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Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Program Director  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee

Monday, March 8, 2010

Written testimony **supporting** Senate Bill 123, An Act Concerning Preserving Natural  
Vegetation Near Wetlands And Watercourses

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony supporting Senate Bill 123. Environment Connecticut is a member-supported non-profit environmental advocacy organization. This bill is a common-sense measure to help ensure that the water in Connecticut's rivers and streams is clean and healthy.

Protecting the vegetative buffer zones near waterways is necessary in order to ensure that such waterways remain as pollution-free as possible. The vegetation near wetlands and waterways prevents erosion, filters out dangerous pollution and helps reduce flooding. In so doing, vegetative buffer zones are a key element in ensuring clean water for all communities in Connecticut. - By creating a 100 foot buffer zone around wetlands and watercourses, this legislation would preserve this vital natural vegetative protection zone.

Similar legislation has been before this legislature in recent years and failed to be passed into law. Environment Connecticut urges the legislature to pass SB 123 this year in order to enhance Connecticut's clean water protections. To that end, we would support amended language simplifying the bill as follows:

- Directing inland wetland agencies to preserve vegetative buffers on unimproved property within 100 feet of wetlands and watercourses.
- Give inland wetland agencies discretion in addressing such buffers on improved property.
- Maintain exemptions for forestry and agriculture.

On behalf of Environment Connecticut's statewide membership, I urge the committee to pass SB 123 to protect our state's waters.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps  
Program Director  
Environment Connecticut