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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair*

Appropriations Committee  
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Testimony On the DEP Budget

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

The Governor's budget proposes merging the Council on Environmental Quality into the DEP. Sierra finds this unacceptable.

The CEQ has existed in parallel with the DEP since its inception. It has provided invaluable commentary and observation on the DEP, other agencies, and the state's environment. CEQ has been able to do this due to a consistently strong board of commissioners and the extraordinary skill and devotion of Karl Wagener. It has been enabled to be so successful because of its independence, at a current cost of less than \$200,000.

Sierra is well aware of the Governor's efforts to reduce the number of agencies. This budget would eliminate the CEQ, thus furthering that goal. However, we advise that this would be harmful public policy. The CEQ requires its independence to fulfill its watchdog role. Eliminating the CEQ staff, replacing it with resources provided to the CEQ board by the DEP at its discretion, would significantly compromise its independence. Given the efforts of the agency to struggle with tasks far beyond its level of resources, and given the very low staffing level of the agency, CEQs independence becomes even more important. The Connecticut DEP has traditionally been one of the lowest funded environment agencies in the country. This budget does nothing to provide increased staffing levels, so the new DEEP, with its new energy portfolio, will continue to struggle with resources falling far short of its obligations.

Sierra is elated at the appointment of Dan Esty as the new Commissioner of DEEP. We feel he is exactly the right candidate for the job. However, our support and respect for him does in no way diminish the need for an independent CEQ.

The Sierra Club recommends most strongly that CEQ staff be retained, and that CEQ be housed at DEP for administrative purposes only.