FOR THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY OF RIVERS ALLIANCE OF CONNECTICUT
March 15, 2019

RE: H.B. No. 7206. A A T A B L I S H I N G A PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES AND HYDROPOWER FACILITIES
Oppose if hydropower dams are included.

And Honorable Members of the Committee:

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 providing education on water stewardship.

We ask the committee to exclude hydropower from the exemptions proposed in Bill 7206. With hydropower, there is a direct trade-off between public benefit and public harm, that is, between clean energy (good) and river destruction (not good). A dam on a river chokes off the vital continuity of living organisms and biochemical chemical processes. It’s like a permanent tourniquet.

Although our mission is to protect rivers, we often accept this benefit-harm trade-off. We do not automatically oppose hydropower. However, the most environmentally harmful form of hydropower, relative to the clean energy benefits, is small, new, dam-based hydropower, such as hydropower for a residential property or farm. We advocate for the maximization of productivity at established hydropower facilities. Very occasionally a new hydro project can improve river health if it is offset by dam removal, typically downstream. But hydropower at the residential scale typically involves choking off an entire river to gain a small amount of electricity. Moreover, even small hydro dams require regular, skilled maintenance. The average homeowner or farmer is not in a position to commit to such maintenance; for one thing the property may change owners a number of times.

We ask you to avoid providing a tax incentive to develop small, new hydropower projects. We already have some 5,000 dams on Connecticut rivers. We need fewer, not more.

Thank you for your attention and work

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