



# Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

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For the Committee on the Environment  
Public Hearing, February 23, 2009.

Dear Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

*Rivers Alliance is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship.*

Rivers Alliance is pleased to testify in support of S.B. No. 569 AAC ENHANCEMENTS TO THE INLAND WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSES ACT [IWWA]. This bill went through to the last day of the 2008 legislative session, and numerous environmental groups will be working hard to get it written into law this year. Supporters comprise a very wide coalition of environmental groups (including The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, and Connecticut Fund for the Environment), as well as the DEP, the state Council of Conservation Districts, and CACIWC (CT Association of Inland-Wetlands and Conservation Commissions).

The bill essentially clarifies three aspects of the IWWA that have recently been somewhat clouded in court decisions. The first is that the state is committed to the protection of wetlands (the language comes from the Coastal Wetlands Act). The second is that commissioners have the authority to consider credible testimony, such as letters from water utilities or eye witness accounts. The third is to make explicit the implicit assertion that, in proceedings before wetlands commissions, the burden of proof is on the applicant to show that the proposed project will do no harm to the resource.

Proposed H.B. No. 5461 AN ACT PRESERVING AND PROTECTING INLAND WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSES is a variation on S.B. 569, focusing on requiring commissions to consider all relevant evidence in reaching a decision. We would be happy to work on integrating these two bills:

Proposed H.B. No. 5465 AAC PHOSPHORUS IN DETERGENTS addresses a very important threat to the health of the waters of the state. This is the presence of excess phosphorus fouling state waters.

In freshwater, it is phosphorus that most commonly promotes rapid growth of vegetation, algae blooms, die-offs, and oxygen depletion. (Phosphorus is the "limiting factor" in freshwater, just as nitrogen is the limiting factor in salt water. The chemical explanation for this can be provided in writing on request.) The effects of excess phosphorus can be seen vividly in the thick green scum that coats so many ponds in warm weather.

At this time, the DEP (working with the EPA) is trying to determine criteria for reducing phosphorus in wastewater discharges. Several environmental groups are taking part in the discussion, and arguing for quick action.

Therefore, we especially welcome this legislation limiting phosphorus in detergents. We urge the committee to pass this bill.

Again, thank you for your very hard work in this difficult session.

Sincerely,

Margaret Miner.  
Executive Director