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February 3, 2016

House Committee on Natural Resources and Energy  
State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

RE: Testimony Submitted by The Trust for Public Land to the House Committee Natural Resource and Energy in support of H.584, An act relating to miscellaneous timber harvesting, forestry, and State lands issues

Dear Chairman Klein and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H584. My name is Rodger Krussman, and I am the Vermont State Director for The Trust for Public Land. The Trust for Public Land is a national land conservation organization with a mission of creating parks and protecting land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. For almost 25 years, The Trust for Public Land has been working in Vermont to permanently protect over 50,000 acres of Vermont forests that provide places for people to get outside and explore, recreate, and enjoy our woods.

As many of you know, our forests provide important ecological functions, they are the backbone of our rural values and traditions, and they are a major driver of our economy. I would first like to offer a few specific comments on H584:

- We support the suggested language in page 47 clarifying that land acquired by the Agency of Natural Resources that is enrolled in the Current use Program be exempt from the levy of a land use change tax if the land is to be acquired for public ownership. We also strongly encourage that you expand this exemption to include land acquired by the Green Mountain National Forest for public use.

- Second, we would like to offer strong support for the "Finding" at the beginning of the bill, specifically: (1) Private and Public Forestlands A) constitute unique and irreplaceable resources, benefits, and values of statewide importance, and (3) Private and Public Forestlands are critical for and contribute significantly to the State's outdoor recreation and tourism economies.

Vermont's Forests provide special opportunities for people to get outside and explore nature. Places like Green River Reservoir State Park, Camels Hump State Park, the Green Mountain National Forest, and the 168 towns that own their own town forests are just a few examples of these important forests. Protecting public access to outdoor recreation in our forests, and in particular close to home recreation in our town forests, is a huge benefit to the travel and tourism industry, and the Vermont economy, the businesses, the

communities, and the people that live in this state. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, almost 75 percent of all Vermonters participate in some form of outdoor recreation annually. That equates to 34,000 direct jobs, \$2.5 billion in consumer spending, and \$176 million in state and local tax revenue.

It is for these reasons that one of our top priorities is full and statutory funding of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, so that we can protect these important resources. This critical state program is matched and leveraged with federal, local and private funding, to protect those places for us to hunt, hike, fish, ski, snowmobile, and get outside, as well as protects these important natural systems that protect our air, water and keep us healthy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me anytime with questions:

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