



Testimony of CT Fund for the Environment, and its program Save the Sound

In Favor of Raised Bill No. 848 AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS OF THE STATE TO CONTINUE THE LOBSTER RESTORATION PROGRAM Before the Environment Committee

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Save the Sound is a regional program dedicated to the restoration and protection of Long Island Sound; together with its parent organization, Connecticut Fund for the Environment ("CFE"), a statewide non-profit environmental advocacy organization, it represents over 6,500 members. Since 1978, CFE has used law, science and education to improve Connecticut's environment.

Save the Sound, a program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment submits this testimony in *support* of Raised Bill 848, An Act Appropriating Funds of the State to Continue the Lobster Restoration Program.

Long Island Sound is vital to Connecticut, providing \$8 billion to the regional economy. This is based on an economic analysis completed by the University of Connecticut a decade ago, updated to 2009 dollars. That study identified the economic benefits derived from our coastal industries that in turn are dependent on a healthy Long Island Sound. These industries include boating and associated marinas, recreational and commercial fishing and traditional oystering and lobstering as well as eco-tourism. The Sound is a vibrant and well used body of water that faces many challenges. Low oxygen levels threaten wildlife survival every summer, critical coastal habitats are dying, and stormwater pollution closes acres of shellfish beds and numerous beaches

each year. Connecticut has recognized what we stand to lose, and has fought time and time again to protect this estuary from harm. However, the time to be proactive is upon us.

In an effort to highlight the benefits that investing in Long Island Sound can provide during times of economic trouble, the Long Island Sound Study's Citizen's Advisory created a package of spending that would both improve the health and accessibility of the Sound and create jobs for the future. It consists of stimulus investments in clean water projects, habitat and land preservation projects, restoration of the oyster and lobster industry, and improving coastal access. Each will simultaneously contribute to improved environmental health and the creation of new and much needed jobs. Of particular interest today is the portion of the package pertaining to the state's lobster industry.

The Sound's lobster industry was a once thriving boon to the region until the late 1990's when the industry crashed, forcing many long-time lobstermen to leave the fishery. In an effort to provide economic assistance to the remaining lobstermen, and to provide a measurable method of restoring the stock, the General Assembly established a lobster restoration program with Public Act 06-187. Premised on lobstermen v-notching (marking) mature female lobsters and then releasing them back into Long Island Sound, law prohibits the subsequent capture and sale of those lobsters until the v-notch has molted out; allowing for additional spawning time and hopefully, the eventual restoration of the stock.

Management techniques like increased minimal length and quota management, through limited trips or fishery closures, are other restoration techniques that can be employed, but they carry a large risk: debilitating an already faltering industry by prohibiting capture of normally marketable lobsters. In fact, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission had planned to increase the current size by 1/16 of an inch but it held off for at least one year to gauge the results

of the v-notch program. According to reports, lobstermen in Connecticut and New York returned the equivalent of more than 58,000 mature female lobsters between December 2007 and July 2008. That's more than 100 percent of the goal established for the first year of the program. Benefits of the lobster v-notch program include:

- Limiting release to mature females (other management options could be overly inclusive by also limiting access to mature males);
- Providing financing to lobstermen so that there is no net loss of income;
- Compiling useful lobster data; and
- Educating high-school students from aquaculture schools with a unique marine curriculum.

With minimal investment, the v-notch program is able to fund an ailing industry-- allowing 13 lobster boats to continue working in a collaborative effort with high school students from three regional aquaculture schools--while keeping lobster management as narrowly defined as possible.

In conclusion, Long Island Sound is one of the most densely populated waterbodies in the country, with nearly 1/10th of the U.S. population living within 50 miles of its shoreline. While tremendous progress has been made in improving the health of the Sound, major long term investment is needed to meet both environmental objectives and improve the Sound's economic vitality. A relatively small amount of funding for the Sound's lobster industry will bolster the economy, maintain jobs, and put the estuary back on track towards a sustainable future. It is for this reason, that we urge you to support Raised Bill 848, An Act Appropriating Funds of the State to Continue the Lobster Restoration Program.