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**Testimony of David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations  
before the Environment Committee – February 27, 2015**

**In Support of H.B. No. 6035 AAC A LONG ISLAND SOUND RESOURCE AND USE INVENTORY AND A LONG ISLAND SOUND BLUE PLAN; and**

**H.B. No. 6839 AAC A LONG ISLAND SOUND BLUE PLAN AND RESOURCE AND USE INVENTORY.**

- **Long Island Sound has been the scene of several protracted battles over the past decade, regarding cables, pipelines, and industrial energy facilities.**
- **Conceptual plans for new offshore development proposals are in the news regularly.**
- **Without a pro-active plan for compatible uses of the Sound, we remain vulnerable to the next Broadwater-type battle.**
- **A comprehensive and inclusive planning process will take a few years, so it is imperative that we begin the process now before the next threat emerges.**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I would like to express our strong support for these two bills, and our gratitude to Governor Malloy for including Bill 6839 as part of his legislative package, and to the committee for raising Bill 6035.

We would also like to express our deep appreciation to this committee for your support for and work on the Long Island Sound Blue Plan legislation last year.

This legislation would direct DEEP and UConn, within available resources, to convene relevant state agencies, academic institutions, and stakeholders to compile an inventory of the natural resources in and the human uses of Long Island Sound, and to use that information to develop a plan to guide future uses of the Sound's waters and submerged lands.

Long Island Sound is the Northeast's largest estuary, and it includes some of Earth's most productive natural habitats. It is crucial to the way of life of more than 20 million people who live within 50 miles of it, generating billions of dollars annually for local economies through tourism, fishing, boating, and other uses.

This legislature has spent considerable time over the past few years discussing the communities and natural habitats **on land along our shoreline**. This legislation addresses the **waters and the submerged bottom lands** of the Sound, which support

the commercial industries and recreational activities we depend on and provide critical habitat for countless aquatic species.

Unlike Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which have adopted spatial guidance plans for their ocean waters, Connecticut has no existing authority to plan future uses of the Sound on an overall basis. Currently, project applicants set the agenda, in an ad-hoc way, for proposed uses of public trust waters and lands, and the public and DEEP can only respond through the regulatory process, which while important, has proven to be a very costly and inefficient way to protect the Sound's environmental, cultural, and economic values.

For the past two and a half years, a working group of representatives of Connecticut, New York, and federal agencies, industries, user groups, and conservation organizations has been meeting to determine what types of natural resource and human use information about the Sound already exist, what work is underway on other types of data, and what important data gaps exist. This legislation would enhance and expand the work of this group and enable the resulting inventory to be incorporated into a plan that could ensure future or new uses of the Sound are compatible with traditional uses, minimize conflicts among users and balance use with resource protection.

The State of New York already has the authority in its statutes to develop and utilize a marine plan in its portion of Long Island Sound, but Connecticut does not. Without legislative authority, a plan developed here for Connecticut's half of the Sound would not be legally binding. For a Long Island Sound Blue Plan to legally influence federal agency projects and permitting, for example, the plan would need to be incorporated through legislation into Connecticut's federally approved coastal management program.

Statutory authorization would also highlight the importance of the Inventory and Blue Plan and legitimize its purpose, creating an authoritative source of data, a single focus for partnerships, and cooperation among stakeholders and other regional marine planning and management initiatives such as Northeast Regional Ocean Council, the Northeast Regional Planning Body, and the Long Island Sound Study.

The plan would be the outcome of a science-based process, with the collaboration of the public and stakeholders for recognizing existing uses and environmental resources. It would be coordinated with, but not contingent upon, New York's efforts.

A Blue Plan would help reduce conflicts among those who use the Sound and save all of us time and resources otherwise used to resolve conflict. Communities, activists, agencies and project applicants have spent enormous time and resources in the past decade fighting over proposed uses of Long Island Sound. The Plan would allow Connecticut and New York to work together in determining which uses we want to encourage and provide better guidance to project developers to identify where various uses would least conflict with other activities and natural resource protection.