

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony in Opposition to Raised Senate Bill No. 141
Environment Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
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Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and Members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in opposition to Raised Senate Bill No. 144, ***AAC Revision of Definitional, Timing and Procedural Provisions of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act. (SB141)***

As the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) works with the state's land trusts (now numbering 137+), state conservation and advocacy organizations, government entities and landowners to increase the pace, quality, scale and permanency of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state.

The Connecticut Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act was passed in 1972 to protect the environmental quality of the state's wetlands and watercourses (IWWA, sections 22a-36 through 22a-45 of the General Statutes of Connecticut). Amended in 1987, the IWWA requires regulation of inland wetlands and watercourses through local inland wetland commissions (IWCs), operating under the established system of state regulatory oversight.

CLCC opposes Sections 4, 5, 7 and 9 of SB141 which would serve to undermine this system by removing DEEP's authority and oversight under the IWWA, including its authority to enforce wetlands violations. While discretionary in nature, DEEP's authority under the IWWA serves as a critical regulatory safety net for inland wetlands and watercourse protection, and a backup for local IWCs in the event they are unable to fulfill their responsibilities.

It is worth noting that while the DEEP Inland Wetlands Management Section is charged with providing training, regulatory, and technical assistance to the IWCs, it is severely lacking in the resources needed to effectively uphold these responsibilities. The proposed changes to the IWWA proposed by this bill will likely serve to increase these training needs, further straining the resources of the agency as well as the respective IWCs, while doing little to enhance protection of our state's system of wetlands and watercourses.

On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, we respectfully request that the Committee vote against SB141. Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

