



FOR THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY OF RIVERS ALLIANCE OF CONNECTICUT
Litchfield, CT rivers@riversalliance.org

MARCH 2, 2015

To the Chairmen: Sen. Steve Cassano and Rep. Ed Jutila
And to Members of the Committee

**BIILL 6842 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
GOVERNOR CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT.**

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship.

We and the signatories below respectfully oppose the statutory change in this bill that would place the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) within the Joint Committee on Legislative Management, which is itself within the CGA Department of Legislative Management. This change would undermine the independence and effectiveness of CEQ without providing any reliable cost benefit to the public.

CEQ has served the state well since its founding in 1971. It is an independent assessor of the state's progress toward its environmental and health goals. It monitors state stewardship of our supremely valuable natural resources: air, soil, water, and wildlife. It explains state environmental policy and actions to the public and receives and communicates citizen complaints. The many distinguished members of the Council over the years have volunteered thousands of otherwise billable hours because they believe in the mission and voice. It does all this on a budget of less than \$200,000, it performs the following functions. But in the proposed budget before you, this important program is slated to be cut in its entirety.

Since 2003, if not before, various attempts have been made to defund CEQ and/or undermine its independence. Each time, public protest has led to a reversal of that effort. This year 23 groups took part in a meeting to save CEQ. An important reason for the success of the protests is that when one looks at CEQ's responsibilities, it is apparent that the public is getting a bargain. Here are some of its functions:

- Assess the condition of Connecticut's environment.
- Report findings annually to the Governor and all state residents.
- Recommend actions to improve state environmental programs.
- Advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed construction projects.

Investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.
Review Environmental Impact Evaluations that state agencies develop for major projects.
Publish the Environmental Monitor, the official website for state project information under CEPA and for notices of proposed sale or transfer of state-owned lands.

To continue to protect this still beautiful state, please keep CEQ whole and well. Thank you.

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, Margaret Miner, ED (203-788-5161) & Tony Mitchell

CT Assoc. of Inland-Wetlands and Conservation Commissions, Alan J. Siniscalchi, Pres.

Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Eric Hammerling, ED

Connecticut River Watershed Council, Alicea Charamut, Steward

Farmington River Watershed Association, Eileen Fielding, ED

Housatonic Valley Association, Lynn Werner, ED

Naugatuck River Revival Group, Kevin Zak, Pres.

Southbury Land Trust, Tom Crider, Pres.

Norm Berg, Southington

Cathy and Steve Carlson, Branford

Diane Edwards, Thomaston

Betsy Glassman, Litchfield

Herb Gram, Madison

Elaine and Ralph McKinney, Oxford

Jenna Messier, NOFA

John Millington, former chairman of CEQ, Washington

Mike Pappa, Stamford

Barrett S. Robbins-Planka, Middletown

Hugh Rogers, Washington

Cynthia and George Willauer, Lyme

Carol Williams, Litchfield