



**Farmington River Watershed Association, Inc.**

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**TESTIMONY FOR THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING  
FEBRUARY 17, 2009**

**From: Farmington River Watershed Association**

**To: Sen. Harp, Rep. Geragosian, and Honorable Members of the Committee**

**Re: Funding for the CT Council on Environmental Quality**

**Funding for the CT Department of Environmental Protection**

On behalf of the Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA), I am testifying on proposed budget cuts for CEQ and DEP. FRWA is a private, non-profit organization that is well served by excellent staff in both CEQ and DEP. We wish to state that

1. CEQ's functions are vital, irreplaceable, and performed with extremely economical use of funds.
2. We applaud the proposed restructuring of the way DEP staff are funded. On the other hand, reducing the number of DEP positions, and unrealistically expecting DEP to absorb CEQ's functions, puts an unreasonable burden on an agency that is already under-staffed.

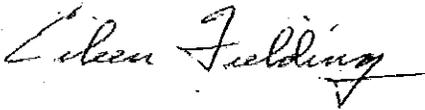
In support of these statements, we point out the following:

- Nine of the eleven people comprising CEQ are volunteers who bring professional expertise, dedication, and donated hours to CEQ's work. Each dollar of state money invested has considerable added value because of this in-kind support. It is exactly the sort of program we should keep when budgets are tight.
- CEQ's white papers and annual reports are an invaluable resource for agencies and organizations across the state. The savings in time and research this represents for the recipients are big enough to justify CEQ's existence. If CEQ disappears, the costs of researching important issues will have to be absorbed elsewhere. Or, if the research is not done at all, the resulting lack of adequate information and communication will detract from sound, coherent, coordinated environmental management in Connecticut. This will incur many tangible and intangible costs.
- CEQ has a unique role as ombudsman for all who need review of an environmental problem. This is an effective way to address concerns of citizens and organizations, especially those who do not themselves know the best routes of communication with state agencies. It cannot be duplicated within the DEP, in part because CEQ's work includes independent evaluation of DEP, and in part because DEP is already overloaded with work.

- Anyone who has partnered with DEP over many years has seen the limits already imposed by funding and staff shortages, as well as the resilience, dedication, and creativity with which the remaining staff fulfil their mandates. Like other organizations, we collaborate with DEP where we can—for example, by furnishing water quality data or assisting with public education and habitat restoration projects. As DEP's beneficiaries and partners, we are concerned that further cuts at DEP will undercut its ability to maintain even the status quo, let alone seize new opportunities to improve the management and protection of our natural resources.

CEQ and DEP are already as lean, or leaner, than they should be. Cutting their funding further will be costly in terms of environmental damage, reduced communication, and lost chances for progress. As you make difficult decisions on appropriations, we strongly encourage you to retain CEQ at its modest level of funding (\$170,000), and to reconsider the number of staffing cuts at DEP.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.



Eileen Fielding  
Executive Director