Audubon CONNECTICUT

185 East Flat Hill Road
Southbury, CT 06488
Tel: 203-264-5098
Fax: 203-264-6332
www.audubon.org

TESTIMONY OF
SANDY BRESLIN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
AUDUBON *CONNECTICUT*

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
February 22, 2010

IN SUPPORT of the following proposed legislation:

S.B. 124 AAC Long Island Sound and Coastal Permitting.
S.B. 5128 AAC Environmental Conservation Licensing.
S.B. 5117 AAC Conservation and Preservation Restrictions Held by the State.
S.B. 121 AAC the Extentsion of General Permits Issued by the Department of Environmental Protection.

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and members of the Environment Committee, my name is Sandy Breslin and I am the director of governmental affairs for Audubon Connecticut, the state organization of the National Audubon Society. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today ***IN SUPPORT*** of S.B. 124, 5128, 51117 and 121 that seek to improve the permitting processes of the State of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection, and ensure the permanent protection of prime farmland owned by the State without resorting to costly litigation.

S.B. 124 AAC Long Island Sound and Coastal Permitting aims to update the coastal permitting practices of DEP by requiring that permits issued by the Office of Long Island Sound (OLISP) be recorded on local land records, restores the estuarine embayment improvement program, adopts the federal definitions of sewage, simplifies the description of the "No Discharge" zone in the Sound, authorizes higher fees for issuing after-the-fact permits for construction of coastal structures, authorizes electronic distribution of coastal permit notices and makes other changes to out-of-date sections of this statute. Audubon ***strongly supports*** these proposed changes and encourages the Environment Committee to vote favorably on this legislation.

S.B. 5128 AAC Environmental Conservation Licensing clarifies State compliance with the federal Pittman-Robertston Wildlife and Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration Acts, ensuring continued receipt of monies from these programs, which are a major source of funding for DEP wildlife programs statewide. The legislation will allow the Commissioner to adjust the fee for the Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp that provides significant funding for wetlands restoration and conservation. In addition, the legislation would authorize the Commissioner of DEP to promote electronic license and fee transactions. Audubon Connecticut ***strongly supports*** this legislation.

S.B. 5117 AAC Conservation and Preservation Restrictions Held by the State seeks to coordinate local and state land use actions, and ensure conservation of prime agricultural farmland that is subject to a conservation restriction held by the State of Connecticut. The proposed legislation would require a local land-use applicant to notify the State when an activity is proposed on farmland subject to a conservation restriction. The legislation also provides a 30-day appeal period for the agency to act when a local permit had been granted incorrectly and allows state agencies to impose a civil penalty for any activities that violate the terms of the conservation restriction, without judicial action. This legislation will help to keep prime agricultural land protected by the State from being developed inappropriately, without resorting to costly litigation. Audubon ***urges*** the Environment Committee ***to support*** this proposed legislation.

S.B. 121 AAC the Extension of General Permits Issued by the Department of Environmental Protection will allow for a seamless transition during the time when a General Permit is being renewed. General Permits, which cover an entire class of activities, help to expedite the review of minimal impact projects. Currently, under Connecticut law, the General Permits lapse before they can be renewed. S.B. 121 would allow these permits to remain in effect as long as the renewal process was underway, similar to the process utilized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and would hold permit fees at the existing level. Audubon Connecticut ***strongly encourages*** the Environment Committee ***to support*** this common-sense legislation.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak about these matters today.

Audubon Connecticut, the state organization of the National Audubon Society with more than 10,000 members statewide, works to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats through education, science and conservation, and legislative advocacy for the benefit of people and the earth's biological diversity. Through our network of nature education centers, protected wildlife sanctuaries, and local, volunteer Chapters, we seek to connect people with nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.