

**Testimony by Sally Harold –Treasurer and board member, Friends of CT State Parks – February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**In support of Senate Resolution #5, a *RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION CONCERNING THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE STATE.***

On behalf of the Friends of Connecticut State Parks, as a Connecticut native and serious outdoor enthusiast, I would like to express my support of the Senate Joint Resolution #5 and convey my appreciation to the General Assembly for bringing this resolution forward and allowing a public hearing on this important matter. The Friends of CT State Parks believe a Constitutional Amendment is smart and necessary.

How very fortunate we are for the efforts made over more than 100 years in Connecticut to protect lands for the public. Our State lands, our State Forests and Parks, our Wildlife Management Areas and State agricultural lands are jewels of which we should be proud and protective.

Our State Parks and Forest lands are visited and well-loved by over 8 million people each year. These lands, as well as the State Wildlife Management Areas and other public lands provide critical habitats for nesting birds and migrating fish, rare snakes, threatened plants and other species of special concern. They contain incredible vistas, valuable shorelines, deep woods, roaring brooks, and quiet ponds. In our ever-developing landscape, these lands can offer space for quiet contemplation of nature or boisterous family reunions. We can enjoy opportunities for camping, hiking, boating, skiing, fishing, bird watching, beach combing, owl prowling, kite flying, picnics, reunions, and nature walks. We can learn about Connecticut's past.

These lands may not always serve the purposes they serve today, but when change is contemplated it should be carefully considered and the public should be part of the conversation. The Friends of CT State Parks does not believe these lands should be given away, sold or traded without a public hearing in the town (or towns) where the public lands are located. We believe any proposed disposal, conveyance, or sale of public lands should require a 2/3 majority vote and such proposals should be required to be presented in separate bills and not allowed to be bundled with other proposed bills where they might be missed.

Our public lands are incredible treasures, kept from development by innovative, forward thinkers who valued the land in its natural state to be enjoyed for generations to come. Exploring our forests and parks makes me proud of what has been set aside in Connecticut. I support the Constitutional Amendment so that any change to the status of these lands is only made after serious consideration has been given and support received.

Thank you.