



Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

TESTIMONY
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
March 14, 2011

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To Chairmen Ed Meyer, Richard Roy, and Members of the Committee:

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship. Our 500 members include almost all of the state's river and watershed conservation groups, representing many thousand Connecticut residents.

RE Bill No. 6386 AA Establishing the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Rivers Alliance supports the creation of a Department of Energy (for which we have long advocated), and we support linking it to the Department of Environmental Protection, as has been done in Massachusetts. Note, however, that Massachusetts generally has a stronger structure for statewide administration of environmental policy. Connecticut has no county or regional government and erratic connections between state and municipal policies and practices. State-level environmental administration has been underfunded for years and, in some areas, is fragmented among several agencies. With the urgent need to attend to energy policy and green jobs, there is a danger that traditional environmental protections will be lost in the mix. In particular, water and wildlife may not get much attention. And these are resources highly valued by the public.

In these circumstances, we absolutely cannot afford to lose the Council of Environmental Quality, which is probably the single most cost-effective unit of government. It provides a connection between the environmental concerns of ordinary citizens and state agencies; it resolves inter-agency problems; it tracks progress on the state's adopted environmental goals; it produces studies and legislative recommendation related to persistent problems; it oversees the process of environmental assessments of state-funded projects. Even if it were possible to set up a semi-independent council of some sort within DEP, the resources are simply not there. Who at DEP has the time or will to deal with this range of environmental and bureaucratic issues. It would obviously be a dead-end assignment. No one would benefit from doing the work. Therefore the work would not get done.

Margaret Miner, Executive Director

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