

Testimony of Richard O'Neill
President Mianus Chapter of Trout Unlimited

In Support of **H.B. No. 5820, AN ACT CONSERVING NATURAL VEGETATION
NEAR WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSES**

Submitted to the Environment Committee February 23, 2009

The Mianus Chapter of Trout Unlimited, located in southwestern Fairfield County has almost 500 members. The Chapter strongly supports HB 5820 to protect Connecticut's remaining wetlands and watercourses.

The two major rivers in our Chapter's geographic region, the Norwalk and the Mianus have been heavily damaged by the floods that occurred in the past three years. The severity of these natural weather events is compounded by the loss of wetlands and the increase in impervious surfaces in the watersheds of these two rivers. HB 5820 will be a significant help in reducing the future damage caused by these weather events.

The Mianus River watershed feeds the reservoir which supplies drinking water to the Town of Greenwich. Continued development in the watershed will threaten the quality of the drinking water supply to Greenwich. HB 5820 will help preserve nature's own filtration system and reduce the need to add more and more chemicals to treat the water to keep the drinking water supply at acceptable quality levels.

As guardians of our watercourses in Fairfield County, the members of Trout Unlimited have observed ever increasing erosion caused by business and home owners clear cutting their property right down to the streambanks. In the process, they have removed native species that anchor the streambank and act as filters to reduce sedimentation. HB 5820 will help to prevent the devastating affects of such clear cutting.

In summary, we urge the passing of HB 5820 which is common sense legislation that will reduce the future damage to our already threatened streams and rivers.