

Testimony of Housatonic Valley Association Before the Environment Committee

Regarding:

S.B. 237 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE STORAGE OR DISPOSAL OF FRACKING WASTE IN CONNECTICUT

H.B. 5308 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF FRACKING WASTE

H.B. 5307 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF BOOMS FOR THE RETENTION OF CERTAIN OILS OR PETROLEUM AND REVISING CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS FOR THE REGISTRATION OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

Submitted by Michael Jastremski, Water Protection Director

February 28, 2013

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and members of the Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 237, House Bill 5308, and House Bill 5307. All three bills have important implications for our ability to protect the waters of Connecticut from toxic chemicals and petroleum products. HVA supports SB 237 and HB 5308, which would prevent Connecticut from becoming a disposal site for unregulated hydrofracking waste. HVA opposes HB 5307, which would expose our harbors to preventable oil and gas spills.

SB 237, AA Prohibiting the Storage or Disposal of Fracking Waste in Connecticut, is strong and common-sense measure that will protect our surface and groundwater from contamination by toxic hydrofracking fluid. While Connecticut's geology isn't suited to this method of extracting gas from the ground, it is used in neighboring states like New York and Pennsylvania. The exact make-up of fracking fluid is unknown because gas companies can claim it as a trade secret, but we do know that used fluid contains not only the original chemicals, but also heavy concentrations of salts, traces of petrochemicals, and toxins that it carries up from deep in the bedrock. Fracking fluid can be five times saltier than sea water, and can contain any of over two dozen known carcinogens and volatile organic compounds. Because of this, fracking companies have a difficult time disposing of this fluid when they are done with it, and have explored shipping to other states for storage, processing it in wastewater treatment plants, and even using it as de-icer on roads. We shouldn't allow our state to be a guinea pig for disposal schemes such as these. Keeping fracking waste out of Connecticut is the only way to protect our drinking water and Long Island Sound.

HB 5308, AAC the Regulation of Fracking Waste, would classify toxic fracking fluid as hazardous waste, closing a loophole in federal law that has allowed it to remain unregulated here in Connecticut. Enacting this protection is a positive first step, but it alone is not sufficient to fully protect our residents and waterbodies. I urge you to pass this bill along with the companion bill SB 237 to ensure our state does not become the Northeast's designated dumping-ground for toxic fracking waste.

Protecting Long Island Sound from petrochemicals from the shipping industry is also a concern. Currently, ships loading or offloading oils and other petroleum products must put floatable booming around the transfer area to contain any spills. HB 5307, AAC the Use of Booms for the Retention of Certain Oils, would eliminate this requirement, putting natural resources at unnecessary risk. Though spills are infrequent, a major spill in any of our busy ports would be catastrophic to our economy and our environment. The pre-booming requirement is a common sense best management practice that pays immeasurable dividends by keeping our ports open for business and our Sound's waters and wildlife protected.

Please support SB 237's ban on fracking waste and HB 5308's closing of the hazardous waste loophole, and please oppose HB 5307's weakening of protection against oil spills. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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