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Call to Action from Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA), for a Passport to the Parks

Contact: Eric Hammerling via 860-335-0812 (cell) or chammerling@ctwoodlands.org

Will Connecticut maintain its State Parks for the public, or begin so-called “passive management?” Your action today (or over the weekend) for the "Passport to the Parks" can make the difference.

The [Governor’s revised budget \(see page 15\)](#) proposed earlier this week would cut the State Parks by \$6.45 million (equivalent to 1/3rd of the entire budget for the Parks) and move all but a handful of Parks with gate fees to “passive management.” Public services such as public restrooms, trash removal, lifeguards, safety patrols, and basic grounds keeping would likely go away at a vast majority of the State Parks. We don’t see that as passive management ... it’s “active mis-management.”

The Passport to the Parks would both generate significant funding for maintaining the Parks and give all Connecticut residents free access to the Parks. The Passport for the Parks would generate ~\$14 million/year for the State Parks through a \$10 fee paid every other year when you register your vehicle at the DMV. The Passport to the Parks is not some pie in the sky idea that has no chance of success; it has been included in a few budget proposals that have been put forward in the Legislature.

But the Passport to the Parks needs more champions in the General Assembly, and that is where you can help the most if you want to see your State Parks maintained and not neglected.

[Contact your State Legislators](#) today or over the weekend via email (and please blind copy me at chammerling@ctwoodlands.org) with a message such as ...

Subject: Please Support the Passport to the Parks

Dear State Representative _____ or State Senator _____,

I am deeply concerned about the recent proposal in the Governor’s budget to cut the State Parks by \$6.45 million and move the State Parks to “passive management.” This would take away the beauty and value of places like [feel free to insert your favorite State Park and perhaps why it is so meaningful to you].

The Passport to the Parks would generate the necessary revenues to maintain the State Parks, and keep them providing over \$1 billion to state coffers, sustaining 9,000 private sector jobs, and supporting over 8 million visitors every year. A \$10 fee on vehicle registration, paid every other year, would generate \$14 million dollars for the State Parks, and provide the added benefit of providing free entry to any



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Connecticut resident. Compared to the cost of an annual park pass (\$67) or even the parking fee paid at a shoreline park for one day (\$13), a DMV fee of \$5 per year or \$10 every other year is a great value.

I hope you will become a champion for the Passport to the Parks in the budget this year, but there are a few elements that are very important to include: 1) these funds should be for the State Parks and should be protected in a non-lapsing, dedicated account within DEEP's budget (that is, it should not go into the General Fund where it can be too easily diverted); 2) the DMV fee should be \$10 and not a lesser amount to generate enough revenues to make the State Parks more self-sustaining; and 3) the DMV fee should begin this year, but free access to the Parks for all Connecticut residents should begin in 2018 when sufficient funds have been generated.

Thank you for your attention to this request. Sincerely,

Your name/Town

Use your voice today to let your State Legislators know that the Passport to the Parks must be a budget priority to keep your State Parks from falling into neglect.

Thank you again for your action on behalf of your State Parks!

All the best,

Eric Hammerling, Executive Director
Connecticut Forest & Park Association