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16 Meriden Road  
Rockfall  
Connecticut 06481-2961  
Tele: 860-346-TREE  
www.ctwoodlands.org

## Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Position
<b>Raised S.B. 141:</b> AAC REVISION OF DEFINITIONAL, TIMING AND PROCEDURAL PROVISIONS OF THE INLAND WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSES ACT	Opposed

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For over 120 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on various sustainable forestry, State Park and Forest, trail recreation, and land conservation issues.

I am testifying today to express CFPA's opposition to Raised S.B. 141, "An Act Concerning Revision of Definitional, Timing and Procedural Provisions of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act."

The Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act has been one of Connecticut's most important pieces of legislation in the last half-century, and it is critical to ensure that development at the local level is regulated for its potential impacts on wetlands and watercourses. Because wetlands and watercourses have statewide importance, it is important to ensure that there is statewide oversight on these issues as well as uniform training of local volunteers tasked with making difficult decisions on development applications. Because of the wide variation of proposals and laws that change through time, this training cannot simply be covered by webinars or DVD training modules.

S.B. 141 would largely remove the statutory authority of the State (through the CT DEEP) to enforce wetlands violations. Although CT DEEP does not have to utilize this authority regularly, it is important for local, volunteer inland wetlands and watercourses agencies to know that there is oversight, and if they do not discharge their duties responsibly, CT DEEP can exert its authority. Sections 4, 5, 7, and 9 of the bill would essentially remove the benefits of uniform state enforcement, state oversight, and state backup for local wetlands commissions.

If any of the changes in S.B. 141 were made, it would add heft to the current concern about the lack of staff at CT DEEP to train inland wetlands commissioners. There is only 1 dedicated staffperson who carries this weighty responsibility of training and supporting wetlands commissions in 169 towns.

**Please vote against this bill**, and help ensure that Connecticut does not lose its important role in providing oversight, enforcement, and support that are all critical to protect our state's wetlands and watercourses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am glad to respond to any questions you may have.