



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – February 22, 2012
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Daniel Esty
Presented By Macky McCleary, Deputy Commissioner

Raised Senate Bill No. 88 - An Act Concerning the Public's Right to Know of a Sewage Spill

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Raised Senate Bill No. 88 - An Act Concerning the Public's Right to Know of a Sewage Spill. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP agrees that good and accurate information about the actual environmental and health impacts from sewage spills should be known to the public. The bill covers much of what DEEP already does with respect to reporting of sewage spills, and would "formalize" those procedures.

DEEP currently has sewage spill notification requirements included in our state wastewater discharge regulations, federal Clean Water Act requirements, and in all wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) permits. Operators of WWTPs must report all spills, follow reporting protocols, and submit forms and information about the nature and extent. DEEP has a sewage spill coordinator during regular work hours and our DEEP emergency response center handles after hour reporting. Operators of WWTPs also report all information to other local and state environmental and health entities.

The bill, as currently proposed, would require additional DEEP staff resources to implement, including website development, staffing during the weekends to post information within 24 hours, and drafting an annual report. The Department believes that the reporting of sewage spill information could be incorporated into its ongoing Information Technology transformation initiative, and development of new Geographical Information System tools. DEEP also suggests that some measure of the risk to human health and the environment should be incorporated into the disclosure of information on any "violation or exceedance," to help the public better understand the differences between very minor violations of permit limits and major releases.

In closing, DEEP is willing to meet with the sponsors of the bill and discuss the existing reporting requirements, the appropriate presentation of this information to the public, and the technology infrastructure necessary to implement the reporting requirements proposed by this bill.

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