

To: Conservation and Development Appropriations Subcommittee

From: James Parada, DEEP Division of Forestry (Retired/CT Certified Forester #0056)

Subject: Conservation and Development Testimony

As a retired DEEP Forester with 34 years of experience and 3 years of additional experience in environmental education and private forestry practice I have knowledge of Connecticut's environment and the citizens who enjoy it.

The Division of Forestry has taken great pride in protecting our state's forests, both private and public, for over a century. Combined with the Divisions of Wildlife, Fisheries, Parks and Law Enforcement, DEEP personnel work as a team to preserve and protect over 250,000 acres of forests, lakes, streams, fields and shorelines. I can attest to field biologists, park supervisors and Encon Police taking pride in their work to meet the needs of citizens who pay fees to camp, hunt, fish, cut firewood, boat, and otherwise use Connecticut's parks, forests, waterways, and beaches.

It is vital to protect boundaries from trespassers and maintain roads and trails for all users of lands in the public trust. It is my experience to know that Foresters, Park Supervisors, Wildlife Biologists and Fisheries Biologists have performed these tasks to assist Law Enforcement. They have done important work, like posting regulatory signs and walking more than 100 miles of boundaries a year to verify lines which is the first defense to protect these lands for the public. Other efforts include public safety, insect and disease prevention, storm salvage and hazard reduction. Unfortunately these efforts are strained by budget cuts and opportunities to use these lands for taxpayers and license holders are reduced when personnel are reduced.

These divisions create revenue for the general fund and business. For example they create private sector business, their employees increase, pay taxes, make purchases from coffee shops, repair facilities, vehicle dealerships and manufacturers. They also provide citizens with renewable resources, fuel, clean water, air, places to exercise, as well as educational programs and activities for children and adults. When our environment has healthy habitats for wildlife (food, fields, forests and water) the associated populations are healthy (reduced rabies and distemper), populations can be restored (New England Cottontail), forests protected from storms, and ultimately the people benefit.

The Connecticut Forest and Park Association and DEEP's Conservation Divisions have, for over a century, supported good stewardship activities and concern for the green backdrop to our lives. Most people take that backdrop for granted. The CFPA and DEEP do not. This backdrop protects the quality of our aesthetics, water and air.

Please consider supporting CFPA and DEEP to maintain a healthy environment.