



**CGA Environment Committee  
Public Hearing February 23, 2009**

**Support for:**

**SB 569 AAC Enhancements To The Inland Wetlands And Watercourses Act  
HB 5820 AA Conserving Natural Vegetation Near Wetlands And Watercourses  
Comments submitted by Cheryl Dunson, VP Public Issues**

**The League of Women Voters of Connecticut, a statewide organization with over 2100 members, has a strong position in support of policies and programs that protect our state's drinking water supplies and inland wetlands and watercourses. Based upon this longstanding position, the League urges your support for SB 569 AAC Enhancements To The Inland Wetlands And Watercourses Act HB 5820 AA Conserving Natural Vegetation Near Wetlands And Watercourses.**

SB 569 will aid our local volunteer boards by clarifying that applicants must provide the evidence to prove that their project will protect the functions and features of existing inland wetland resources. It further clarifies that our local volunteer board members can rely on input provided by the state officials, i.e., Department of Public Health and the Department of Environmental Protection, expert environmental review team reviews, local companies in reaching their decision.

HB 5820 recognizes the substantial research findings that natural vegetation surrounding rivers and watercourses is a vital and cost-effective means to preserve water quality and reduce risks of flooding. Through the work of UCONN's NEMO (Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials) project and others, it is well documented that water quality deterioration, flooding, negative impacts to plant, fish and other wildlife can occur any time activities disturb the land or water. Much of the remaining undeveloped land in Connecticut contains more wetlands and steep slopes than was typical in the past when we had more land to choose from. As we continue to develop this marginal land, the margin for error shrinks, and the community bears the cumulative costs of all the major and minor mistakes along the way. The substitute language of the bill does not create new regulated areas, but rather increases the level of scrutiny with an eye toward protecting vegetation to the maximum extent possible.

As noted in the State's Conservation and Development Policies Plan 2005-2010, "current and future sources of drinking water must be continuously protected from intensive development and potentially deleterious land uses." We believe that by incorporating the above recommended changes these legislative proposals will serve to protect and ensure the integrity of environmental assets critical to public health and safety.