



Farmington River Watershed Association, Inc.

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Feb. 21, 2013

TESTIMONY FOR H.B. No. 6350

AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015, AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE

On behalf of the Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA), a private, non-profit environmental organization, I am testifying to

- **Support the current funding status of the CT Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ);**
- **Oppose further cuts to the budget of CT DEEP, especially the closure of fish hatcheries; and**
- **Oppose a reduction in budget for USGS water monitoring programs.**

CEQ's functions are vital, irreplaceable, and performed with extremely economical use of funds. Most of the people comprising CEQ are volunteers who bring professional expertise, dedication, and donated hours to CEQ's work. Each dollar of state money invested has considerable added value because of this in-kind support. It is exactly the sort of program we should keep when budgets are tight.

CEQ's white papers and annual reports are an invaluable resource for agencies and organizations across the state. If CEQ disappears, the costs of researching important issues will have to be absorbed elsewhere. Or, if the research is not done at all, the resulting lack of adequate information and communication will detract from sound, coherent, coordinated environmental management in Connecticut. This will incur many tangible and intangible costs.

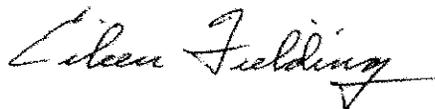
CEQ has a unique role as ombudsman for all who need review of an environmental problem. This is an effective way to address concerns of citizens and organizations, especially those who do not themselves know the best routes of communication with state agencies. It cannot continue to serve all these functions if its staff is cut in half, and it cannot fare better by placement in the Office of Government Accountability when the OGA is already overloaded with work.

Anyone who partners with DEEP has seen the limits already imposed by funding and staff shortages, as well as the resilience, dedication, and creativity with which the remaining staff fulfill their mandates. FRWA collaborates with DEEP by furnishing water quality data, and by assisting with education programs, habitat restoration projects and fisheries work. As stewards of "the most fished river in Connecticut," we are very much aware of the economic benefit to the state furnished by its fish hatcheries, which provide the stocked trout that generate millions of dollars of revenue from recreational fishing. Further cuts at DEEP will undercut its ability to maintain even the status quo, let alone seize new opportunities to improve the management, protection, and profitability of our fisheries.

FRWA's mission also includes advocating for sound management of our surface waters and groundwater for the benefit of all. As we undergo climate change, it will be necessary to use the best information possible for adapting to new conditions intelligently. We are dismayed to see further erosion in the number of USGS flow gages around the state, at a time when we and many other organizations and agencies are most in need of the data they provide.

Crippling CEQ, further cutting DEEP's fisheries funding, or cutting back our access to good flow data will impose real costs to the state in terms of environmental damage and lost economic opportunities. We strongly encourage the retention of the CT Council on Environmental Quality in its present form; retention of the state's fish hatcheries; and retention of all currently operating USGS flow gages.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

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

Eileen Fielding, Executive Director