



FOR THE FINANCE, REVENUE, AND BONDING COMMITTEE
TESTIMONY OF RIVERS ALLIANCE OF CONNECTICUT IN SUPPORT OF
Governor's Bill No. 842, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the
State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and Other Purposes

Date: March 4, 2013

To the Chairmen, Sen. John Fonfara and Rep. Pat Widlitz, and to Members of the Committee:

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship. Our 450 members include almost all of the state's river and watershed conservation groups, representing many thousand Connecticut residents

The Clean Water Fund General Obligation and Revenue bonding proposed in this bill is essential to the state's economic and environmental commitment to clean water and a healthy L. I. Sound. The primary purpose of the fund is to finance sewage treatment, one of the most basic responsibilities of government. The administration and legislature in recent years has recognized this need and responded prudently. We thank you, and urgently ask your continued help with this effort.

The amount requested by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), \$447 million for FY 2014 and \$550 million for FY 2015, is in line with the reformed Clean Water Fund program launched in 2007. A report that year from then-DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy and a prestigious advisory group outlined the damage done to municipalities and state waters in the previous years (FY 03 through FY 07), when bonding was severely reduced; in FY 03-04, the fund was basically "swept."

The 2007 DEP report is entitled *Clean Water Fund Dilemma: Increasing Demands with Diminishing Fiscal Resources*. That clearly is our status today. But we have gotten smarter, on this issue at least. The reduction in bonding had led to suspension of shovel-ready projects (worth hundreds of millions of dollars), job losses, increased costs to municipalities, and degradation of water quality in rivers and the Sound.

Then and now advocates urging adequate support for the Clean Water Fund include a wide spectrum of groups: environmental organizations, such as Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound; regional and municipal groups, such as the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (which brought together the Clean Water Investment Coalition in 2006); engineering groups; labor organizations; maritime organizations, and, of course, individuals who want to be able to swim and boat without worrying about exposure to untreated sewage.

The level of support recommended in 2007 was somewhat higher, actually, \$130 million annually in GO bonds. But no one could foresee the national financial crash of 2008. Fortunately, the General Assembly and governors Rell and Malloy recognized that Clean Water Fund dollars create jobs, help municipalities, and make Connecticut a healthier, more attractive (and competitive) state. You have continued to invest in clean water at a satisfactory level.

The particular mission of Rivers Alliance is to restore and protect natural waters and aquatic habitats. The effects of inadequately treated sewage and stormwater are noxious algae blooms, large oxygen-deprived dead zones, loss of fish populations, impaired shellfish beds, and thriving colonies of harmful bacteria, and waterborne pathogenic viruses.

We thank you for protecting state water from these impairments and look forward to continuing progress.

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PS. The URL for the DEP report cited in this testimony is:
http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/water/municipal_wastewater/cwf_a_g_report.pdf