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FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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Empowering Communities. Advocating Solutions.

SB No. 1019
An Act Expediting the State Permitting Process

And

SB No. 1020
**An Act Concerning Water Resources
and Economic Development**

Comments by Citizens Campaign for the Environment
February 24, 2011

Sen. LeBeau, Rep. Berger, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Louis Burch, I am the program coordinator for Citizens Campaign for the Environment. CCE is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to empower communities and advocate solutions to protect public health and the environment.

On behalf of our members in Connecticut, CCE strongly urges the committee to dismiss Senate Bills 1019 and 1020. Both of these bills are bad for Connecticut's future, environment, and public health. CCE is amazed that in 2011 Connecticut is faced with reliving the industrial age where polluters freely spewed toxic waste into our environment and used our rivers as open sewers. It was not so long ago that our country realized that permitting polluters and conserving our water was important because our rivers burned, our streams shone with rainbow-coloured oil slicks, and our skies were filled with pollutants that sickened children. Environmental protections and review are not luxuries that the people of Connecticut can do without. The people of Connecticut expect their legislators to protect them, their air, and their water.

CCE is opposed to raised bill no. 1019 *An Act Expediting the State Permitting Process*. Raised bill no. 1019 is the *Polluter's Permit bill* and would curtail the CT DEP's ability to fulfill its mission while jeopardizing Connecticut's public health and environment.

CT Department of Environmental Protection is responsible for evaluating all permit applications and identifying problems and potential health hazards that may arise from various development proposals. DEP is already working to meet the expectations of an expedited review process adopted last year. The law now requires the DEP to review all new permit applications within 60 days, and to render a decision within 6 months of the application date.

Raised Bill No. 1019 would further reduce the time allocated for review to 45 days. If the DEP has not reviewed the permit within 45 days then it is automatically approved.

It is well known that the DEP is understaffed. It is only logical that this bill, if adopted, would lead to rubber stamping projects without careful consideration of their environmental impact, jeopardizing environmental quality and public health. A furthermore, increased hazards to public safety and environmental quality will only add to inefficiency, by putting the burden back on the state to deal with the environmental and public health repercussions of poorly planned development. A vote for the Polluter's Permit bill is a vote to degrade the air we breathe, the water we drink and destroy the values held by the people of Connecticut. ***CCE strongly urges you to recycle the paper that the Polluter's Permit bill was drafted on.***

CCE is opposed to Raised bill no. 1020 *An Act Concerning Water Resources and Economic Development*

Raised bill no 1020 would *Drain Streams Dry* by effectively undoing five years worth of work done by the DEP, Water Planning Council, and Regulations Review Committee to protect stream flows in CT, and start the process over. The *Drain Streams Dry* bill directs DEP to reclassify all stream systems and waterways in Connecticut and devise a new set of standards, which would undoubtedly take years to complete. This work has already been done, as mentioned earlier, the DEP is understaffed and should not be burdened by re-doing work already done.

Worse yet, the Drain Streams Dry bill gives the DECD, DPUC and the Department of Agriculture equal veto powers over all stream flow regulations. This provision will undoubtedly allow for loopholes, relieving would-be diverters from any accountability and rendering stream flow regulations unenforceable.

Furthermore, the Drain Streams Dry bill ignores costs related to providing the public with clean drinking water. Utilities would be able to raise rates if new standards become enacted, and the DEP would not be able to institute regulations if they are viewed as "inhibiting economic development." This will lead to reduced stream flow across the state, which will be problematic for all of us. Inhibited flow rates will lead to higher surface temperatures and higher concentrations of algae and contaminants, which adds to the costs water providers sustain to keep drinking water clean.

Water is often touted as the "blue gold". CT's water resources should be the highest priority for conservation to ensure clean water to drink, adequate stream flow for fish, and available water for agriculture, industrial, and other demands for current and future generations. CCE strongly urges the committee to dismiss this bill.

In conclusion, Citizens Campaign for the Environment respectfully urges this committee to dismiss these short-sighted proposals. Thank you.