

State Issues

- **Budgets of DEP, the CT Agricultural Experiment Station, the Dept. of Agriculture and the UCONN Cooperative Extension System**

The Department of Environmental Protection is severely under-funded. While there have been recent welcome additions of staff to the Division of State Parks and some \$1.7 million in park funding was restored in 2007, both State Parks and State Forests continue to want for resources and personnel. At DEP's founding in 1971, the General Fund provided 90% of the agency's budget; it now provides only 30%. Furthermore, the divisions of DEP of greatest interest to CFPA are the ones most dependent on the General Fund. We will begin to address this problem by supporting the retention of all timber sale revenues within DEP, by supporting the proposed saltwater fishing license, and by supporting the retention of all hunting and fishing license revenues within the agency. While we support retaining agency-generated revenues, we would oppose equivalent decreases in general funding. We will join with other organizations to make this issue a long-term priority.

We thank the General Assembly for the funding provided to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, enabling the Station to hire a grants officer and staff for the former state nursery and for bonding authorizations for new construction and renovations on the Station's New Haven campus. Regarding the Department of Agriculture, we are pleased to see that the Purchase-of-Development Rights program has additional staff and that \$5,000,000 in authorizations for the PDR program will be on the Bond Commission agenda twice per year. Regarding the UCONN Cooperative Extension System, the System is in need of greater general funding, in particular for paying the fringe benefits of personnel whose salaries are paid with federal funds. The UCONN Cooperative Extension System should also receive greater support for its urban forestry program and for public outreach about its exemplary 4H program.

- **All-Terrain Vehicles**

CFPA supports the DEP's all-terrain vehicle policy and believes it can be strengthened through thoughtful legislation. We support legislation that accomplishes universal registration of all ATVs, protects State Parks, State Forests and conservation lands, creates suitable places for registered ATVs to use and better enforces the existing law. Funds raised through ATV fees should be used on safety training, trail construction and maintenance, enforcement and the like. We would also support a regional registration program with other nearby states that have more to offer the ATV community.

- **Sustainable Forestry**

Connecticut is nearly 60% forested, and the Association supports efforts to conserve and manage private and public forest resources on a sustainable basis. In particular, we support third-party certification of the management of State Forests, additional funding for urban forestry, enhanced forest management planning and the retention within DEP of all State Forest timber sale revenues. We also believe that certified forests under conservation restrictions should be eligible to sell carbon sequestration credits.

- **“Face of Connecticut” and Land Conservation**

The Association strongly supports the Face of Connecticut campaign, a statewide, coalition-led effort to conserve forestland, farmland, trails and greenways and historic properties and to provide funding for planning and stewardship. We will also advocate that the recently authorized bonding for land conservation, trails and park infrastructure makes its way to the Bond Commission agenda.

- **Land Bank Legislation – “Green Fund”**

We support enabling legislation for a local option, buyer-paid, real estate conveyance tax for towns to conserve key properties within their communities. Any such tax should exempt a certain amount of each transfer, thereby not burdening home buyers of moderate means. The amount exempted should be determined by each community. We would also support this legislation for certain regions of Connecticut, in case legislation that encompasses the entire state is not feasible.

Federal Issues

- **New England National Scenic Trail**

The Association strongly supports HR 1528 and S 923, the New England National Scenic Trail Designation Act. This bill would designate the Metacomet and Mattabesett Trails in Connecticut, and the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts, as the nation’s ninth National Scenic Trail. While designation would not alter the fundamental, voluntary nature of these hiking trails, it would provide funding and support that would enhance trail stewardship, the hiking experience, and the prospects for trail-related land conservation.

- **Wild & Scenic Rivers: Eight Mile River and Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook**

CFPA joins the Connecticut conservation community in urging the designation of the Eight Mile River as a Wild & Scenic River. We also support the study process for determining whether the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook ought to be designated as a Wild & Scenic River.

- **Tax Benefits for Land Conservation**

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 greatly enhanced the tax benefits of donating a conservation restriction. The Act extended the length of time over which an income tax deduction may be taken for such a gift from five years to fifteen, and increased the deductible portion of the gift from 30% of adjusted gross income to 50% of adjusted gross income. These provisions are temporary, however; the benefits of the Act expired at the end of 2007. CFPA supports efforts to make these benefits permanent.

- **Forest Legacy**

The Association strongly supports increased funding for the Forest Legacy program. Forest Legacy is a program of the USDA Forest Service that conserves private, working forestland with conservation restrictions. Properties thus conserved remain privately-owned and continue to grow forest products. Forest Legacy has conserved thousands of acres of forest in Connecticut, notably the Great Mountain Forest in Norfolk and Canaan. With over half the nation’s forests in private ownership, increased funding of this program is essential for meaningful forest conservation.