

Dear _____,

Last year the CT Greenways Council (CGC) assisted the DEEP with the distribution of \$7 million in funding of which \$400,000 remained unobligated. This year, the anticipated budget was reduced to \$5 million. The last budget session de-authorized this funding leaving the remaining \$400,000 in existing funds for \$9.8 million in requested submissions. I am urging you to advocate for restoring the \$5 million funding request by the CGC for the CT Recreation Trails Program in the next budget round slated for February 8th. Over the years, Connecticut's RTP has funded hundreds of projects which have directly facilitated healthy outdoor recreation for our residents and visitors and have supported badly needed economic development in communities across the state. It is vitally important, especially during tight economic times, to invest in our local communities and to recognize the potential of local trail systems to be an economic engine for our communities and improve the quality of life for our residents.

Access to open spaces and trails for outdoor recreation is at the heart of keeping our small and rural towns vibrant and desirable places to live. Trails and parks are a documented source of positive economic benefits by bringing in home buyers, workers, attracting retirees, enhancing property values, and increasing municipal revenue. A recent report shows that CT DEEP's open spaces generated an estimated \$3.1 to \$5.4 million to municipalities through increased property values [1]. Natural amenities, trails and greenways have been shown to support local business development as a direct result of increased visitation to the communities that support them. Following trail openings, communities have documented increases in businesses such as lodging, restaurants, bike rental, and outdoor clothing and supplies. A recent report estimated that CT residents and visitors spent a total of \$1 billion annually on outdoor recreation and the outdoor industry supports 9,000 private sector jobs in CT [2]. For every dollar spent on trails and parks, the state receives \$38 in economic activity [1].

Please request that the \$5 million funding request for the CT Recreation Trails Program be restored. Projects supported by this grant program provide tangible and long lasting economic benefits to our local towns and region and it's more important than ever to ensure that our state, cities, and towns are attractive places to live. In these economic times, it is imperative that we continue to invest in the future of our communities. More information on the economic benefits of trails and greenways can be found at the links below.

The American Planning Association, "*How Cities Use Parks for Economic Development*,"
<https://www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/economicdevelopment.htm>

American Trails, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/outdoor-recreation-economy-report-2012.html>

[1] National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers, <http://www.nasorlo.org/?p=552>

[2] The Hartford Courant, <http://www.courant.com/community/rnw-rop-national-and-state-parks-0507-20150501-story.html>

Thank you,

Your Name