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Support the FY 2022-23 Governor's Budget recommendation in [SB 887](#) of \$3 million in both 2022 and 2023 for the Recreational Trails & Greenways Program

The CT Recreational Trails & Greenways Program has invested \$10 million since 2016 into over 60 municipal and nonprofit grants as well as multiple State Park and Forest projects in more than half of all communities across the state. Unfortunately, all of this previously approved bonding is now expended.

Why is restoring bonding for the recreational trails program so important?

- There is significant need and a large remaining backlog of requests for these grants. More than \$12 million in funding requests were submitted for the last \$3.17 million in available bonding which was granted in early 2019. More than \$4 million in highly-ranked project proposals could not be funded in that last grants round.
- Recreational trails are one of the best ways that bond funds can be invested. Recreational trails for hiking, running, biking, equestrian, and other uses attract and sustain families and businesses, create healthy communities, and foster a high quality of life.
- According to the UConn CT Trails Census, in 2020, trail use increased by an estimated 38% when compared to 2019. Similarly, increased visitation to State Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Management Areas has been booming, and we expect this high outdoor recreation involvement to continue.
- In 2019, outdoor recreation in Connecticut contributed \$3.7 billion to our GDP, \$2 billion in private sector wages and salaries, and supported over 49,000 Connecticut jobs ([U.S Dept of Commerce: ORSA](#)). Much of this outdoor recreation was associated with using trails.
- Connecticut's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for 2017-2022 commissioned statewide surveys that ranked recreational trails at the very top of community assets and needs for the future.
- Connecticut leads the nation every year in the number of trails events held on CT Trails Day weekend. One of the reasons, of course, is the public's great interest in exploring the state through its trails.
- If restored, this bonding would be the only source of funding available in FY 2022 – 2023 that could be invested in a wide variety of recreational trail projects around the state. Crucially, these funds can go where federal dollars cannot – such as planning, design, and smaller but critical connections to various state trails networks.

To ensure Connecticut remains a trails leader, this important and economically significant investment in Connecticut's quality of life must be renewed. CFPA recommends support for SB 887, which supports \$3 million for the Recreational Trails & Greenways Program in both 2022 and 2023.

For questions, contact Eric Hammerling at the Connecticut Forest & Park Association via ehammerling@ctwoodlands.org or 860/346-TREE.