



Connecticut Chapter
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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 16, 2015

Testimony In Opposition to
HB 6998 AAC The Conveyance Of Certain Parcels Of State Land

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

We advise that the legislature must not convey state lands outside of state ownership unless it is clearly in the Public Interest to do so. Our concern here is lands of environmental significance, especially open space lands or lands of special habitat value. There must be robust documentation showing that the Public Interest has been satisfied. Thus, it is necessary that the annual conveyance bill, such as HB 6998, contain sufficient information to meet this test.

Further, we hold that a conveyance bill concerning lands of environmental significance which are in the custody of DEEP or the Dept. of Agriculture MUST originate in that committee, where it will have the public hearing. The Joint Rules need not be amended to provide for this. At present, they only require that a conveyance bill pass through GAE (sections 3(b)(5) and 15(3)). We are astounded that, in the entire history of the annual Conveyance bill starting in 1993, the bills, many with conveyances of DEEP properties, has NEVER even passed through the Environment Committee for discussion and vote. Not once. We find this unacceptable.

Each section of the conveyance bill is introduced with "Notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes...". We understand this insertion guarantees passage of clear title to the recipient. We observe some legislative fondness for the phrase-it occurs more than 2,000 times in statute. But we consider it here a legislative tsunami, as it washes away any and all statutes and protections for the parcel. It is clearly not in the Public Interest.

With regard to HB 6998, we note these sections of concern. Unfortunately, the language actually appearing in the bill is insufficient to address these concerns.

Section 3 transfers 4 acres of Silver Sands State Park to the town of Milford for municipal purposes, which may actually be for a parking lot. The parcel has significant habitat value, and must be left as open space.

Section 8 transfers 100 acres of the Centennial Watershed Forest to the town of Fairfield.

The land is in the custody of DEEP. Aquarion Water Company apparently holds conservation easements. Yet neither of them were consulted, nor was The Nature Conservancy, which is involved with the land management of the Centennial Watershed Forest.

Section 14 describes a conveyance of 2 parcels of DEEP custody land in Brooklyn and Canterbury. The bill contains insufficient information to evaluate the Public Interest in pursuing this conveyance.