

Talking Points for your email or letter to the Governor on State Park/Campground Revenues

1) State Parks are Important

- Connecticut's State Parks draw 8-9 million people each year and are one of our most important economic, historical, and recreational assets.
- CT State Parks and Campgrounds generate over \$6 million in direct receipts from visitors. In addition, an economic study at UConn verified that State Parks also generate over \$1 billion and support 9,000 jobs every year.
- CT State Parks are your Yellowstone and Yosemite. Fortunately, they are located across the state within a ~15-minute drive of every resident of Connecticut.

2) State Parks are in Crisis

- Resources (funding and staff) to operate and maintain Connecticut's State Parks are at historically low levels. Connecticut now ranks 49th in the U.S. due to the low percentage of the overall state budget dedicated to Parks.
- Parks are also 100% reliant on the State's General Fund for financial support (only one other State in the nation, RI, is funded so lopsidedly). When the Budget is cut, the General Fund is typically cut first, so Parks are particularly vulnerable to deep cuts.
- In 2016, a 45% cut to the seasonal workforce resulted in campground closures, reduced hours at facilities, and other limits for the public. Additional budget cuts projected for 2017-18 could literally close all campgrounds and most Parks and DEEP facilities unless a solution to this crisis is found this year.

3) State Parks and Campgrounds Generate Revenues and Should Keep Them

- Currently, the fees you pay at the gate for parking or for camping go directly to the General Fund and do not directly support Park or Campground operations or maintenance.
- If the ~\$6 million generated by Parks and Campgrounds every year were kept within the Parks (this represents about 1/3 of the entire Parks budget), it would allow for reliable, sustainable maintenance and operations, especially by seasonal workers hired during the Spring-Fall season.
- In addition to keeping the revenues generated by the Parks, there are important ideas like a "Passport for the Parks" – a \$10 charge added to 2-year DMV Vehicle Registrations which could generate \$14.3 million/year in new revenues for State Parks – which should be included in the Governor's Budget to help offset budget cuts and stabilize the level of service provided to the public by Parks.

For your voice to be considered by the Governor, you need to make contact BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY.