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**Testimony of David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations
Before the Appropriations Committee – February 24th, 2011**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I would like to express our appreciation to this committee for the support you have given in recent years to the Department of Environmental Protection, and urge you to maintain the staffing levels recommended in Governor Malloy's proposed biennial budget for the agency.

Three years ago, this committee recognized that the DEP had been disproportionately harmed by staff reductions over the previous two decades, and proposed an additional fifty positions for the agency. When a new budget was not adopted for the next current fiscal year, those new positions were obviously lost. Since then, we have been in a far more difficult budget climate and adding new staff would be very difficult. This committee clearly singled this agency out at that time, however, as one where further cuts would create severe hardships for our municipalities, our business community, and our environment.

Governor Malloy's proposed budget proposes a net increase in staff positions, beyond what would be entailed with the merger of the Department of Utility Control into the DEP. We hope that this committee will approve of these proposals.

It should be noted that even back in 1990, the DEP was already understaffed to meet its responsibilities. The Thomas Commission (*The Commission to Study the Management of State Government, chaired by DeRoy Thomas – President of ITT*) found that of thirteen state agencies it studied in 1990, the DEP was unique to the extent it was "under-resourced". This commission, by the way, was not an advocate of big spending; in looking at other agencies, the commission identified over \$500 million in annual savings it maintained the state could achieve.

Since then, as we have come to better understand the role that a healthy, clean environment plays in the health of our communities, the DEP has been given many new responsibilities, some of them by the federal government. **Yet the agency has fewer staff now than it did in 1990 !!** For a period in the mid-90's, an increase in federally-funded positions (*from 218 in 1988 to 298 in 1994*) helped the agency from falling egregiously behind in its duties. Since then, however, federally-funded positions have decreased back to 1988 levels.

Thanks to this committee for what you have tried to do for the DEP the past few years. Please do whatever you can to avoid any more staff reductions.