



CONNECTICUT RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

The River Connects Us

Lower Valley: deKoven House, 27 Washington St., Middletown, CT 06457

For the Public Health Committee

Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Lower River Steward

March 10, 2017

The Connecticut River Watershed Council is the principal nonprofit environmental advocate for protection, restoration, and sustainable use of the Connecticut River and its watershed.

In SUPPORT of Raised Bill 7221 – Access to Water Planning Information

Connecticut is closer than it has ever been to developing a State Water Plan. The Connecticut Legislature put a considerable amount of effort, time, and resources into crafting what is now PA 14-163 An Act Concerning the Responsibilities of the Water Planning Council which outlines the elements necessary to ensure that we are managing our state's most valuable resource fairly and sustainably.

Currently, some of the critical data that will be used to develop recommendations and decision making tools for the State Water Plan are protected by the Freedom of Information Act and are not available to the public *or even to the stakeholders who are actively involved in the development of the plan*. To be clear, there is certainly information within the Water Supply Plans of water utilities that is sensitive and should be protected. However, we don't believe the information this bill will make available, which would allow the public and stakeholders to verify the data on which recommendations and decision making tools are based that are critical to the state water plan, falls into this category. We cannot protect our public trust resource without making this information available. In regard to Emergency Supply plans, customers and advocates should have the ability to know if such plans adequately protect existing customers and the resource from predictable emergencies or to determine if changes in rate structure or the business practices of the utility may threaten adequate supply and parity for all users (including our rivers and streams) in times of drought.

In order put forward the State Water Plan that this body asked for and in which the public can have confidence, we urge you to pass RB 7221.

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