



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL ON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION**

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**JOINT TESTIMONY
Council on Soil and Water Conservation and
Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts
for Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 17, 2010**

***Opposition to*
Reduction of "Council, Districts and ERT Land Use Assistance" Line Item
FROM \$800,000 TO \$400,000 in Governor's Bill Number 5018**

AA Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2011

The Council on Soil and Water Conservation (Council) and the Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts (Conservation Districts) strongly oppose the section of House Bill 5018, AA Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2011 that cuts in half the funding of the Council on Soil and Water Conservation, the Conservation Districts and ERT.

If funding to these entities is cut, there will be a significant reduction in natural resource technical assistance available for municipalities, the agricultural community and private land owners.

This \$800,000 line item presently funds, among other things, sixteen positions, specifically, seven natural resource positions for assisting communities on a regional and watershed basis. These include five technical natural resource specialists, one in each of the five Conservation Districts, one Coordinator for the Environmental Review Team (ERT) and an Executive Director for the Council on Soil and Water who coordinates the state wide work of the Conservation Districts with state and federal agencies.

Conservation Districts provide timely, value added, unbiased technical and educational services on land use issues to decision makers and land users. Districts make available land use solutions on very small budgets, by working creatively and being fiscally responsible. This is possible because of the long established network of conservation partnerships and scores of committed volunteers working to protect our soil, water and other natural resources at the local level.

We urge you to maintain the \$800,000 line item, for Council, Conservation Districts and ERT Land Use assistance for municipalities, ag producers and private land owners and users. (See pg. 2 for more information).

Contact Suellen Kozey McCuin, Council Executive Director at 860-767-9594, ct.cswc@att.net; Tom ODell, Council Vice President at 860-399-7912, todell@snet.net; or Denise Savageau, CACD President at 203-622-6461, Denise.Savageau@greenwichct.org . **Thank you.**

The Council's mission is to advise and assist the Commissioner of Environmental Protection on local issues concerning conserving and protecting the land, water and other natural resources of the State in order to preserve and enhance quality of life for present and future generations.

Conservation Districts Services provided to Connecticut municipalities, agriculture and private land owners include:

- Comprehensive review of development projects;
- Erosion control and stormwater plan review;
- Workshops on natural resource topics;
- Soils and geographic information, including GIS;
- Pond inspections and trouble-shooting;
- Natural resource surveys and inventories;
- Wetland boundary verification;
- Native landscaping, buffer and streambank restoration assistance;
- Channel restoration and design guidance;
- Soil sampling;
- Funding assistance to municipalities and land owners for special projects; and
- Facilitating connections to other natural resources professionals.

Conservation Districts were created following the soil and water problems resulting from the dust bowl. CT Conservation Districts are part of a 50-years' old, nationwide, 3,000 Conservation District system.