



May 10, 2023

Governor Ned Lamont
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Subject: Please Support Parks and Trails in the Final Budget

Dear Governor Lamont,

I write to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Sleeping Giant Park Association (SGPA), as well as our nearly 1000 members, to ask that you support increased funding for the Connecticut State Park system in your final budget.

SGPA was founded in 1924 for the express purpose of conserving the iconic landmark of the Sleeping Giant in Hamden, Connecticut. The Association purchased the original land for Sleeping Giant State Park in 1933, and has since worked in partnership with the State of Connecticut to add additional acreage to the park, build and maintain 32 miles of trails, restore native habitats, engage and educate park visitors, and more.

SGPA has also been a tireless advocate for the Sleeping Giant - the reason for our outreach today.

In the last 30 years, the number of full-time staff at Connecticut's state parks has been cut in half to just 83 employees. This staffing reduction has a direct impact on the entire park system, including Sleeping Giant State Park. The Sleeping Giant Park Unit, which includes Sleeping Giant, West Rock Ridge, Quinnipiac River, Wharton Brook, and Farm River State Parks, is managed by a single Park Supervisor and a single Park Maintainer. That is a combined total of 8,273 acres being overseen by two full-time employees.

Protecting and Caring for the Giant Since 1924

www.sgpa.org | admin@sgpa.org | P.O. Box 185340, Hamden, CT 06518

Meanwhile, over this same 30-year period, visitation to Connecticut's state parks has nearly doubled. Staff at Sleeping Giant State Park are doing their best to keep up with the increased maintenance resulting from increased visitation – tasks like repairing park infrastructure; controlling traffic and parking; keeping restrooms sanitized; and dealing with on-site enforcement issues. Yet these essential workers are increasingly put in unsafe situations by being stretched too thin.

Sleeping Giant State Park has experienced record visitation in recent years, and this increase in use must be met with an increased investment by the State. Additional staff and funding are needed to ensure that the park is safe and well-maintained today, and is sustained for future generations to enjoy.

The Sleeping Giant Park Association graciously wishes you support the following items in the final budget adopted for fiscal years 2024 and 2025:

- 15 new Park Maintainers and 1 District Park Supervisor supported by the Passport to the Parks;
- Increased grants to municipalities and nonprofits to improve and extend recreational trails; and
- Increased investment in repairs and accessibility improvements to State Park facilities.

These investments are essential to Connecticut's state parks, and ensure that beloved places, like the Sleeping Giant receive the care they deserve.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)

Luis O. Arata
President
Sleeping Giant Park Association
president@sgpa.org

Protecting and Caring for the Giant Since 1924

www.sgpa.org | admin@sgpa.org | P.O. Box 185340, Hamden, CT 06518