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Testimony in Support of Proposed S.B. 186
An Act Concerning the Penalty for Violation of a Municipal Ordinance Regulating the
Operation or Use of a Dirt Bike or All-Terrain Vehicle
To the Planning and Development Committee
Submitted by: Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
February 13, 2015

Co-Chairs Osten, Miller and members of the Planning and Development Committee –

On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC), I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of Proposed S.B. 186: **An Act Concerning the Penalty for Violation of a Municipal Ordinance Regulating the Operation or Use of a Dirt Bike or All-Terrain Vehicle**, which would allow municipalities to fine first time offenders of local ordinances governing the use and operation of dirt bikes and all-terrain vehicles (together referred to herein as "ATVs").

CLCC serves as the umbrella organization for the state's land conservation community, working with land trusts (now numbering 137+), other conservation and advocacy organizations, government entities (including municipal land use commissions) and individuals to increase the pace, quality, scale and permanency of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state.

C.G.S. 23-8(b) sets forth the goal of preserving 21% of state land, with 11% of the goal required to come from conservation of land by "others" (towns, land trusts and water companies). To this end, towns, land trusts, utilities and the state (collectively "conservation partners") have invested considerable funding and volunteer hours into the acquisition and protection of land for conservation, recreation and agricultural purposes. Protecting this investment in land protection through active management and stewardship is an on-going challenge for all conservation partners.

Use of ATVs on public and private conservation lands is commonplace, and is almost always illegal. The problem is pervasive, with illegal ATV use not only interfering with the public's safe use and enjoyment of their public and private trails and lands, but also creating extensive damage, including: (i) destruction of vegetation and sensitive wetland habitats; (ii) increased erosion on and off trail areas; (iii) siltation into lakes and streams; and (iv) damage to fish spawning areas and other wildlife habitats.

Enforcement of municipal regulations against illegal ATV use is difficult at best; most offenders aren't caught. In light of this challenge, it makes good sense to provide towns with the option to more efficiently and effectively enforce ordinances that are intended to protect the safety of its citizens and the integrity of its natural resources as soon as the opportunity arises.

On behalf of CLCC, I respectfully urge the Planning and Development Committee to support Proposed S.B. 186. Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

