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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Environment Committee
March 8, 2010

Testimony In Favor of

S B 123 AAC Preserving Natural Vegetation near Wetlands and Watercourses
S B 205 AAC Enhancements to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act
H B 5124 AA Limiting the Idling of Motor Vehicles
S B 126 AA Adding Wood Smoke to the Public Health Nuisance Code and
Concerning Outdoor Wood-burning Furnaces

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club Connecticut Chapter. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

I am also a director of Rivers Alliance, and am a director and past president of the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association.

123

Minimizing activities which substantially disturb riverine areas along the banks of streams and rivers has long been a priority of environmental conservation. It has been well established that maintaining a vegetated buffer is an important factor in preserving water quality. This is especially important for watercourses used for public drinking water supply. The streamside vegetation reduces flooding by impeding the flow of stormwater. It maintains stream capacity by minimizing erosion, which would lead to shallower streams through deposition of the eroded bank material downstream.

However, the construction community is opposed to this bill. They insist on the right to build right down to the water's edge. Sierra feels that a 100 foot buffer is a reasonable compromise, especially as this area is likely to be floodplain anyway. For subdivisions, the problem is solved by building cluster subdivisions, with houses clustered away from the stream, and the collective open space inherent in the design situated in the area towards the stream. This bill will have a minimal impact on the land available in the state for construction.

While farming activities at the water's edge have the potential for significant environmental harm, Sierra believes that farming in the state is so important that an exemption is appropriate.

Passing this critical legislation is a priority for the environmental community.

205

This bill primarily states openly that it is the policy of the state to protect inland wetlands. This simply explicitly recognizes state policy which has been in effect for several decades. It is a parallel statement to that which addresses tidal wetlands. We see no cogent reason for the legislature to refuse to make such a statement of environmental importance.

The bill also provides that an Inland Wetlands Commission should consider all evidence before it, including that from agencies and water companies.

Sierra feels that 205 is a reasonable and appropriate step in our efforts to protect inland wetlands from further harm, degradation, and loss.

5124

HB 5124 recognizes that idling a motor vehicle has environmental consequences for air quality, and should be avoided except in specific circumstances, such as winter temperatures. It exempts idling on private property, and provides for only a minimal fine.

126

Smoke from outdoor wood-burning furnaces contains a host of toxic chemicals. It certainly can make life unpleasant for downwind victims. It is inconceivable that state law provides no remedy for those affected by furnaces in neighboring properties. At a minimum, the smoke from these installations should be considered an actionable nuisance.