Testimony
Paul Formica
First Selectman
Town of East Lyme
February 24, 2011

Re: SB-1020, An Act Concerning Water Resources and Economic Development – Support

The Town of East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission is responsible for providing water service to approximately 15,000 people. Its customer base includes residential, state and municipal government, commercial and industrial properties. State facilities served by the East Lyme water system include two prisons operated by the Department of Correction, Camp Rell, Stones Ranch and Rocky Neck State Park.

East Lyme's supply consists of seven wells located in the Pattaganasett River and Bride Brook aquifers. Four of the wells are registered with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and have been operating for over thirty years. The remaining three wells operate under water diversion permits issued by the DEP.

The average day demand of the water system is approximately 2.1 million gallons per day (mgd). Because East Lyme is a shoreline community with a population that grows fi'om approximately 18,000 to 30,000 people during the summer, it experiences a peak demand of approximately 3.5 mgd.

Already due to water diversion permit conditions, East Lyme is required to shut down two wells and limit the pumping on a third well when stream flows in the Pattagansett River and Bride Brook reach "low-flow" triggers. These conditions usually occur during the summer time when demand is the highest. The shutdown of these wells results in a loss of over 900,000 gallons per day and causes a water supply deficit.

East Lyme, however, is finding ways to manage its water supply and reduce its peak summertime demands. In the past two years East Lyme has instituted mandatory water conservation during the summer, has conducted a system-wide leak detection survey and is embarking on a wide spread meter replacement program. In addition, replacement wells are being constructed to make up for lost capacity and other infrastructure improvements are being made to increase operational efficiency and reliability. East Lyme has committed over $6 million dollars toward these initiatives.

While these efforts are beneficial, they will not be enough to meet our current, let alone future water supply demands. With that, East Lyme is also embarking on a regional interconnection project with the City of New London to increase supply. This project will allow the transfer of water in both directions depending on need and will promote the prudent management of water resources on a regional level. This project is estimated to cost $10 million dollars.

Depending on how the stream flow regulations are revised, our water supplies could be severely impacted. Although Public Act 05-142 called for a balance between protecting the state's aquatic life and providing for public health and safety, economic development and agriculture, we have had to push hard for changes to move towards this balance. Unfortunately, we are still not there yet. With all of the money that East Lyme is spending to improve its water system, it will be very frustrating if we have to make infrastructure changes to accommodate various release requirements that could then be subject to change under the petition process in the proposed regulations.

These regulations could very well limit East Lyme's ability to provide adequate water supply to its customers for public health and safety, and will erode its opportunity to sustain the economic viability of the town.

We recognize that DEP has made several positive changes to the stream flow regulations. We are optimistic that we will be able to resolve outstanding concerns. However, given that DEP has indicated that it intends to come back and pursue regulation of groundwater withdrawals under the stream flow enabling act, we are very concerned how this will impact our water supplies if protections are not built into the existing law.

SB-1020 helps address many of these concerns and we urge your support.