



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
SB 979: AN ACT PROMOTING ENERGY AFFORDABILITY, ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND GREEN CITIES.	Support section 7

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.

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.

We appreciate the inclusion of Section 7 in SB 979, which is one of the major recommendations of the [PRFCT Future Report to DEEP](#). Section 7 would establish a goal for Connecticut of increasing urban forest cover by 5% in its environmental justice communities by 2040. For the past few years, DEEP has dramatically increased its investment in urban forests; that is, trees and forests in closest proximity to where people live and work. DEEP has dedicated funding to support grants to environmental justice communities working in partnership with UConn and the Connecticut Urban Forest Council. These grants are having a positive impact, and should continue.

Trees and forests provide so many benefits to communities by filtering air and water, maintaining biodiversity, providing shade to keep cities cooler, absorbing and slowing stormwater to reduce flooding, increasing neighborhood property values, storing carbon, helping our municipalities be as resilient as possible in the face of climate change, and even keeping communities safer and healthier.

We support some minor technical language changes in Section 7 that we believe will be included DEEP's testimony. For example, it should be clarified that January 1, 2024 is not the date that Connecticut is expected to reach its 5% increase in urban forest canopy goal, but rather this is the date where a baseline of urban forest cover statewide would be established, and the 5% increase goal would build upon that foundation through 2040.

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