



Testimony of:
Save the Sound
a program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment



In Support of
S.B. 1010 AAC SEA LEVEL RISE AND THE FUNDING OF PROJECTS BY THE CLEAN
WATER FUND
S.B. 1012 AAC A BEST PRACTICES GUIDE FOR COASTAL STRUCTURES AND
PERMITTING
S.B. 1013 AAC CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DATA COLLECTION
S.B. 1014 AAC THE DEFINITION OF "RISE IN SEA LEVEL"

Before the Environment Committee

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Submitted by Leah Schmalz, Dir. of Legislative and Legal Affairs

Connecticut Fund for the Environment is a non-profit organization that, along with its regional program Save the Sound, works to protect and improve the land, air and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound on behalf of its 5,500 members. We develop partnerships and use legal and scientific expertise to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 1010, AAC Sea Level Rise and the Funding of Projects by the Clean Water Fund; Senate Bill 1012, AAC Best Practices Guide for Coastal Structures and Permitting; Senate Bill 1013, AAC Climate Change Adaptation and Data Collection; and Senate Bill 1014, AAC The Definition of "Rise in Sea Level."

Save the Sound, a program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment **supports all four of these bills**, which together will help the state, municipalities, and citizens better prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change on our shoreline.

In less than two years, the Long Island Sound region has been walloped by four major storms — two tropical storms and two snowstorms. Though only some hit Connecticut directly, all four were direct hits on our infrastructure, economy and way of life.

Not only have these storms increased in frequency, they are bringing higher snow and rain amounts, winds, and storm surges — often at historic levels. In last month's blizzard, Milford, CT received 38 inches of snow. Sandy brought Bridgeport a 13.3-foot storm surge, even higher than the 12.1-foot surge that hit the city during Tropical Storm Irene.

In Connecticut, we've begun the process of adapting to effects of climate change. Over the past five years, universities have helped identify new policies, agencies and non-profits have created coastal resiliency tools, and the Governor's office has established workgroups to review natural resources and infrastructure in light of our changing climate. The state has used this information to start taking action, most notably through the first steps of last session's sea level rise bill and currently through

recommendations provided by the Shoreline Preservation Taskforce and found in the four bills before Environment Committee.

Storms Irene and Sandy demonstrated the need to enhance the resiliency of our wastewater infrastructure in the face of climate change. Sea level rise and storm inundation threaten numerous plants along the coast. Reports after Sandy indicated seven of the state's sewage pumping stations were forced to discharge raw sewage into nearby waterways during the storm and four sewage treatment plants were flooded or inundated with water, forcing them to resort to primary disinfectant treatment. Furthermore, Stamford's POTW had operational issues with their treatment system which included losing solids, low UV dosage, and loss of clarifiers. Funding to modify pump stations and electrical systems will be necessary and planning for future expansions and plant sites, in light of climate change, is critical. Connecticut pays for sewage treatment needs through the state Clean Water Fund. Senate Bill 1010, AAC Sea Level Rise and the Funding of Projects by the Clean Water Fund, will allow the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to factor in impacts of sea level rise on potential projects when DEEP considers which projects will receive funding.

Senate Bill 1012, AAC a Best Practices Guide for Coastal Structures and Permitting, will helpfully augment DEEP's current efforts.

To plan effectively for climate change and sea level rise, leaders need further research, accurate information about natural resources and reliable forecasts. Senate Bill 1013, AAC Climate Change Adaptation and Data Collection, directs DEEP and UConn to investigate creating a "Connecticut Center for Coasts." Eventually the Center is expected to map shoreline changes and flooding, develop statewide planning guidelines, create a comprehensive coastal infrastructure inventory and risk assessment, analyze the impact of seawalls in urban and rural communities, develop tools for determining the most appropriate shoreline protection strategies, and more. Save the Sound strongly supports the future creation of such a center. In addition to the development and consolidation of information, outreach that highlights resilient shoreline protection options for our communities is essential. It is crucial that we safeguard homes, infrastructure, and public access, but shoreline communities require options and information to guarantee that they use "living shoreline" techniques—like tidal wetlands, dune systems, beaches and other natural resources—in the adaptation process. Additionally, extensive education is needed to ensure the public understands that those resources are highly susceptible to damage by excessive shoreline armoring.

We know that the water level in Long Island Sound has risen and that its rate of rise is increasing. A bill last session included sea level rise as a factor for municipalities to consider in planning for development. While that was a good first step, it based the definition of sea level rise on past observations, not on scientific projections for the future. Senate Bill 1014, AAC the Definition of "Rise in Sea Level," is intended to build on that new definition by letting municipalities use the best sea level rise projections available for their planning activities. Save the Sound supports the clarifications to this bill proposed by The Nature Conservancy, which are in line with the original intent of the Shoreline Preservation Task Force.

Scientists say the Long Island Sound region will likely see a sea level rise of 1.5 feet by 2050, and 3.5 feet above current levels by the century's end. If levels rise as predicted, not only will we lose shoreline areas and infrastructure, but increased flooding and storm surges will cause more damage in future storms. Identifying and implementing ways to protect our shoreline will be a long-term project, and will require serious commitment and investment by the region. The Shoreline

Preservation Taskforce has done an admirable job of sifting through information and developing recommendations on complex issues and the state must keep up momentum —after all, if the region learned one lesson from Sandy, it is that the storm is brewing. We cannot afford to be caught unaware. Supporting SB 1010, SB 1012, SB 1013 and SB 1014 will help build a balanced approach that helps protect our homes and natural resources.

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

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