



Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING: MARCH 16, 2012

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and Members of the Committee:

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Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship. Our 450 members include almost all of the state's river and watershed conservation groups, representing many thousand Connecticut residents.

We offer brief testimony on the following bills, in the order in which they are listed in the online agenda for today's public hearing

RB 348 AAC WATER CONSERVATION. Rivers Alliance has been interested in supporting a bill like this for more than ten years. We hope you will like it. Both water companies and environmental advocates participated in its development. Essentially, the bill encourages the de-coupling of water revenues from volumes sold. This is the same principle that has been applied in the energy sector. Efficiency and conservation can be costly to the utility. Water-saving appliances depress sales and revenue; then investment in infrastructure and maintenance is slowed; the resulting emergency repairs are expensive, staff is let go, water quality is at risk, and rates rise in crisis mode. The solution is a rate structure that rewards the consumer for thrift but provides a predictable revenue flow for the water company. Different utilities work in very different conditions, so the bill is designed to accommodate different needs. *Support.*

RB 375 AAC TRAINING FOR INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY MEMBERS AND AGENTS. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) developed this bill to upgrade the expertise of wetlands commissioners and agents. Present law requires almost no training for staff or members of a commission. CEQ research revealed that the better trained commissions more successfully protected wetlands. Previous efforts at legislation were more burdensome and costly than necessary, and also occasionally punitive. This bill has largely cured those problems. *Support.*

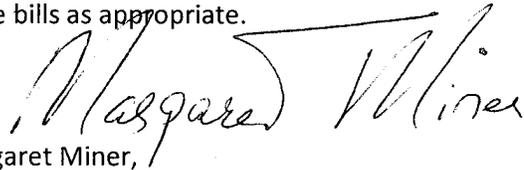
RB 376 AAC THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT ACT AND SHORELINE FLOOD AND EROSION CONTROL STRUCTURES. This is a complicated instrument for overriding shoreline zoning rules. We have opposed changes to regulatory authority until the state develops a broad policy for shoreline construction in an era of rising water. Note, the definition of "cost prohibitive" is pinned to the overall cost of a project. But this does not take into account the resources of the applicant (for whom nothing or everything may be too costly) or the importance of the requirement to human and environmental health. *Oppose.*

A tax-exempt
organization under
501 (c) (3) of the
Internal Revenue
Code

Notes on the concepts in other bills on the agenda.

- Leaking underground storage tanks are still causing extensive contamination of groundwater and soil. (5082 and 375)
- Mercury contamination affects all streams and fish in Connecticut. The less mercury left around the better. (93 and 350)
- Monitoring and protecting state open space, including water company lands, must improve if the state is to meet its policy goals and pledges to the public. (347)
- Invasive aquatic plants can be a nuisance, a health hazard, and can lead to the application of hundreds of pounds of aquatic pesticides over and over in the same area.

Thank you for your attention. We would be happy to answer questions and to work on any of these bills as appropriate.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret Miner". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Margaret Miner,
Executive Director