



**Testimony  
Bart Russell, Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Environment Committee  
March 7, 2011**

**Re: OPPOSE – HB-6505, An Act Stream Flow Regulations**

**The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) urges rejection of HB-6505**, which significantly expands an unfunded mandate on the state's smaller towns and cities and fails to address fundamental concerns regarding the potential impact of proposed stream flow regulations on our communities.

Although COST is committed to supporting efforts to protect our rivers and streams, we are concerned that the regulations, as currently drafted, do not provide the appropriate balance needed to ensure sufficient water supplies to meet the needs of Connecticut's citizens. HB-6505 would throw the regulations further out of balance because it fails to include any safeguards to ensure that the public water supply needs of our communities are protected.

Compliance with HB-6505 as well as the draft stream flow regulations will impose significant costs on our towns and cities, particularly those who maintain municipal water departments. Rates increases, which are inevitable under the proposed regulations, will have severe financial implications for municipalities across the board. But even more troubling, local economies and revenue bases in communities faced with moratoriums on new service connections will stagnate, leading to further economic decline and job loss.

In addition, towns and cities served by municipal water departments will be required to shoulder the cost – in many cases millions of dollars – for upgrades to their dams and other infrastructure in order to make the releases required under the proposed regulations. Limiting groundwater withdrawals in addition to mandating surface water releases will give towns no choice but to look at developing new wells or reservoirs which will cost millions of dollars. Although the brunt of these costs will be reflected in water rates, some costs will be passed on to towns and cities and their taxpayers.

At a time when most towns and cities don't have sufficient own-source revenues and/or state aid to pay for essential public services and fill the proverbial "potholes" in the roads, unfunded mandates like the proposed stream flow regulations cannot be justified. Towns have already had to cut programs and reduce staff and mandates like this one will simply make an extremely bad financial situation untenable.

We are also concerned about the impact of HB-6505 on many of our communities where farming is a vital part of the economy as well as the landscape. Our towns have supported agricultural activities and farmland preservation which are a big part of preserving the small town charm that many residents and visitors treasure. Applying stream flow regulations to groundwater withdrawals without specifically exempting agriculture will impose a severe hardship on these farming communities. **We therefore urge rejection of HB-6505.**