



Town of Redding

*100 Hill Road, PO Box 1028
Redding, Connecticut 06875*

*Natalie Ketcham
First Selectman*

*203-938-2002
FAX 203-938-8816*

Testimony of Natalie Ketcham Redding First Selectmen

Testimony regarding HB 5820: AAC Natural Vegetation Near Wetlands and Watercourses

Submitted to the Environment Committee February 23, 2009

This bill addresses a critically important issue facing the State of Connecticut: the protection of our public drinking water supply. Watershed protection of source waters is considered the first and most fundamental step in protecting drinking water. HB 5820 takes that step by preserving the natural vegetation surrounding rivers and wetlands, allowing it to absorb harmful nutrients before reaching the water. This is what nature intended, and it is the best technique for protecting water quality.

Protection of riparian areas is also a cost effective method of mitigating damages from flooding and erosion hazards, the risks of which are steadily increasing due to global climate change. Therefore, this bill provides fiscal benefits as well as benefits to the environment and to public health.

This is a thoughtfully crafted bill, which does allow for certain exemptions. One notable one is any activity solely for natural resource management that furthers the natural vegetation's functions in maintaining or restoring the biological and ecological integrity of the wetland or watercourse. This important exemption allows for the removal of invasive species in bank restoration.

HB 5820 is a timely bill that would provide many benefits to the state environment and its citizens. I urge its passage.

Sincerely,

Natalie Ketcham
Redding First Selectman