



55 Church Street; New Haven, Connecticut 06510 203-568-6297

**Testimony of David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations
Before the Environment Committee – March 7th, 2014**

**In Support of Water Conservation provisions of Bill 5424 - AN ACT CONCERNING
THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WATER PLANNING COUNCIL**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I would like to commend the committee, and the task force that met this winter regarding water planning, for renewing an emphasis on this crucial issue. We would like to express our support for the provisions in lines 37 – 47 in Bill 5424 that would enhance the attention on water conservation in our water planning statutes.

Any comprehensive water plan must feature strategies for conserving water. More efficient use of water will be crucial to ensuring that the ample supplies of water we currently have in many parts of the state remain adequate, that as much water as possible can safely be returned to rivers for the benefit of fish and stream health, and that we reduce the significant amounts of energy that are expended to process, pump, heat, and distribute water. The General Assembly took an important step in fostering water conservation through the passage of Public Act 13-78 last year. Section 1 of this bill would take another important step.

A comprehensive water plan must also not only address the critical aspects of water supply, storage, and distribution, but also the impacts that our use of water have on the health of our rivers. This bill should more consistently and emphatically recognize the need to account for ecological considerations in water planning. The streamflow regulations that were passed two years ago will help address environmental factors in our rivers, but among many significant concessions to water supply considerations, did not address the impacts of groundwater withdrawals on streams.

As one example of how this bill could more explicitly provide for ecological concerns, we recommend that Section 1(b)(3) in line 29 be amended to read: “(3) recommend the utilization of the state's water resources, including surface and subsurface water, for their greatest **WATER SUPPLY AND ENVIRONMENTAL** benefits;

In Section 4, greater attention to ecological considerations could be provided by repeating or moving the proposed reference to “environmental protection” up to (a)(1) as follows:

- (a) Each water utility coordinating committee shall prepare a coordinated water system plan in the public water supply management area. Such plan shall be submitted to the Commissioner of Public Health for his approval not more than two years after the first meeting of the committee. The plan shall promote cooperation among public water systems and include, but not be limited to, provisions for (1) integration of public water systems, consistent with the protection and enhancement of public **AND ENVIRONMENTAL** health and well-

being; (2) integration of water company plans; (3) exclusive service areas; (4) joint management or ownership of services; (5) satellite management services; (6) interconnections between public water systems; (7) integration of land use and water system plans; (8) minimum design standards; (9) water conservation and environmental protection; (10) the impact on other uses of water resources; and (11) acquisition of land surrounding wells proposed to be located in stratified drifts.