FOR THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY OF RIVERS ALLIANCE OF CONNECTICUT
February 3, 2017

HB 5502 AA Requiring the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to Decide Commercial Project Applications within Ninety Days

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is a statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect 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.

And Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

Rivers Alliance is opposed to this bill. It is not clear why commercial applications should be treated differently than industrial, residential, religious, and other types of applications. Moreover, commercial projects frequently involve more than one application, and there can be complicated sequencing of these applications. Frequently, in our experience, delays are the result of DEEP trying to help the applicant (or, the applicant gaming the system).

Rivers Alliance has in the past advocated for a team approach to complex applications, and we believe this is still worth considering.

In the past few years, DEEP has greatly accelerated its processing of applications, at least in the areas that involve water issues; we cannot speak to other types of projects. DEEP almost never itself proposes a public hearing, and, usually, tries to dissuade advocates from requesting a hearing. In our view, marginal applications tend to get the benefit of the doubt.

Certainly DEEP could do better, in theory. But when funding is reduced year after year, it seems unfair to ask for work to be done faster, with more elaborate processes, even if these processes might be desirable under different conditions.

Thank you for your attention. We would be happy to answer questions.

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