



Housatonic Valley Association

150 Kent Road
P.O. Box 28
Cornwall Bridge, CT 06754
860-672-6678

1383 Pleasant Street
P.O. Box 251
South Lee, MA 01260
413-394-9796

19 Furnace Bank Road
P.O. Box 315
Wassaic, NY 12592
845-789-1381

www.hvatoday.org



To: Senator Ted Kennedy and Representative James Albis, Co-Chairs,
and Members of the Legislative Environment Committee

From: Lynn Werner, Executive Director, Housatonic Valley Association 

Date: February 19, 2016

Re: **In support of SJ No 5, Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State
Constitution Concerning the Environment and Natural Resources of the State**

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) is the non-profit watershed conservation organization working to conserve the natural character and environmental health of the entire 2,000 square-mile tristate Housatonic River Watershed. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the critical need to better protect our public lands.

HVA supports SJ No. 5, Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution Concerning the Environment and Natural Resources of the State – and we believe that the language can be improved. For example, any action by the state to change use or give away public lands with *conservation, recreation or agriculture value* should require a *local public hearing*, and receive fair scrutiny by the legislature through *separate bills for each conveyance*. It should *require more than a mere simple majority to approve* the conveyance of public lands.

HVA believes that public lands with conservation, recreation and agricultural value should not be given away, traded, sold or otherwise dispensed with by the state without rigorous oversight befitting the seriousness of the transaction.

Doing so without such oversight damages the faith that members of the public have placed in the state when donating lands for public benefit. It discourages similar donations in the future. And it diminishes the value of adjacent public lands through fragmentation, loss of connectivity and the impacts from new land uses such as polluted runoff.

Our public lands are our natural heritage and our legacy to the future. Any conveyances of these lands should be done with careful scrutiny, public input, and informed and thoughtful assessment. These are serious actions, with serious consequences, and should be the exception rather than the rule.

Once again, thank you for this important opportunity to comment on SJ No 5.