

Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC)

Representing the towns of Shelton, Milford, Stratford, Derby, Orange, and Ansonia, CT.

Testimony of the Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC)
Before the Commerce Committee

In Support of
HB 6528, An Act Concerning Clean Marinas

Submitted by
Robert Gesullo, Chair and Lori Romick, Vice Chair
March 7, 2013

Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, and members of the Committee,

The Housatonic River Estuary Commission is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on House Bill 6528, An Act Concerning Clean Marinas. The HREC supports this bill, which establishes a cost-sharing program that will help marinas and boatyards certified by the Connecticut DEEP's Clean Marina Program apply for small grants to assist with dredging of their channels.

Long Island Sound is an "Estuary of National Significance" and Federal, State, and local funds are being used to protect and preserve its natural resources. Many LIS stakeholders would benefit from marinas that practice "good environmental management." This bill would provide additional incentive to do just that, by assisting in the inevitable and costly process of dredging allowing safe access to and from marinas and the Sound.

Currently, obtaining assistance for marina dredging projects is exceptionally difficult. This means that many marinas cannot afford this costly work, so their channels gradually accumulate silt and can eventually become impassible to boats with deeper drafts. Sharing the cost will make dredging feasible for more marinas, thereby keeping those businesses open and profitable, as well as creating new jobs for engineers and local dredging contractors.

This bill will link significant support for dredging projects directly to a program that helps protect Long Island Sound. By tying the assistance to the Clean Marina Program, HB 6528 encourages marinas and boatyards to use business practices that protect our

water quality and natural resources. Connecticut's marinas are in a unique position to reduce water pollution from runoff of oils, soaps and waxes, as well as sewage, and to set an example for other shoreline businesses. In addition, they play an educational role, helping to raise awareness of sustainable boating practices among recreational and commercial boaters.

There are currently about 30 certified Clean Marinas in Connecticut, and another 20 that have pledged to make the necessary changes to get certified. This cost-sharing program will reward their efforts, encourage them to maintain their commitment, and incentivize other marinas and boatyards to follow suit.

Last year, this concept was raised in SB 220 and enjoyed strong support from legislators, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, marinas and boatyards, and environmental advocates. This year's version needs one technical fix: the language in section 2 should be changed from "or any federal or state agency acting on behalf of such municipality" back to the version in last year's amendment, "federal agency or other entity."

Please support HB 6528 for the environmental, economic and recreational benefits it offers Connecticut's shoreline communities and Long Island Sound. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Robert Gesullo, Chair
Housatonic River Estuary Commission

Lori Romick, Vice-Chair HREC
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Lromick@optonline.net

Salemi, Kathy

From: Lori Romick <lromick@optimum.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 06, 2013 3:56 PM
To: Salemi, Kathy
Cc: lmcmillan@ctenvironment.org
Subject: HB 6528 letter of support
Attachments: Testimony of the Housatonic River Estuary Commission.pdf

Dear Honorable Members of the Commerce Committee,

The attached is a letter of support for HB 6528 from the Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC).

The HREC is comprised of six towns (Shelton, Milford, Stratford, Derby, Orange and Ansonia) and is established under CGS CHAPTER 483bSec.

25-170. The commission may study any issues relating to the Housatonic River and may make such recommendations as may be necessary to maintain, protect and restore the resources of the estuary of the Housatonic River. The commission shall consider the adverse impact any action proposed in or for the Housatonic River estuary may have upon the marine resources of said river. The commission may prepare and submit a report to the local legislative bodies of the towns represented on said commission.

There are many different stakeholders involved with the river and its resources as well as Long Island Sound and the HREC is compelled to advocate for public access, safety, commercial water-dependent utilization, protection of natural resources, and including improved water quality. Projects that are intended to assist in the preservation and improvement of this valuable environmental resource are needed.

Our Mission is to support and foster the many components of this stewardship, including but not limited to Restoration, Conservation, Preservation, Recreation, and Economics as these actions/intentions relate to the Rivers Ecology, Environment, Economic Development/Planning and Historical/Cultural values. We will seek to find collective, balanced solutions to provide equal value to these components as a strategy to promote continued restoration and responsible economic development of the estuary, and to protect against any future threats, changes or adverse impacts. We "thank you" in advance for your consideration of this bill.

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