against backward-looking proposals.