

Testimony of **Nancy Watson** Before the Environment Committee

Regarding

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

Submitted by

Nancy Watson

March 8, 2013 Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and members of the Committee, I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment on several bills originating in the recommendations of the Shoreline Preservation Task Force.

The storms of the last two years have made it clear that Connecticut cannot wait—we must start preparing for the changes that climate change is already bringing to our region. The rate of sea level rise in Long Island Sound is accelerating, and our state and our communities need to start factoring this reality into planning initiatives now. We need initiatives that will ensure shoreline residents live in safe homes, that will move or protect critical infrastructure, and that will make both our human and natural communities more resilient.

As a resident of Riverside, CT – located 10 minutes from glorious Greenwich Point – this is an issue that deeply effects me. Having lived through several storms – particularly the devastating Sandy –it is clear that action can not be delayed. We need to preserve our spectacular shoreline, protect our critically important marshes and safeguard our infrastructure from storm surges and a frightening sea level rise.

Witnessing the devastation to our beautiful beach, as well as several friends' homes, was heartbreaking. It made it clear to me there is no room for delay!

Last year's sea level rise bill was a good start at preparing our state, and the Shoreline Preservation Task Force is doing an admirable job of tackling these difficult issues.

Storms Sandy and Irene highlight the need to make our wastewater infrastructure more resilient to flooding and inundation. During Sandy, seven of Connecticut's sewage pumping stations were forced to discharge raw sewage into nearby waterways, and several plants suffered other serious problems. This is a threat to public health and the water quality of our rivers and Long Island Sound. Pumping stations and electrical systems will need to be improved, and sea level rise should be considered when planning and siting future treatment plant upgrades and new facilities. 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 is identifying 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.

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**. I support the clarifications to this bill proposed by The Nature Conservancy, which are in line with the original intent of the Shoreline Preservation Task Force.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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