March 1, 2015

RE: Testimony to Appropriations Comm. for the March 2, 2015 Public Hearing on Hatchery Funding in DEEP budget

I support keeping Kensington Hatchery operational and removing it from the list of cuts proposed in the governor's budget because this hatchery generates more money for our state than it costs, and it provides unique benefits that would be forever lost.

A 2011 study by the CT Center for Economic Analysis at UConn reports that $38 in economic activity is generated by every $1 our state spends on natural resources.

Decreased fish stocking will lead to less angler hours realized, less tourism, less revenue for small businesses and therefore less tax and license revenue for CT. The current stocking programs generate roughly 2 million angler hours and approximately $60 million in revenue. The closing of Kensington would eliminate less than $195,000 in a multi-billion dollar budget, and would be poor economic policy.

Our other two hatcheries are operating at maximum and will be unable to make up for the loss of Kensington's capacity and unique elements such as chilled water capability and uniquely favorable well water. Closing Kensington Hatchery would end the brood stock salmon stocking program in CT, and along with it up to 7,000 Atlantic salmon fishing trips per year. Valuable genetic traits defining Connecticut River salmon will also be lost forever. Our successful Seeforellen Brown trout strain will be lost, as will much of the trophy brown trout and sea run trout programs that generate significant tourism revenue.

The award winning Salmon-in-Schools Program would be terminated after this school year which would affect over 60 schools and more than 6,000 Connecticut students each year. Another approximate 9,000 schoolchildren in 110 schools will lose the Trout in the Classroom Program due to the need for chilled water during egg development, which is only available at Kensington. These very cost-effective educational programs also develop environmental awareness in kids.

Keeping Kensington Hatchery operational makes sense economically, educationally and environmentally.

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