



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Public Hearing – January 31, 2011
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Amey W. Marrella
Department of Environmental Protection

**Committee House Bill No. 5068 – AN ACT CREATING A REBUTTABLE
PRESUMPTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF AN INLAND WETLANDS PERMIT
FOR A DRY HYDRANT**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Committee House Bill No. 5068 - AN ACT CREATING A REBUTTABLE PRESUMPTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF AN INLAND WETLANDS PERMIT FOR A DRY HYDRANT. The Department of Environmental Protection (Department) offers the following testimony.

We certainly understand and appreciate a municipality's need for dry hydrants in wetlands and watercourses for the purpose of fire control, particularly for rural fire departments. A dry hydrant is a non-pressurized pipe system permanently installed in existing lakes, ponds and streams that provides a supply of water typically to a fire department tank truck. In rural areas, a lack of water mains and pressurized fire hydrants can sometimes impair a fire department's ability to do its job quickly and efficiently. The success of a fire departments operation hinges on the distance a truck must travel to fill-up and return to the fire. In many cases these fill-up points are often long distances from the fire and the firefighters are unable to maintain an uninterrupted water source at the scene. The installation of a non-pressurized pipe system into local water sources provides a ready means of supplying water to fire engines.

Currently a municipal inland wetlands agency has the authority pursuant to the Connecticut Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act (Sections 22a-36 through 22a-45) to regulate the installation of dry hydrants. The proposed language facilitates the installation of dry hydrants provided there are no other feasible and prudent alternatives that will have a less adverse impact on wetlands and watercourses.

The Department agrees with the overall concept of the bill and believes that public safety will be well served, but is concerned with the proposed language. The proposed language does not specifically state that the installation of the dry hydrant and subsequent withdrawal of water is for the purpose of fire control. While dry hydrants are typically used for fire control, it is conceivable that a town can install such dry hydrant and use the water for other purposes (i.e. irrigation of town ball fields). Further, often private contractors (i.e. landscapers) will access

such hydrants for water. This may negatively affect the wetland or watercourse by drawing down the water level.

The Department believes the proposed language needs to be clarified to ensure the installation and use of such dry hydrants is for fire purposes only. The Department would be happy to work with the Environment Committee and proponents of the bill to develop language that would ensure the protection of wetlands and watercourses while permitting the use of such resources for the purpose of fire control.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact the Department's legislative liaison, Robert LaFrance, at 424-3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov.