CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony Regarding Raised Senate Bill No. 300
Public Health Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
March 7, 2016

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health 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. 300, **AN ACT CONCERNING NEW BRITAIN WATER COMPANY LAND.** (SB300)

As the umbrella organization for the state's land conservation community, CLCC works with land trusts (now numbering over 137), other 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. Consistent with our mission, ensuring the permanent protection of lands valuable for conservation purposes is a priority for our organization.

CLCC opposes SB 300 because it would set a dangerous precedent for the protection of drinking water watershed lands. Pursuant to state water policy and law, Class I and II lands are protected and preserved to safeguard the quality of our state's water resources. The law provides that because these are lands located closest to water supply sources they require a state Department of Public Health permit to transfer or change their use.

SB 300 would allow New Britain to lease approximately 100 acres of the city's water department's Class I and II land in Plainville for the purpose of rock mining. The lease also would include about 30 acres of Class III land. The mining, adjacent to an existing quarry, is expected to continue for up to 40 years.

Permitting the project to move forward will serve to undercut the strict protections on Class I and II lands currently accorded under state law, not only posing a risk of adverse impacts to highly valuable water supplies, but also setting a dangerous precedent for further erosion of such laws and for requests for similar activities from others in the future.

We respectfully contend that evaluating the merits of a change of use today based on proposed outcomes over 40 years should require the utmost scrutiny -- particularly when the nature of the changed use poses significant risk of adverse impacts to lands statutorily protected for the purpose of safeguarding the state's water resources. At a minimum, we request that a decision on this project be postponed until it can be evaluated and implemented pursuant to a comprehensive statewide water plan currently being developed by the Water Planning Council.

A bill supporting an almost identical project was proposed in 2007; it was ultimately repealed. CLCC respectfully requests that this bill and this project likewise be rejected.

Thank you for your consideration. We would be happy to provide additional information or answer any questions you may have.

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