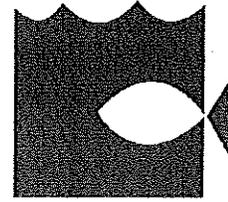




Connecticut Fund
for the Environment

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



Save the Sound™

In Favor of

**PROPOSED HB 5471, AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR DREDGING
And**

**PROPOSED HB 5473 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF
CERTAIN OPEN SPACE LAND**

Before the Environment Committee

February 6, 2009

Submitted by Leah Schmalz, Dir. Legislative and Legal Affairs

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.

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and Members of the Environment Committee:

This testimony is in support of Proposed HB 5471, An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State For Dredging and Proposed HB 5473, An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State For the Preservation of Certain Open Space Land.

Proposed HB 5471: Dredging is Essential to Connecticut's Economy

Long Island Sound is vital to Connecticut, providing \$8 billion to the regional economy. It 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

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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 small package of capital spending that would both improve the health and accessibility of the Sound and create jobs for the future. It consists of investments in clean water projects, habitat and land preservation projects, restoration of the oyster and lobster industry, and improving coastal access, including but not limited to wisely planned dredging projects.

Long Island Sound has a strong shipping history, and Connecticut's ports are critical to that regional movement of goods and services. Equally steeped in maritime heritage, is the use of the Sound by commercial and recreational fishermen and boaters; and open, accessible marinas are essential in maintaining that use. While we are not supporting individual dredging projects—that is a case by case analysis and is restricted to those that are required, adhere to sensible planning and environmental regulatory oversight, and dispose of dredge material in a protective manner—we do support general *funding* for dredging. The package below could help keep harbors open while creating 90 private sector jobs.

	(Estimated in millions of dollars)
Norwalk Harbor Phase III, Norwalk	3.5
North Cove Phase II, Old Saybrook	4.1
Patchogue River, Westbrook	2.0
Clinton Harbor, Clinton	
Beach Nourishment for Hammonasset State Park	2.0
Housatonic River Dredging and Hammonasset State Park Beach Nourishment	20.5

Total estimated Connecticut dollars for dredging 32.1

Additional feasibility analyses could include:

(Estimated in millions of dollars)

Connecticut River Sampling and Testing	1.0
Project could be executed a year after sampling and testing	
Long Island Sound Dredge Material Management Plan.	
(\$5.0M needed per year for another 2 years or 2 years for	10.0
Eastern Long Island Sound Environmental Impact Study (EIS)	
Disposal Site Designation USEPA New London Harbor,	5.0
Greens Harbor Inner Breakwater Study	0.1
New London Harbor, Greens Harbor Inner Breakwater Feasibility Phase	
Federal share	0.25
New Haven Harbor, Deep Draft Improvement Study	0.1
New Haven Harbor, Deep Draft Feasibility Phase	
Federal share	0.5
Mystic Harbor, Navigational, Flood Control, Shore Erosion Protection	
and Beneficial use of Dredged Material Study	0.1
Mystic Harbor, Navigational, Flood Control, Shore Erosion Protection	
and Beneficial use of Dredged Material Feasibility Phase.	
Federal share	0.25
Stonington Harbor Inner Breakwater Study	0.1

Total estimated Connecticut dollars for feasibility studies 17.4

As you can see, the demand is high and action is necessary. It is for this reason that Save the Sound requests that the Environment Committee *support*, in broad measure, bonding for local dredging projects.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

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Proposed HB 5473: Preservation of Open Space

CFE supports H.B. 5473, which would provide \$8 Million in funding to be applied toward a conservation purchase of 1,000 acres of forested wetland on Connecticut's coast.

The land that is the subject of this proposed legislation is known locally as "the Preserve," and has been the subject of an intense and ongoing public campaign to save it from a proposed intensive and inappropriate development. The parcel covers approximately 1,000 acres of forested wetlands along the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound. It is one of the largest uninterrupted forest areas remaining on Connecticut's coast and has been identified as a top conservation priority by our Department of Environmental Protection as well as national conservation groups such as the Nature Conservancy.

The Preserve site is exceptionally rich in the resources that the state's Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) was designed to protect—specifically, large, unfragmented forest and wetlands and the wildlife that depend on them. For example, in evaluating the site for open space acquisition purposes, the Department of Environmental Protection assigned it unusually high scores in the wildlife (95/100) and forest categories (82/100). An independent herpetological report prepared by one of the leading experts in the field, states that the large number of pools and the concentration of amphibian species on the property is notable. Several amphibian species that are declining statewide-- including the gray tree frog, the northern dusky salamander and the red-spotted newt-- are thriving on the Preserve site. These amphibians breed in the pools and spend the remainder of the year in the leaf litter surrounding the pools, utilizing as much as 750 feet of upland habitat surrounding the pools.

The site is home to several state-listed plant and animal species. Some of the specifics regarding the natural resource value of this site include the fact that the site houses:

- 43 wetlands, including a highly productive interrelated vernal pool complex;
- At least 4 state-listed plant species, including the Prickly Pear, False Hop Sedge, Field Milkwort, and Yellow-Fringed Orchid;
- 25 species of amphibians and reptiles, including two state listed species: the Box Turtle and the Ribbon Snake;
- 30 species of mammals, including the Eastern Red Bat (state species of special concern); and
- 57 species of avians.

The forest resources on the site have been identified by many interested parties as of regional significance for bird life in our state. These parties include Audubon Connecticut, Bird Conservation Research, Inc., the Eastern Connecticut Environmental Review Team and the Old Saybrook Land Trust. The detrimental impacts of fragmentation, such as introduction of predatory cats, raccoons, cowbirds, starlings and blue jays as well as invasive plant species, are documented in submissions by Audubon Connecticut, the report of the Eastern Connecticut Environmental Review Team and Old Saybrook's Plan of Conservation and Open Space.

The conservation purchase and preservation of valuable open space resources in our state should be a priority. Accordingly CFE *supports* H.B. 5473 to and urges the General Assembly to authorize the requisite state bonds to preserve this 1,000-acre forest in Old Saybrook, Essex and Westbrook as a legacy to future generations.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

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