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Dear Members of the Legislature's Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Robert A. Jones and I am the retired chief of the Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Fisheries and Wildlife (now the Bureau of Natural Resources). I am also the President of the Connecticut River Salmon Association (CRSA), a citizen organization dedicated to the restoration of Atlantic salmon to the Connecticut River.

It is my understanding that HB 6375 contains a provision that disallows the participation of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission (CRASC). CRASC is an interstate compact created by legislation by each of the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire. The states were joined by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service and in 1983 the compact was ratified by the United States Congress. The Compact Commission consists of the chief fisheries official of each of the Connecticut River states, along with their counterparts in the federal services, and a knowledgeable citizen appointed by the governors of the participating states. I am honored to have been appointed to this voluntary citizen position.

The mission of CRASC is to restore Atlantic salmon and other migratory fish to the Connecticut River. Connecticut has been a major supporter of CRASC since its creation. The removal of one of the states from participation will cause the compact to be ineffective and, given Connecticut's key location on the river, the removal of DEP may place the entire compact in jeopardy. It is noteworthy that costs to the states are minimal. The Commission meets for one day two times a year and fisheries staff members involved in the program do not generate any additional costs to the state above their regular salary. As a volunteer citizen member of the Commission I receive no state funds for my participation.

A very serious aspect of the lack of Connecticut's involvement in CRASC is the potential loss of a program managed by our organization. Each school year CRSA, in cooperation with DEP and CRASC, provides salmon eggs to 77 schools throughout the state to hatch and rear to juveniles and then to release in tributaries to the Connecticut River in this state. This program is one of the most popular science exercises in our state's schools and provides environmental education for some 5000 students each year. It is not clear whether this program can be continued if Connecticut DEP is no longer a participant in CRASC.

Please consider the removal of this provision from HB 6375 so that this important program can continue.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Jones
President