



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Testimony Regarding, proposed Senate Bill No. 569, *An Act Concerning Enhancements to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act* and proposed House Bill No. 5820, *An Act Conserving Natural Vegetation Near Wetlands and Watercourses*, Before the Environment Committee, February 23rd, 2009

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, members of the Environment Committee, my name is F. Philip Prelli, Commissioner of Agriculture. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the above referenced bills. Agriculture has a long rooted history in this country and this state. Today, Connecticut's remaining farmers are under increasing economic and environmental pressures making it difficult for them to remain in business. Without some of these land use protections currently afforded in state law, many of these farmers may succumb to building pressures by giving up farming and selling their land for development purposes. **Therefore I would like to ask the Committee, when drafting these bills, to take these existing provisions into consideration and continue to allow the protection the agricultural operations and uses that are permitted in wetlands and watercourses, as of right, and therefore not regulated under Section 22a-40.**

Section 22a-40, often referred to as "as of right" exempts the following activities from permit requirements whether such activities apply to existing operations and uses, or to new operations:

- grazing
- farming (including forestry)
- nurseries
- gardening
- harvesting of crops (including silviculture activities)
- farm ponds of three acres or less essential to the farming operation (such pond essential and indispensable to sustain farming activities)
- clearcutting of trees for the expansion of cropland
- construction of roads provided they are directly related to the farming or forestry operation
- erection of buildings provided they are directly related to the farming or forestry operation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your careful consideration of this matter as the Committee continues its work.