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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Environment Committee
March 12, 2010

Testimony In Favor of
SB 383 AAC A State-wide Water Use Plan
SB 385 an Act Creating Incentives for the Development of Solar Energy and
Other Renewable Energy Resources
SB 386 AAC the Adoption of Regulations Relating to Water Use, Planning and Protection
HB 5417 AAC Open Space and the Creation of Trails for All-terrain Vehicles
HB 5419 AAC Farms, Food and Jobs
HB 5420 AAC the Transition from the Ten Mil Program in 2011

In Favor of, But with Changes
HB 5418 AAC Integrated Pest Management Plans for Municipal Facilities

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

383

This bill calls for statewide water planning. The advocates have been asking for this for decades. However, we are concerned that the agencies do not have the staff resources to compile such a plan without recourse to resources outside the government. In fact, the expertise of organizations and educational institutions would be necessary to successfully complete this task.

In 2005, the legislature instructed DEP to promulgate streamflow regulations. The draft regulations were issued last fall. Many stakeholders participated on several committees which helped to draft the regulations. A public hearing was held, and almost 400 people and organizations submitted written testimony. DEP will now revise the draft according to the public comment. That process, now five years in the making, must be allowed to run to completion. These regulations are vital to the health of our river systems, and to management of our water supply. Comprehensive statewide planning should be the next step in this process. This planning will address issues not resolvable thru the legislation which created the streamflow regulations.

However, I stress that SB 383 must **not** become a vehicle for dismantling the regulatory drafting process for streamflow regulations already underway.

385

Raises the minimums for energy suppliers for the component of their energy derived from Class I or II renewable energy sources. This is a laudable goal, which Sierra fully supports.

386

This bill provides that DEP, DPH, and the DPUC shall each be given 45 days to respond to draft regulations of the other two agencies, if they relate to water. The Water Planning Council must also have an opportunity to respond. Sierra feels this bill is unnecessary, as the agencies can easily respond during the comment period, but has no objections to the principle otherwise.

5417, Section 2

Section 2 of this bill calls for enabling legislation which will allow towns to establish a conveyance fee on buyers of real estate. Income would be used to fund open space and other environmental priorities. This tax would constitute a new source of municipal revenue, so would be in line with the goals of the Speaker's MORE program. I sit on the Municipal Revenue Subcommittee. This concept is on the list of long term proposals the subcommittee has prepared.

This fee, known as the Community Green Fund, has worked very successfully in other states in raising revenue for open space. It is an appropriate fee, as buyers of real estate will be the beneficiaries of the use of funds.

This has been a Sierra priority for several years. Sierra strongly recommends passage.

5419

Section 1 of 5419 establishes a farms job training program which would be eligible for grant funding. Promotion of state agriculture is a legislative priority for Sierra. This bill will help provide the workforce for farming in the state. It has the additional advantage of creating jobs, a top priority for this legislative session. Section 2 provides very modest bond funding to support this program and the community farms program.. This bill is part of the Green Jobs proposal submitted by the entire environmental advocacy community. It is a critically important bill.

5420

5420 would ensure that the thousands of acres of forest land preserved by the Ten Mill Program will continue to be preserved as forestland by conversion to PA 490 land. This protection is necessary not only for the value of forestland as habitat and open (undeveloped) land, but for the important services forests provide as water quality filters. Loss of forestland will certainly lead to higher water filtration costs.

5418

Sierra is very concerned that the vague language of this bill could be interpreted to hold that previous passed prohibitions on pesticide applications on school grounds would be replaced by authorization to use IPM. The previous legislation has become an important tool in making school environments safe and toxic free for students. It is extremely important to continue the bans. 5418 must be amended so that it is clear it does not override any previous legislation.

This bill is therefore acceptable if, and only if, two changes are made. Section 2(a) must have the additional language "except as provided in Section 10-231b, and Section 19a-79a."

The language of Section 2(b) implies that IPM is optional if bidding procedures are revised. This must be fixed by changing "may" to "shall".