

**TESTIMONY
THOMAS WEST
SOUTHINGTON WATER DEPARTMENT
BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MARCH 7, 2011**

The Southington Water Department **strongly opposes HB-6505, An Act Concerning Stream Flow Regulations**. Passage of this bill will place the Town of Southington in a severe water supply deficit and jeopardize our ability to provide sufficient water supplies to protect the public health and safety of our residents.

Although the proposed stream flow regulations are in the process of negotiation, one version of the regulations which included groundwater withdrawals would have left us with insufficient supplies to serve even our existing customers, let alone supply new service connections in a town struggling to pull out of very trying economic times. Our very survival as a water supplier hangs in the balance.

Without building in protections to the bill to protect a system's safe yield, under HB-6505, the Town of Southington will go from having an excess of supply to a deficit the very day the regulations go into effect. Our system is heavily dependent on groundwater supplies.

Under the first set of stream flow regulations proposed by DEP and subsequently rejected by the legislature's Regulations Review Committee, DEP proposed strict limits on groundwater withdrawals. These limits would have reduced available supply to the extent that we could not serve existing customers or ever consider allowing any new service connections. As a result, the Town of Southington would have faced a moratorium on development, construction and renovations. Coming on the heels of what has been a very difficult economic recovery, this would impose a heavy financial burden on our town.

The Southington Water Department operates its system in a responsible manner, complying with state and federal laws and regulations to fulfill its obligation to provide a safe, potable supply of quality water to residents and businesses. The water supply issues in our town have resulted from a variety of contamination issues. In the late 70s, we lost over half of our water supply due to two superfund sites and a dry cleaning establishment contaminating 4 of our 6 wells. We were able to install treatment on one of those supplies, but the other 3 are still not in service today. We worked diligently to replace these supplies, leasing one well from a neighboring utility, and installing two new wells in the early 80s, and then finally installing our largest well in the north end of town. We made a conscious decision at the time to locate these sources in areas of limited development. Because of this, they are in areas that will be most effected by the stream flow regulations (the upper reaches of streams that feed into the Quinnipiac River).

In addition to its public service obligations, as a water supplier, we are committed to being stewards of the environment and water resources. It is in the best interest of water companies and their consumers for there to be an ample supply of clean water. The Southington Water Department is one of the largest land owners in Wolcott, where the majority of our watershed lies for our reservoir system. We own over 85% of our watershed. We monitor its health and manage its resources because this means that we have a cleaner, safer source of drinking water from the start.

We certainly support the goal of the proposed stream flow regulations. However, **HB-6505 will undermine our ability to negotiate regulations that are balanced and protect a system's safe yield while providing more water for the rivers and streams. We therefore urge rejection of this bill.**