



**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment  
Before the Public Health Committee**

*In Support of H.B. No. 5255, AN ACT CONCERNING WATERSHED LANDS*

Submitted by Eric Annes, Legal Fellow  
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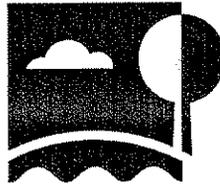
*Connecticut Fund for the Environment ("CFE"), with a total membership of approximately 6,000 Connecticut members, uses law and science to defend Connecticut's air, land and water.*

The state of Connecticut is blessed to have some of the highest quality drinking water in the nation. But, as with all our god given resources, we must be vigilant in its protection or we will be blessed no more. Connecticut's General Assembly, starting with the members of this committee, play an important role in our vigilance. In order to safeguard our public water supply for the future, protective measures must be put into place today to protect the forests that purify and protect our drinking water and our health. Over two million Connecticut citizens depend on Connecticut reservoirs as their main source of drinking water. This is an important public health issue.

CFE strongly supports the purpose of H.B. 5255, An Act Concerning Watershed Lands. The goal of this bill is to prevent high density land development from occurring on public reservoir watershed lands, in order to protect the natural ability of the forests that surround and provide drainage to our reservoirs to continue their ability to naturally purify our public drinking water. This is an important public health objective.

Many of our cities are seeing developers force relatively high density developments in public drinking water watersheds. Such developments have been foisted upon Bethany, Ridgefield and Redding, to name just a few. Our State Plan of Conservation and Development has long identified the goal of maintaining low density development in drinking water watershed areas, at a density of no more than one residential home per two acres of developable land, in order to protect the quality of our raw drinking water supply. See Growth Management Principle No. 5. The importance of maintaining low density development to protect raw reservoir water quality is highlighted by data collected by the South Central Regional Water Authority. Raw reservoir water is approximately four times as polluted in a relatively densely developed reservoir watershed area (Lake Whitney in Hamden) as compared to a relatively pristine reservoir watershed (Lake Gallaird in Guilford). Concerns are being raised daily about the capacity of filtration to remove potentially dangerous contaminants. Recent news of low levels of pharmaceutical chemicals found in treated water across the country is disconcerting. Certainly, high density development threatens drinking water supplies

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with sewage contamination (the source of pharmaceutical chemicals) from failing septic systems. It has also been shown that increase in pollution due to intense development and deforestation significantly increases the cost of treating drinking water. As drinking water standards get more stringent, the need to reduce the burden of treatment becomes increasingly more important. Intense development on water supply lands does just the opposite.

H.B. 5255's goal of raising the scrutiny given to development projects on water supply lands is an essential public policy if Connecticut wishes to continue to have top quality potable water. Not allowing intense development on public watershed lands is necessary to protect our raw public drinking water supply that two million Connecticut residents depend on. As such, CFE strongly supports a refined Act Concerning Watershed Lands.