



Connecting people to the land since 1895

16 Meriden Road
Rockfall
Connecticut 06481-2961
Tele: 860-346-TREE
www.ctwoodlands.org

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

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Position
Proposed Conveyances of State Lands (HBs 7417 – 7423, SBs 1123 – 1128): ACTS CONCERNING THE CONVEYANCE OF 13 PARCELS OF STATE LAND.	Neutral

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For over 120 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on various State Park and Forest, trail recreation, sustainable forestry, and land conservation issues.

For several years, CFPA has been a leading advocate for transparency in the public lands conveyance process. The overwhelming support for Question #2 at the ballot box in November, 2018 suggests that ~85% of voters strongly agree that 1) there should be appropriate public input before public lands are conveyed by the General Assembly; and 2) State Parks, Forests, or state-owned farmlands should be held to a higher standard with a supermajority vote.

So we thank you for bringing these 13 bills forward individually for a public hearing as we embark on this new process of public involvement; and we thank you for not raising any proposals to convey state-owned farmlands or DEEP properties, such as State Parks or Forests, out of public ownership. Rather than offering comments on each proposal, we offer a few general recommendations for all conveyance proposals.

We would recommend that all conveyances follow the process of going through the State Properties Review Board and any other administrative steps that are currently in place or developed in the future. These functions provide valuable oversight, consistency, and transparency. Additionally, we recommend that the intended use for the conveyed land be disclosed along with its assessed or appraised value. Transparency in this process protects the state's assets and the citizens who may be impacted in a particular community. Finally, while it is not our core mission, we do have serious concerns with transferring state assets of significant appraised value out of public ownership without a clearly articulated benefit to the state.

CFPA looks forward to working with this committee and individual Legislators as this new more transparent process continues to be implemented. Thank you again for holding a public hearing to discuss these bills, and I am glad to respond to any questions you may have.