

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 994 and House Bill No. 5871
Environment Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
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Co-Chairs Kennedy, Miner and Demicco, and Members of the Environment Committee:

As the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its 137+/- land trusts, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community in Connecticut.

We thank the Committee for this opportunity to present testimony and for your continued leadership in support of land conservation programs by raising the following bills: **SB 994: AAC the Conservation Functions of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection** (Support Concept); **HB 5871: AA Authorizing Fees by Conservation Districts** (Support Concept).

CLCC supports the concept of SB 994: AAC the Conservation Functions of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)

CLCC is committed to supporting DEEP natural resources programs and the agency's ability to ensure the proper stewardship, management and inventorying of state conservation lands. We are extremely concerned that further cuts to the agency's already bare-boned budget would render the State Parks system and other DEEP programs that protect the state's quality of clean air, water, wildlife, and recreational resources unsustainable. CLCC supports the concept of SB 994 and other legislative initiatives which seek to establish: (1) creative mechanisms to generate revenue dedicated for the purpose of supporting the operation and maintenance of our State Parks and other DEEP conservation programs; and (2) a dedicated, non-lapsing account to assure the funds are in fact used for those intended purposes.

CLCC supports the concept of HB 5871: AA Authorizing Fees by Conservation Districts

The Conservation Districts are locally governed, natural resource based agencies established by the General Statutes (Section 22a-315a) to assist DEEP in conserving soil and water and to provide technical services to municipalities, farmers and other landowners. A municipal land use application fee program ("Fee Bill Program") funded the Conservation Districts until those funds were swept into the General Fund in 2009. The program provided a direct link between the fees on land use applications and the technical services provided by the Conservation Districts. State funding for the Conservation Districts was eliminated last year. CLCC supports substitute language for HB 5871 which restores a dedicated account for the Conservation Districts again funded through the revenue generated by the Fee Bill Program.

On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, I thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments.

