

February 17, 2016

To: Environment Committee  
From: Ann Beaudin  
Re: S.J. 5

Dear Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, and members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony in support of the Constitutional Amendment (S.J.5) to strengthen protection of Public Lands and provide greater transparency.

Many people are under the misconception that *Protected* Public Lands which include: Forests and Parks, Managed Wildlife Areas, State Owned Agricultural Lands and other natural landscapes are safeguarded.<sup>1</sup> The reality is “protected” is a moot point. It has been noted that the Conveyance Act gives the General Assembly the ability to sell, trade or give public lands to a town, business, or even an individual with the option of no compensation and without a public hearing or through late sessions amendments. The wording of each section of the Conveyance Act begins with “Notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes.” This could circumvent any protections and legislation, and presumptively engender ecological results through: fragmentation, impacting natural resources, discouraging landowners from leaving property to the state, and loss of faith.

In addition, I support the recommended changes in behalf of protections as to:

- Public lands with agricultural, conservation or recreational value should not be sold or traded without a public hearing in the town or towns where the public lands are located.
- All consideration to this effect should be solely in separate bills as an isolated issue.
- Should include “local” public hearings in towns where land located
- Should include value of Public Lands given away
- Any conveyance of Public lands should be the exception and not the rule.

Worthy of attention is CT DEEP website Home page which declares: “Connecticut is a State rich with natural resources and a great diversity of habitat, landscapes, plant life, and wildlife...to make Connecticut a special place to live, work, or visit.”<sup>1</sup> As we face new challenges, more states are recognizing the relationship between natural conservation and amenities and economic benefits. The costs to restore the value of just one acre of marshland, wetlands or open space can run in the thousands per acre.<sup>2</sup> and this doesn't take into account the human cost.

Our natural environment is invaluable to human survival. The growing body of climate science and increasing impacts to resources and people attest to the fact that we have been negligent. We must begin to rectify short-sighted decisions with S.J.5 Constitutional Amendment and recommended changes.. The urgency to protect public lands is a positive step forward.

Cordially,  
Ann Beaudin  
1009 Poquonock Avenue  
Windsor, CT 06095

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References:

<sup>1</sup> “Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality.” *Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality*. Jan. 2014. Web. 17 Feb. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> DEEP 2015 Website Home page

<sup>3</sup> King D.M. and C.C. Bohlen. 1995. The cost of wetland creation and restoration. Technical Report DOE/MT/92006-9 (DE95000174). U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, D.C. / Louis Berger and Associates. 1997. Costs of creation and restoration projects in the glaciated Northeast. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1, Boston,