



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
Raised HB 6744: AAC TREE REMOVAL AND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.	Support

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first nonprofit conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For over 128 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on various State Park and Forest, trail recreation, sustainable forestry, and land conservation issues.

I want to thank the Committee for raising this bill. Over the past decade or so, I have Chaired the State Vegetation Management Task Force created by the Two Storms Panel, Chaired the Forests Subgroup of the Governor's Council on Climate Change, and most recently Chaired a diverse group of organizations to develop Policies on Resilient Forests for Connecticut's Future (PRFCT Future).

All of my efforts have been based upon the premise that trees and forests provide a wide variety of socioeconomic, ecosystem, and other benefits, and that we all share an important responsibility in how we steward their present and future. With a changing climate and a new normal of more intense weather events and stressors on trees, this is especially important and increasingly difficult.

As you know, the Department of Transportation (DoT) has published online its [statewide vegetation management guidelines](#), and does employ some landscape arborists to oversee its work. Although that is a helpful start, there still is a need for more transparent and consistent communications from DoT with municipal officials, tree wardens, and the public about proposed tree removals along state highways. Information about more site-specific removal plans should be posted online because vegetation management doesn't only have a local impact, it impacts all of the travelers along state highways who wonder about or get concerned when trees are removed.

I would recommend that in addition to fostering greater transparency and communications, HB 6744 should include the concept of "compensatory reforestation"; that is, the DoT should be replanting trees to compensate the people of Connecticut for the removal of trees.

[HB 6610](#), which received a public hearing agenda before the Environment Committee earlier this month, includes language modeled on the [New Jersey No Net Loss Compensatory Reforestation Act](#), (N.J.S.A. 13:1L-14.1 et seq.). This act in New Jersey requires State agencies to submit a compensatory reforestation plan to DEEP's Forestry Division for each project that results in the deforestation of one-half acre (0.5 ac/21,780 square feet) or more on land the State entity owns or maintains. Even if the language in HB 6610 was limited to compensatory reforestation based upon actions of the Department of Transportation, it would make a positive difference for Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments, and I'd be glad to respond to any questions you may have.