



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Executive Director

February 14, 2023

Re: House Bill 6610 - An Act Concerning "No Net Loss" of State Forestlands.

Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko, Vice Chairs Sen. Hochadel and Rep. Palm, Ranking Members Sen. Harding and Rep. Callahan, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) is a nine-member board that works independently of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to assess the condition of Connecticut's environment and report its findings annually to the Governor; recommend actions to improve state environmental programs; advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed projects; and investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.

The Council **supports certain provisions** of House Bill 6610 that would 1) establish a Connecticut Community Forestry Program, and 2) enhance public participation in forestry actions. The Council has maintained that certain state actions that affect the state's forests and park lands are "actions which may significantly affect the environment" and could be subject to the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). The proposed legislation includes a provision for a public forum with a 60-day comment period. As an alternative to establishing a new comment period process, the Council suggests that state agencies utilize the existing notice process and public meeting requirements of CEPA for certain state actions. The CEPA process requires notice of certain proposed state actions to be published in the [Environmental Monitor](#)¹, that there be a minimum 30-day comment period, and that a public scoping meeting be held at the sponsoring agency's discretion or "if twenty-five persons or an association having not less than twenty-five persons requests such a meeting within ten days of the publication of the notice in the Environmental Monitor". CEPA also requires that the sponsoring agency consider, and address comments received during the public comment period and decide if an Environmental Impact Evaluation is required. The Environmental Monitor is published twice a month on the Council's website and notice of the publication is provided to hundreds of subscribers and the town/city clerk for every municipality in the state.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Paul Aresta,
Executive Director

¹ Council On Environmental Quality, Environmental Monitor – Current Issue; <https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor/Environmental-Monitor---Current-Issue>