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The Voice of the Connecticut Forest Products Industry

February 8, 2011

Testimony in opposition to:

R.B. 832 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF INLAND WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSES

Submitted by: Joan Nichols – President CT Professional Timber Producers Association, Inc.

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and members of the Environment Committee:

The Connecticut Professional Timber Producers Association has grave concerns over R.B. 832.

Our primary concern is the irregularity with which municipal inland wetlands commissions currently implement the permitted use of right provision provided under CGS 22a-40. While forestry is considered an agricultural activity, there are certain components of a timber harvest that are often considered regulated activities by municipal inland wetlands commissions. The installation of temporary bridges for stream crossings and the installation of corduroy are just two examples. While these measures are utilized to protect the integrity of stream and wetlands crossings and are temporary in nature, they are regulated by many wetlands commissions.

While these activities would be regulated under current legislation, R.B. 832 would provide the statutory authority to allow wetlands commissions to actually prohibit such activities. A more compelling argument for opposing this bill is the severe lack of training of municipal wetlands commissions. While the CT DEP does a commendable job of providing many levels of training, there is no statutory requirement for mandatory training of all wetland commission members and no penalty for lack of compliance. This is further aggravated by the fact that since 1996 any individual engaged in a commercial forest practice as defined by the Connecticut Forest Practices Act must be certified by the state of Connecticut. In addition, there are statutory requirements for mandatory continuing education credits to maintain Certification. This is an unfunded mandate that costs the Connecticut forest products industry thousands of dollars every year.

Good forest management work, wildlife habitat improvement and the ability of Connecticut landowners to manage their woodlots may be compromised by this bill. It is the unintended consequences of an overzealous and undertrained wetlands commissions that seeks to overreach its legislative authority that is cause for concern over this bill. Good forestry, is good for the environment. Overregulation is bad for forestry.

According to a 2010 UCONN study, sales of Connecticut forest products contributed \$131.5 million dollars in 2007 to the states economy.