



Connecticut Fund
for the Environment

Save the Sound®

Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound

Before the Environment Committee

In Support, with modification

**HB 5130 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SEWAGE SPILL RIGHT-TO-KNOW ACT AND
EXPANDING CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR WASTEWATER
OPERATORS.**

Submitted by: Bill Lucey, Soundkeeper

February 23, 2018

Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) is a non-profit organization with over 4,700 member households statewide. CFE, its bi-state program Save the Sound, and its Soundkeeper protect and improve the land, air, and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound. We use legal and scientific expertise and bring citizens together to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.

Dear Sens. Kennedy and Miner, Reps. Demicco and Reyes and Members of the Committee:

Connecticut Fund for the Environment and its bi-state program Save the Sound (CFE/Save the Sound) writes to ask that you support protecting the health of the public, our waterways, and Long Island Sound by strengthening, and then passing HB 5130 out of committee. We are grateful that the committee has recognized the importance of this issue, and of protecting the public health in light of continued raw sewage discharges and spills. CFE/Save the Sound looks forward to working with you and other stakeholders as you consider the existing language and possible modifications.

Clean water is essential to our health and quality of life. Connecticut relies on our lakes, rivers, and shorelines for drinking water, recreation, and tourism. With federal enforcement of the Clean Water Act getting laxer by the day, it will be critical that states utilize their ability to protect the people from serious economic, environmental, and health risks from polluted waters. *River users, whether fishermen, duck hunters, paddlers, swimmers or just someone throwing a ball for their dog has the right to know if sewage is contaminating the water they are using.* Last fall 5 million gallons of sewage dumped into the Naugatuck River and people fishing downstream had no idea what was coming at them. Most spills come from CSO's but together there are millions of gallons of overflows and spills every year. It is time to let the public know.

Health Effects

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, up to 3.5 million Americans become ill each year from recreational waters contaminated by sewage. Health impacts from raw sewage include gastrointestinal problems, respiratory infections, and fevers. It can even cause long-term chronic conditions such as liver, heart, or kidney failure, as well as arthritis and cancer.



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Environmental Impacts

Sewage pollution contribute to contaminated fish and shellfish, and destruction of aquatic life. It also leads to algal blooms, which cause unhealthy fish populations and creates serious health risks if eaten. Contaminated sediment, which has toxic effects on aquatic life, has emerged as a chronic ecological and human health issue throughout Long Island Sound and its tributaries.

Economic Impacts

Contaminated water leads to serious financial burdens for communities due to cleanup expenses, emergency repairs, lost tourism revenue, lost productivity, and medical treatment. Beach closures alone are responsible for economic losses of \$1–2 billion annually in the U.S. LIS commercial shellfish operators are forced to lay off workers when oysters and clams become contaminated.

Please strengthen the Sewage Right to Know Act:

- **Require Quick Public Notification and Annual Report**
- **Add Electronic Reporting and Disclosure**
- **Expand Definition of Sewage Spill**

Connecticut has a long and vibrant history of cutting edge environmental protection. We produced the first comprehensive clean water laws in the country and we owe it to current residents and future generations to continue that legacy. **Please strengthen and support HB 5130.**

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Bill Lucey
Soundkeeper

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