



Environment Committee Hearing 2/19/16

Testimony Regarding S.J. 5

We thank the Committee for scheduling a hearing on S.J. 5, a very important bill in our opinion because past General Assembly actions have resulted in the loss of valuable conservation lands. The so-called "Conveyance Act" allows for the sale and transfer of public lands without hearings or oversight. Often in the past this has resulted in the loss of State Park and Forest lands. S.J. 5 addresses this problem and we support its intent while respectfully suggesting that it needs to be strengthened.

One improvement in the bill particularly important for our Town of Southbury would be to specifically include agricultural and recreational values in the language of the bill, which currently refers only to "conservation values." Residents of Southbury were pleased with the passage of PA 1390 in 2013, which will preserve 921A of agricultural land at the Southbury Training School with a conservation easement on the land to be held by The Southbury Land Trust. Passage of S.J. 5 with the inclusion of agricultural values would make it less likely that this land could be threatened by actions under the "Conveyance Act."

Southbury also has hundreds of acres of state-owned conservation lands which are important to preserving the Town's rural character as well as providing recreational opportunities. These lands would also receive added protection under S.J. 5.

We respectfully urge the Committee to strengthen S.J. 5 in the ways we and other conservation organizations are suggesting, and to approve it.

Tom Crider, President