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The Voice of the Connecticut Forest Products Industry

March 16, 2012

Testimony in support of:

S.B.349: AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING FOR INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY MEMBERS AND AGENTS

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 strongly urges your support of S.B. 349. The Inland Wetlands and Watercoursed Act (IWWCA) gives local Inland and Wetland Commissions authority to implement the act. There is no educational or professional certifications required for a member of the general public to sit on a wetlands commission. While these individuals may be well intentioned in wanting to serve in their communities, they are often ill prepared to make decisions on land use applications as related to the wetlands law.

The IWWCA provides for some level of training on a limited basis, but it is woefully inadequate. Furthermore, many towns are non compliant with even the basic level of training and no enforcement is taken when commissions are non-compliant. The CT DEEP Water Resources Division provides training materials and programs, but there is currently no statutory requirement that commission members attend.

The wetlands law is a complex and important piece of legislation that helps to preserve our the quality of our wetlands and watercourses. Applicants and the natural resource deserve to have inland wetland applications reviewed and ruled upon by a knowledgeable and well trained commission that understands the law and how it is to be implemented. The Connecticut General Assembly needs to pass S.B. 349 to better serve applicants, municipalities and our water resources.