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Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Position
<b>Proposed S.B. 167: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISPOSITION OF THE FORMER SEASIDE SANATORIUM FACILITY.</b>	Oppose

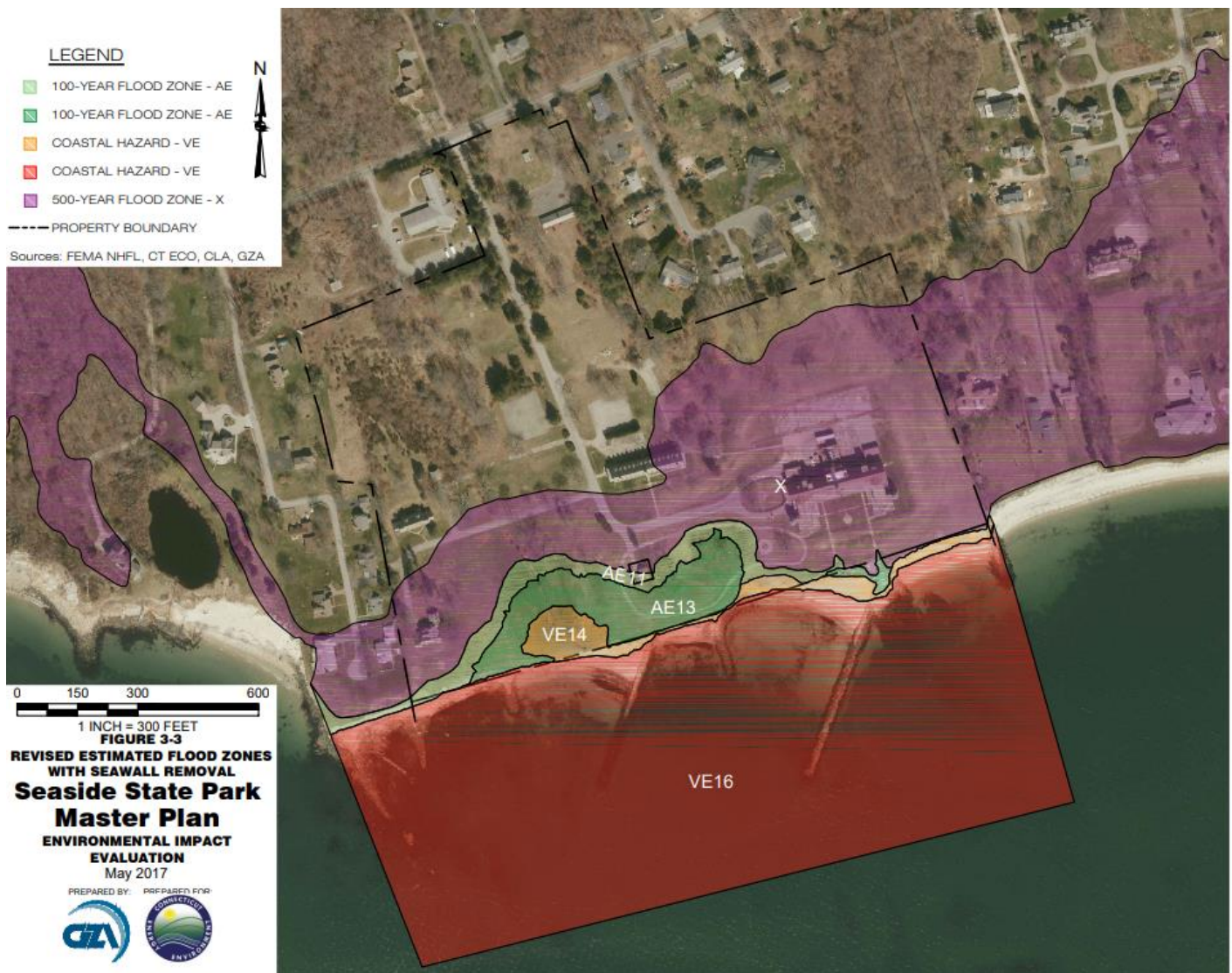
The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first nonprofit conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For over 125 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on various State Park and Forest, trail recreation, sustainable forestry, and land conservation issues.

There are several reasons why CFPA opposes S.B. 167: An Act Concerning the Disposition of the Former Seaside Sanatorium Facility (i.e., Seaside State Park since 2014):

- 1. Public Access to Long Island Sound is rare and highly valued.** State Parks like Hammonasset, Rocky Neck, Sherwood Island, Silver Sands, and Seaside together provide access to fewer than 7 miles of the Long Island Sound shoreline. This represents only ~2% of the shoreline available for all members of the public to enjoy. It may have been while thinking about the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect Connecticut's coastline when Mark Twain famously said, "Buy land. They aren't making it anymore."
- 2. Aren't we concerned about Sea Level Rise and Climate Change-fueled storms?** An aerial view of Seaside State Park with the FEMA 100-year and 500-year flood zones superimposed is shown on the following page. You can see that approximately half of the 32-acre property and most of its existing buildings are within the 500-year flood zone. Any development, re-development, or rehabilitation of buildings on the site for public use should consider the likelihood of damage and additional costs to the public associated with future storms.
- 3. Another Request for Proposals (RFP) at Seaside State Park is unnecessary and premature.** The Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) issued an RFP in 2018 after a Master Plan, extensive public input process, and Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) were conducted in conformance with CEPA. All of the concepts for the future development of Seaside that were identified through this process are still on the table, according to the Record of Decision issued by DEEP in January, 2019. In addition, the Friends of Seaside State Park have recently developed a proposal, working cooperatively with DEEP staff, to strike a balance between preserving some of the architectural history of the site as well as its natural resources for the public to enjoy.
- 4. RFP's shouldn't be compelled by legislation.** It is bad precedent and problematic for the future management of State Parks if RFP's were issued at various Parks based on legislation that may be parochial, versus being issued through the administrative discretion of a state agency tasked with managing parks for the entire public. If DEEP wishes to issue another RFP for the development of Seaside State Park, it could do so. DEEP could also do so in conjunction with DECD if it wished to.
- 5. If public resources are to be spent, the public should benefit.** If the site were to be developed, redeveloped, or rehabbed in the future as part of a public-private partnership, a prospective private

developer would likely need and/or request significant public resources to support the venture. The 2018 RFP estimated that it would cost \$25-30 million in capital expenditures to attain the preferred build-out option. If there is likely to be significant expenditures of public resources to develop Seaside State Park, it is fiscally prudent to also ensure that the financial benefits from such a project would primarily benefit the public. The best way to ensure this is to take any consideration of disposing of Seaside State Park, or a portion of it, off the table entirely.

Protecting public access to Long Island Sound has been a top priority for Connecticut even before the first shoreline park at Sherwood Island was acquired in 1913. Protecting parks for the public is difficult and often takes time, especially when resources are limited. To even consider the disposition of Seaside, or only the buildings at seaside, seems hasty and unnecessary since options for its development currently exist.



We ask the Committee to oppose S.B. 167 and allow the process of managing and developing Seaside State Park for the benefit of the entire public continue to play out under the guidance of DEEP.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I am glad to respond to any questions you may have.