



Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc.

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TESTIMONY TO THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING Friday, March 16, 2012

The Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc (CACIWC) is pleased to submit testimony on the following three bills:

- **S.B. No. 347 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S OPEN SPACE PLAN,**
- **S.B. No. 349 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING FOR INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY MEMBERS AND AGENTS, &**
- **H.B. No. 5413 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING INVASIVE PLANTS.**

CACIWC appreciates the Committee's decision to hold a public hearing on these bills and offers the following comments to assist the committee in their deliberations:

S.B. No. 347 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S OPEN SPACE PLAN.

CACIWC has a long-standing policy of supporting efforts to preserve forests, fields, farmland and other open space land for conservation purposes. These include efforts to support authorization of sufficient funds to preserve open space, along with a commitment to maintain the state capital budget for open space preservation while pursuing legislative initiatives to help achieve statewide open space preservation goals. CACIWC supports SB 347 as it will require more frequent updates to the comprehensive strategy for achieving state open space goals, include consultations with municipalities in these updates, and set the highest priorities for land acquisition to wildlife habitat and ecological resources identified with the greatest need of immediate preservation.

CACIWC also supports efforts to identify land in custody of state agencies that is valuable for conservation purposes. In particular, CACIWC is strongly in favor of the SB 347 requirement to establish a statewide estimate or registry of lands preserved by the state, municipalities, water companies and non-profit land conservation organizations. Many of our member conservation commissions will be pleased to contribute to such a registry, as well as to support continued statewide efforts to improve planning for protection of land.

S.B. No. 349 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING FOR INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY MEMBERS AND AGENTS.

A number of major goals for CACIWC are associated with the enhancement of educational and training opportunities for our member commissions. Opportunities that provide updated information for existing wetlands commissioners and staff as well as training for new

commissioners and staff are of particular importance to our organization. In addition to providing our own workshops, CACIWC has worked closely with the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to increase support for training. During, 2010 and 2011, the CACIWC Board of Directors participated in CEQ efforts to seek input from both the environmental and regulated communities on the subject of wetlands training. CACIWC was encouraged to see that many important concepts were included in the recent CEQ recommendations and in SB 349. The CACIWC board supports the recommendations for these initiatives including:

- A requirement for new members to complete “basic training” – a new class of training that would be designated by the DEEP – if members have the choice of completing training on-line or in the classroom,
- A requirement for locally-designated agents who have enhanced authorities (usually town staff) to complete the annual training update,
- More funding support and use of payment mechanisms such as vouchers to allow additional municipal officials and commissioners to attend training or complete on-line or classroom training for free, and;
- Annual tracking and reporting by DEEP of municipalities’ training status, including basic and comprehensive training and the commission’s fulfillment of their current obligation to review training materials at a local meeting once a year.

The CACIWC Board of Directors will be happy to assist the Committee on the development of municipal wetlands training legislative options including facilitating communication with our member inland wetlands commissions and staff.

H.B. No. 5413 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING INVASIVE PLANTS.

A major focus of CACIWC’s education and outreach efforts has been promoting the identification and control of invasive plants by municipal conservation commissions and their agents and partners. Additional efforts to control invasive plant species are needed to reverse their continued adverse impact on native plant species and Connecticut’s natural biodiversity. CACIWC strongly supports HB 5413 as it will provide funding for an invasive plants coordinator to assist the Invasive Plants Council and their partners in essential statewide planning, education, detection, and control efforts.

CACIWC is a non-profit organization working to protect Connecticut’s wetlands, watercourses, and other natural resources through support and education of the 2000+ volunteers and staff that carry out the responsibilities of Connecticut’s Conservation Commissions and Inland Wetlands Commissions. CACIWC, representing over 200 member commissions, works with municipalities and environmental groups to promote public support for the judicious management and conservation of Connecticut’s natural resources. For additional information contact Alan J. Siniscalchi, President at board@caciwc.org or visit www.caciwc.org.