



TESTIMONY OF
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AUDUBON CONNECTICUT

COMMERCE COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

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Audubon Connecticut, the state organization of the National Audubon Society with more than 10,000 members statewide, works to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats through education, science and conservation, and legislative advocacy for the benefit of people and the earth's biological diversity. Through our network of community-based nature centers, protected wildlife sanctuaries, and local volunteer Chapters, we seek to connect people with nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

COMMENTS REGARDING:

H.B. 6506 AN ACT STREAMLINING THE PERMIT APPROVAL PROCESS.

Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, and members of the Commerce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment today on *H.B. 6506 AA Streamlining the Permit Approval Process* that seeks to shorten the permitting process for economic development projects by establishing a concurrent state and local pre-application review.

Audubon takes no position on the underlying bill, except to offer the following comment for the Committee's consideration as you move forward with this legislation:

Endangered Species Act review can be a time-consuming and costly aspect of the permitting process. Unfortunately, some developers do not become aware of their need to undergo such a review until relatively late in the planning process after they have already invested considerable time and money developing a particular proposal. At this point, the Endangered Species Act review can come as an unexpected surprise that can quickly escalate into a fraught and contentious process.

There is, however, a **simple step** that could help to make developers aware of any potential Endangered Species impacts posed by their project early in the development process. The Department of Environmental Protection maintains an online Natural Diversity Database. Though not exhaustive, this database provides town-by-town information about areas in which federal and state listed species have been found. **By consulting this database**, developers can easily ascertain whether a proposed project is in the vicinity of an already-identified habitat area for listed species, and can contact DEP for additional review and information in a timely fashion.

As part of any pre-application process, we **strongly urge** the Commerce Committee to require that developers consult DEP's Natural Diversity Database and furnish evidence of having done so to the appropriate state or local agency in the form of a map of the proposed project area downloaded from DEP's website that indicates the presence or absence of listed species.

This simple step would save time and money - - both for the state and for developers. And the improved planning that resulted would ultimately save wildlife for generations of Connecticut residents to enjoy in the future.

Protecting Connecticut's wildlife diversity makes good economic sense. More than **\$1.5 million state residents engage in hunting, fishing and wildlife-related recreation.**¹ They spend more than **\$833 million supporting an estimated 9,835 jobs** in the state.

On behalf of Audubon Connecticut's more than 10,000 members statewide, I strongly urge you to include Endangered Species review in any streamlined permitting process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on these important issues.

Additional Resources:

Information about Connecticut's Threatened, Endangered or Special Concern Species:

http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2702&q=323486&depNav_GID=1628&depNav

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To view town-by-town maps:

<http://www.depdata.ct.gov/naturalresources/endangeredspecies/nddbpdfs.asp>

¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.