

Dear Committee on the Environment,

This is to voice my support for HB 6537, An Act Concerning Water Quality and the University of Connecticut, aimed at bringing the University of Connecticut into compliance with the laws governing other water systems. In addition, I would like to support two other environmental bills, HB 6536, aimed at strengthening the DEEP's oversight through permitting, and HB 5480, requiring assessment of pesticide practices at UConn's research farm. My remarks below are focused on UConn.

I have written about UConn since the 1980s, for *Connecticut Magazine* and *Northeast*. I broke the widely-cited story of UConn's pumping the Fenton River dry ("Dry Times for UConn," 9/18/2005, and earlier this month published an op/ed, "Bottoms Up: UConn's Unrelenting Thirst For Water."

Most people, including I imagine many state legislators, are unaware of the extent to which UConn operates outside the existing law and with what little transparency and accountability. The university's hubris is expressed in the current plan for importing water from the Farmington River Valley through the MDC to feed the water-poor Storrs campus. Such an inter-basin transfer is by its nature a regional; yet the EIE put forward by UConn treated it as falling within UConn's domain.

In my view, (1) The EIE should be thrown out, as inappropriate for the scale of the proposed project; (2) UConn should be subjected to oversight appropriate to its role as a water supplier; and (3) in the longer term, Connecticut should institute regional planning aimed at protecting the state's water supply from schemes exactly like UConn's, whether driven by private or public entities.

UConn's planned growth at its Storrs campus is out of control and driven by ambitions inimical to wise planning that respects the environment. A more decentralized approach, tying together of the branch campuses and other universities around the STEM theme, could promote more symbiosis and the matrix of the stronger transportation network our state needs and, with it, job-creation.

In any case, these bills can help bring balance and accountability.

Thank you.

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