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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

March 2, 2009

TESTIMONY

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.

HB 6467, AAC Smart Growth and Plans of Conservation and Development HB 6589, AAC Land Use Appeals

Dear Senator Coleman, Rep. Sharkey, and Members of the Committee:

First, thank you chairmen and committee members for taking on the much-needed and extraordinarily difficult task of rationalizing the state's haphazard approach to planning, growth, and conservation.

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is particularly concerned with the myriad official and semi-official plans that relate to protecting the quality and quantity of the state's waters.

Last year, we served on an advisory group in the development of a multi-town Drinking Water Quality Management Plan under the sponsorship of the Department of Public Health (DPH) for Groton Utilities. The Groton Utilities watershed is also part of a regional plan for water service areas developed by a statute-based Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC), also led by DPH. Then there are the individual water-supply plans, created as per statute by water suppliers under the authority of DPH, with concurrence from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). At the same time, DEP is drafting a stream-flow regulation, pursuant to PA 05-142, which we certainly support, but which will also affect source waters, as well as all other waters in the watershed. Of course each town in the watershed has its own Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), not very well coordinated with the regional Council of Governments POCD, and the state POCD. The US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation has a regional stakeholder group working on plans for conservation of open-space, including water-buffer lands. DPH has a drinking-water Source Water Assessment Project for the region, which is different from DEP's drinking-

water Aquifer Protection Regulation, although both target source waters. Meanwhile, the Water Planning Council, which includes DEP, DPH, Office of Policy and Management, and Department of Public Utility Control, is also producing reports and plans on matters of water allocation and management.

There is much more, including, of course, the confusing tangle of authorities, laws, contracts, and plans relating to wastewater.

Reform and reorganization are most certainly needed. Again, we thank you for taking the first steps. We believe that a bold approach is essential, including at its center property tax reform.

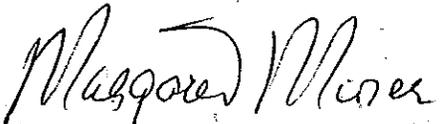
Turning to 6467, we urgently request the following change in the definition of smart growth, Section 1 (NEW) (G): the conservation and protection of air, water, wildlife and other natural resources by preserving open space

In SEC. 3 (a) line 3, we urge this change: "transportation, energy, water and air." Almost all energy development and generation requires significant water, and almost all water service and use requires significant energy.

We support HB 6589, AAC Land Use Appeals, as long as it is not amended with language aimed at limiting existing rights. We believe that, as written, this bill will make the appeals process fairer, faster, and more predictable.

If we can help in any of these matters, we are at your service.

Sincerely,



Margaret Miner,
Executive Director