



Farmington River Watershed Association, Inc.

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Connecticut General Assembly
Environment Committee
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Farmington River Watershed Association, I am testifying in favor of H.B. 5820, An Act Concerning Natural Vegetation Near Wetlands and Watercourses.

The Farmington River Watershed Association is a nonprofit organization that deals daily with the challenge of maintaining water quality in our rivers and streams. Our water quality coordinator and our streamwalk volunteers can verify from personal experience what is already well established in water quality literature: that vegetated streambanks are one of the simplest, least expensive ways to minimize pollution from runoff as well as reduce bank erosion and flood damage.

Because streambank vegetation is such a self-sustaining, cost-effective means of managing streams and maintaining water quality, we support legislation that enhances protection of vegetated streambanks without making the local regulatory process unduly burdensome. The proposed bill meets these criteria in the following ways:

- It presumes, in our opinion correctly, that removing vegetation near wetlands or watercourses impacts water quality, and it requires that vegetation be protected to the maximum extent possible.
- It clarifies the criteria that inland wetland agents should use, when using their discretion to determine a review area.

At the same time,

- It does not create new regulated areas.
- It does not change current exemptions for agriculture and forestry.
- It allows vegetation removal connected with habitat restoration, invasive species control, remediation, and bank restoration.

Thus, it strikes a balance between improved protection and ease of implementation.

It should also be pointed out that precipitation in Connecticut is demonstrably increasing over the long term. This results in higher stream flows and bigger storm events that have destructive effects on streambanks. Lack of vegetation on the banks worsens these effects. Simple adjustments to our regulations that result in better cover on the edges of our wetlands and watercourses are a wise precaution, and are far less expensive than repairing flood damage or restoring destroyed habitat. For all these reasons, we urge your support of this Act.

Respectfully submitted,


Eileen Fielding
Executive Director

