



*Connecticut Fund for the Environment is a non-profit environmental organization with over 5,500 members statewide working to protect and improve the land, air and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound.*

**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment  
Before the Environment Committee – February 4, 2015**

***In support of:***

**Raised S.B. No. 347: An Act Concerning the Percentage of State and Federal Funds that May Be Used to Purchase Open Space Under the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program;**

**Raised S.B. No. 349: An Act Concerning Single-Use Carryout Plastic and Paper Bags and the Use of Reusable Bags;**

**Raised H.B. No. 6032: An Act Clarifying Provisions of the General Statutes Concerning the Use of Barrier Systems for Certain Plantings; *and***

**Raised H.B. No. 6033: An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Juices, Teas and Sports Drinks Under Connecticut's Bottle Bill;**

Dear Sen. Kennedy, Rep. Albis, and members of the Environment Committee,

Connecticut Fund for the Environment submits this testimony in SUPPORT of:

- Raised S.B. No. 349: An Act Concerning Single-Use Carryout Plastic and Paper Bags and the Use of Reusable Bags

If passed, this bill prohibits certain stores from giving certain bags to customers. The bill establishes a three-step program to phase out use of non-reusable bags. Starting in 2015, the bill imposes a minimum fee of 10 cents for all "single use carryout bags." Starting in 2017, single-use carryout bags are banned and other specified bags must cost at least 25 cents. Finally, starting 2019, no bags may be offered except for reusable bags.

Hundreds of millions of single-use paper and plastic are consumed per year by Connecticut residents, and end up in landfills, or worse, in waterways where they can entangle, or be ingested by and suffocate, wildlife. The culture of today's stores must change to eliminate this wasteful practice. Plastics take millennia to biodegrade, while paper bags perpetuate deforestation.

This bill forces customers to pay for bags, which will incentivize reuse and get consumers to start thinking about more environmentally-friendly options. Banning these bags will reduce the amount of solid waste that must be disposed of in landfills, and will protect wildlife.

- Raised H.B. No. 6033: An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Juices, Teas and Sports Drinks Under Connecticut's Bottle Bill

If passed, this bill would eliminate the exemption to Connecticut's Bottle Bill for juices, teas, and sports drinks. These beverages would then require a \$0.05 deposit for all glass, aluminum, and plastic containers. We fully support this bill, as the expansion of beverage categories encourages recycling.

The aluminum and glass used in many beverage containers is almost 100% recyclable, and is far more efficient than creating new bottles from raw materials. Recycling also keeps millions on pounds of solid waste out of landfills, and the bottle deposit has been shown to be effective at encouraging recycling.

- Raised S.B. No. 347: An Act Concerning the Percentage of State and Federal Funds that May Be Used to Purchase Open Space Under the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program

If passed, this bill would eliminate the cap on the percentage of state and federal funds that may be used to fund any project under the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program. The cap is currently set generally at seventy percent (70%) of the fair market value of land. Practically, this means that local municipalities, land trusts, and/or conservation organizations must raise at least thirty percent (30%) of the purchase price in addition to all of the other costs of the sale.

It is the stated objective of the state of Connecticut to protect 21 percent of its open spaces by 2023. In order to accomplish this goal, legal hurdles such as this arbitrary grant money cap must be eliminated. The cap serves no legitimate purpose, as DEEP already limits its grants to fifty to sixty-five percent (50-65%) of the appraised value.

The goal of the cap may have been to force local communities to be invested in open space protection, but they would still be responsible for other costs such as closing, engineering, or management. The cap disproportionately burdens poorer communities that may not be able to fundraise as readily as wealthy communities. The cap serves only as an impediment to the protection of open space.

- Raised H.B. No. 6032: An Act Clarifying Provisions of the General Statutes Concerning the Use of Barrier Systems for Certain Plantings

If passed, this bill would eliminate a clause in the law prohibiting the planting of running bamboo near property lines. The clause in question ends a “continuing violation” of the law if the bamboo is “contained by a properly installed and constructed barrier system.”

Running bamboo is a fast-spreading and destructive invasive species often used ornamentally, for privacy, or as a sound barrier. Running bamboo is a nuisance because of its tendency to spread quickly if not contained by physical barriers and annual manual labor.

The problem with allowing an exemption to the prohibition of planting running bamboo for “properly constructed barriers” is that it is not 100% effective at stopping the plant from spreading. Bamboo is persistent, and its rhizomes spread out underground as much as 8 to 10 feet in a single growing season. The accepted manner to effectively control the spread of running bamboo is with consistent monitoring, killing new growth and removing rhizomes, *combined with* proper barriers.

For all of the reasons stated above we SUPPORT each of the aforementioned bills. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Zachary Bestor  
Legal Fellow / Attorney  
Connecticut Fund for the Environment  
zbestor@ctenvironment.org  
Tel: (203) 787-0646 x 108  
Fax: (203) 787-0246