



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – March 14, 2016
Government Administration and Elections Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee

Raised Bill No. 5619 - AN ACT CONVEYING CERTAIN PARCELS OF STATE LAND AND REQUIRING A STUDY OF CERTAIN STATE REAL PROPERTY.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is pleased to offer testimony regarding **Raised Bill No. 5619 - AN ACT CONVEYING CERTAIN PARCELS OF STATE LAND AND REQUIRING A STUDY OF CERTAIN STATE REAL PROPERTY.**

DEEP strongly opposes Section 8 of the Raised Bill, as it would transfer land currently held as State open space to the Town of Groton for economic development, recreational and open space purposes.

When DEEP acquires land for open space it intends to protect this land and hold it in trust for the public's use and benefit. A transfer of open space for other than public open space purposes is contrary to DEEP's mission, policies, and goals. In particular, this land, totaling some 67 acres, was acquired by DEEP to protect water quality, provide passive recreational opportunities, create a public water access area, interconnect with other existing open space, and protect the scenic view shed from the Mystic River. This proposed transfer may negate the public benefits realized by the protection of this open space. In addition, the interconnections with open space held by the Town of Groton and a non-profit land conservation organization would be severed. These interconnections of open space are vital for protecting habitat and wildlife and enhancing recreational opportunities.

DEEP cannot support the transfer of these lands for economic development purposes. Transferring this land for economic development purposes would take lands out of open space protection, contrary to the statutory goal of the State protecting ten percent of the state's land as open space. Further, this conveyance would be a fiscal burden on the State. Not only would this valuable real estate be conveyed for no fee and therefore not replaced with other open space land, but DEEP would also be responsible for drafting legal documents, conducting legal reviews of land rights, and conducting surveys of the land to effectuate this transfer.

DEEP would not be opposed to public passive recreational and open space uses of the property, as this is why the land was acquired. However, this does not require legislative action. DEEP would welcome the

opportunity to work with the Town of Groton to understand its need for economic development and how these parcels, managed as open space by either DEEP or the Town, could enhance their economic development prospects for the adjacent former Mystic Oral School.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we would be happy to consult further with the committee. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov .