



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



In Support of Governor's S.B. 29

AN ACT AUTHORIZING AND ADJUSTING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER PURPOSES.

Before the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

March 13, 2014

Submitted by Leah Lopez Schmalz

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 Fonfara, Representative Widlitz, and members of the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee:

Save the Sound, a program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment submits this testimony in support of Governor's S.B. 29, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and Other Purposes. We are particularly **supportive of Sections 9 (c) and 37, which would support the Shoreline Resiliency Fund and port and marina projects, respectively.** These provisions would allow citizens and communities to better prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change, promote public access and commercial business, and provide environmental benefits to Long Island Sound.

SB 29: Section 9 (c)

In less than two years, the Long Island Sound region was 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 year'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, and the recommendations of the Shoreline Preservation Taskforce, to start taking action. One of those recommendations is now a reality: UCONN Avery Point's new Institute for Community Resiliency and Climate Adaptation.

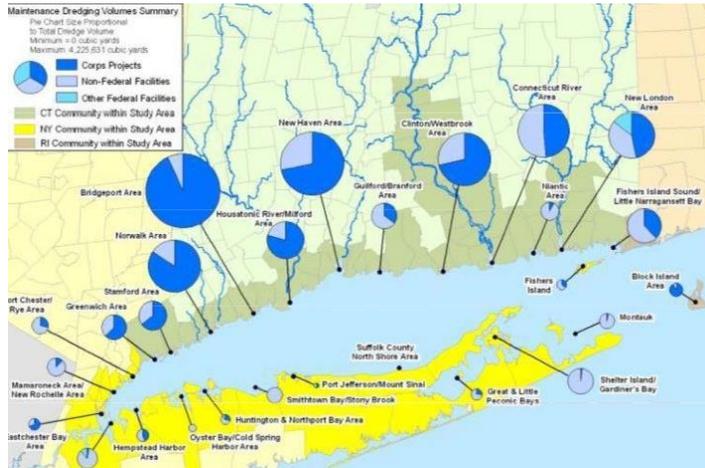
This center will provide Connecticut's residents with the knowledge to make their homes and businesses more resilient to future storms, and the funds provided in Section 9(c) would provide them with the financial support to do so. The region realizes it is impractical to rebuild exactly the same after every storm; instead we must plan better, build smarter, and adapt quicker. Instead of ignoring sea level rise realities, municipalities can now incorporate it into their planning. Instead of building seawalls from Stonington to Greenwich, individuals can work with experts to develop living shorelines for protection. And instead of rebuilding over and over again, citizens may soon have access to funds that allow them to water proof their basements and raise their homes now, *before* the next storm comes.

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 is 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 is keeping up the 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 section 9(c) of SB 29 will help build a balanced approach that helps protect our homes and natural resources.

SB 29: Section 37

Our Long Island Sound ports are essential to the economy of the region. Whether passenger transportation or movement of commodities, it is critical that there is port funding for

infrastructure and dredging to maintain the navigational channels. Similarly, our marina industry generates in excess of \$1.5 billion a year in economic activity and provides public access to the Sound for tens of thousands of our citizens. If the sediments that accumulate in our channels and harbors are not occasionally dredged, boaters cannot access marinas and businesses suffer.



Currently, the need for dredging in Connecticut is great. While limited funding for major federal navigation projects is available on occasion, obtaining assistance for small marina dredging projects is exceptionally difficult. This means that many marinas cannot afford this costly work, so their channels gradually accumulate

silt and can eventually become impassible to boats with deeper drafts. Save the Sound not only recognizes the need for some marina dredging, we recognize the need to promote programs that provide health benefits to Long Island Sound. This funding could help curb pollution affecting the Sound via the Clean Marinas Incentive Program, passed by the General Assembly last session, which links certified green business practices at Connecticut marinas with small grants for local dredging projects.

Clean Marinas Background: Long Island Sound provides \$8.5 billion to the regional economy every year. Healthy water quality is key to human health, tourism, and the fishing industries, but the Sound remains plagued by various types of pollution. Because marinas are on the water, their direct activities (like boat cleaning and fueling operations) and contaminants from their properties (like stormwater runoff from parking lots and hull maintenance/repair areas) often contribute to water quality problems in the Sound. To help combat this problem, Connecticut established a program that encouraged marina owners to implement best management practices to minimize their impacts on the water. Clean Marinas identify opportunities and implement practices to control pollution associated with mechanical activities, painting & fiberglass repair, hauling and storing boats, fueling, facility management, and emergency planning. There are about 30 certified clean marinas in the state and another 20 have pledged to make the necessary changes to get certified. New Clean Marinas are currently on hold due to limited CTDEEP

resources, but thankfully the state is in the process of identifying options that would allow the program to move forward.

It is clear that clean marinas are good for the Sound and that dredging funds are needed for marinas to stay open. The cost-sharing program that links participation in the CTDEEP Clean Marina Program with small grants for maintenance dredging of marinas provides an economic incentive system that supports public access and results in a healthier Sound. Providing ten percent of the project costs to those clean marinas makes dredging more feasible while creating engineering and dredging jobs and keeping marina businesses open and profitable—all of which benefit the state's economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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