



**For the Environment Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, River Steward
March 16, 2018**

Since 1952, the Connecticut River Conservancy (formerly the Connecticut River Watershed Council) has worked to protect your rivers from source to sea so everyone can enjoy them. Our rivers belong to all of us. We are their voice. This means we find environmental problems and fix them, across all four river states. We run community river cleanups. We remove deadbeat dams. We plant trees. We protect and restore wildlife. We speak up on behalf of your rivers.

Oppose RB 338 – An Act Concerning the Use of Community Investment Account Funds for Combatting Invasive Species

Thank you for your efforts to find a creative way to fund the extremely important work of invasive species control. However, the Community Investment Act fund is already insufficient to fund its core priority of open space.

In future efforts to find an appropriate funding source for invasive species control, please remember that aquatic invasive plants are a serious problem in our rivers as well as lakes and ponds. European water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) and *Hydrilla* are very serious threats in the Connecticut River watershed. CRC is working hard to manage water chestnut through volunteer monitoring and removal. Management of *Hydrilla*, however, is complicated and expensive. It is spreading rapidly and has a very real potential to overtake the beautiful coves along our river. Aquatic plant biologists have noted that the strain found in the Connecticut River particularly vigorous. It is imperative that we have access to available funding for control in our rivers.

Strongly Opposes RB 347 – An Act Concerning Consent Orders Entered into by the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

The Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's authority to issue and revoke consent orders should not be compromised, therefore, we strongly oppose this bill. Undermining this authority and allowing a party to bypass the administrative process will make it much harder to fix serious environmental problems that jeopardize public health and economic development.

Supports RB 5454 – An Act Concerning Ninety-Day Permit Turnaround Times for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

This bill will repair the damage done by the eleventh hour language inserted into budget bill 1502. The review process for several of the permit programs singled out and passed into law through 1502 are complex and without thorough investigation could have serious negative impacts on our

environment and public health. Previous attempts to legislate automatic permit approvals through fair and democratic methods have been judiciously moderated by this committee. Please pass this bill.

Strongly Supports RB 5457 – An Act Concerning Bottle Redemption Centers

Redemption centers and dealers are operating their businesses on fees established in 1980. They have not received a raise in 38 years! Think about how difficult it would be to operate your business or household on revenues that haven't changed in four decades. The beverage industry has fought this measure every year because they do not want to be held financially responsible for the waste they create. The time is long overdue for you to stand up to the beverage industry and raise the handling fee so that the container deposit program can continue to reduce litter and increase recycling rates for future generations.