



**P.O. Box 271646
West Hartford, Connecticut 06127**

10 March 2016

RE: Park Watershed testimony: *support* Proposed Substitute Bill No. 422 LCO No. 2975.
State of Connecticut Planning and Development Committee
PDtestimony@cga.ct.gov

To Whom It May Concern:

Park Watershed *supports* Proposed Substitute Bill No. 422 LCO No. 2975. Park Watershed is a 501c3 urban-suburban watershed stewardship organization for Park River regional watershed, which stretches east of the Metacomet Ridge to the Connecticut River. The municipalities of West Hartford, Hartford and Bloomfield as well as parts of Newington, New Britain, Farmington and Wethersfield, are within the Park River drainage area that largely overlaps 7 of the 8 MDC voting member town.

Our organizational goal is to improve the water quality and ecosystem health of water courses and water bodies that enhance neighborhood character even within high-density urban development. Park Watershed fundamentally advocates for a 21st century economy that conserves our regenerative resources – such as water and robust, healthy ecosystems that benefit Connecticut communities that have a desirable, sustainable quality of life.

This work concentrates on improvements to urban-suburban landscapes that receive, filter and recharge stream flows. Green infrastructure has emerged as a key 21st century planning strategy that captures stormwater run-off from large parking, roadways and rooftops into landscape design features that filter non-point source pollution and recharge ground water. Moreover, green infrastructure has also generated new jobs, and a new green economy in cities and towns across America. Through my work, I have visited numerous green infrastructure projects at the UConn Storrs campus; in Boston; New York City; Philadelphia; Chicago; San Francisco; Denver; Portland OR, and Kansas City, . . .

LOCAL JOBS: This point is relevant to the language of Bill No. 422, because MDC leadership has not demonstrated a robust interest in new jobs for Hartford metro-area citizens. The Clean Water Project is a \$2.4 billion dollars paid city and state taxpayers has transformed the MDC from an organization that at one time spent ~\$5 million per year upgrading infrastructure to a budget of ~ \$50 million dollars per year on the Clean Water Project, which involves enlarging the wastewater treatment plant and separating combined sewers. Most of the “traditional” infrastructure construction jobs have been awarded to experienced crews from MA and RI. While this is reasonable from a cost perspective, the MDC had the opportunity to invest relatively small amounts of the Clean Water Project on green infrastructure which would offer new local jobs and mitigate climate change.

I served as a member of the MDC Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to the Clean Water Project as representative of the Park River Watershed Revitalization Initiative, a project that preceded the 501c3 organization, Park Watershed. From September 2004 through ~December 2014, I attended monthly meetings for the MDC CAC, as well as a sub-committee that encouraged the MDC to integrate green infrastructure into the MDC Clean Water Project. Unfortunately, the MDC chose *not* to invest in systemic development of green infrastructure for stormwaters management – even though the Obama administration’s EPA Office of Water clearly supports growth of green infrastructure – because of the economic benefits and new jobs created by green infrastructure project work.

Park Watershed
a 501c3 urban-suburban citizen stewardship organization for the Park River regional watershed



P.O. Box 271646
West Hartford, Connecticut 06127

The MDC Citizens Advisory Committee meetings ended unexpectedly ~ 2 years ago. Former CAC members, who had received regular MDC emails updates no longer receive any email updates on the Clean Water Project. To my knowledge, none of the former CAC members received any email notice regarding a public hearing related to a sewer surcharge discount.

Due to repeated state budget cuts, reductions in CT DEEP staff has limited state oversight of the MDC Clean Water Project along with other infrastructure projects throughout the state. Because the MDC has received millions of dollars from the federal government, the CT Clean Water Fund, http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2688&Q=438546&depNav_GID=1511 and resident ratepayers, our elected officials ought to be looking more closely at how the MDC is spending taxpayer dollars – and how relatively small spending decisions could grow new local jobs for engineers, landscape designers, plant nurseries, and landscaping labor crews.

Water utilities that have accepted the need to focus on core resources, such as water conservation – are developing important new conservation technology and new job opportunities. Past MDC leadership worked with the Hartford Marathon to develop a water tank truck with rows of drinking fountains in order to reduce plastic bottles used by runners.

Citizens of Connecticut need future MDC and municipal leadership to recognize, and support 21st century economic **resiliency** in their voting member towns. We all know the need to mitigate climate change is urgent – yet every day, decision makers who manage taxpayer dollars continue with business as usual. Connecticut is blessed to be in a region that receives 45+ inches of precipitation per year. However increasingly intense rain or snow storms are followed by longer stretches of drought. In 2014, City of Cambridge Massachusetts conducted a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment <http://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/Projects/Climate/climatechangeresilianceandadaptation.aspx> that research revealed that 90 degree days and 100 degree days likely to double by 2030. Thus, while there are now less than 10 days per year where temperatures exceed 90 degrees, in 2030, the Cambridge Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment projects 20 -30 days per year of 90 -100 degree heat. By 2070, greenhouse gases are not reduced, the duration of 90-100 degree heat waves will triple to 60 days, which would be two months of 90-100 degree days. The MDC ought to seriously study climate change impacts, rather than using past data (*from 1967?*) to project future reservoir capacity.

The Bloomfield Citizens have done an outstanding job researching the real costs of the Niagara water bottling facility to MDC ratepayers. Hopefully our state elected representatives and elected officials in the 8 voting member municipalities will insist that citizens of Connecticut do not pay extra for tax incentives that will benefit a private company from California. For this reason, Park Watershed recommends Planning and Development Committee *support* Proposed Substitute Bill No. 422 LCO No. 2975. **More importantly, the state ought to put a moratorium on the Niagara Bloomfield water bottling facility until the state water planning process is complete.**

Thank you for this opportunity to share my perspective,

Mary Rickel Pelletier
Founding Director of Park Watershed