



**For the Environment Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director
January 27, 2023**

Rivers Alliance was formed to fight for sound water policies at the state and federal levels, to provide education on water resources, and to advocate for any person or group striving to protect water. If you want clean, free-flowing and healthy rivers, and high-quality drinking water, Rivers Alliance is here to help.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the following raised bill before you today.

SB 896 AAC TREE REMOVAL ON PROPERTIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION – Support with Modifications

One of the two primary objectives of the Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GC3) was to “[d]evelop and implement adaptation strategies to assess and prepare for the impacts of climate change in areas such as infrastructure, agriculture, natural resources, and public health.” This effort was led by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and included a Working and Natural Lands Workgroup that was coordinated by DEEP’s Bureau of Natural Resources. A focus of the reports produced by the sub-groups working within the WNL Workgroup were ecosystem services and nature-based solutions.

Protecting and enhancing our existing natural resources is the easiest and most cost effective way to combat the impacts of climate change. Our forests and trees sequester carbon, provide relief from extreme heat events, and protect water quality. Trees along our waterways slow bank erosion and provide habitat for fish and other animals and invertebrates.

It is very important that DEEP lead by example by incorporating best practices and the recommendations of the GC3 into its management of properties under their control.

Tree removal at Housatonic Meadows State Park exposed flaws in DEEP’s process for identifying hazard trees for removal. While DEEP has improved stakeholder engagement for tree removal on state land, concerns from professional arborists remain that DEEP could and should revamp their identification process to avoid removal of healthy trees that provide important ecosystem services.

The public hearing element of the bill, however, should be reconsidered so that it is not unnecessarily burdensome on DEEP's resources and will not impede removal of trees that are truly a hazard.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support and comments on this proposed bill.

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