



**For the Planning and Development Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director
February 15, 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 bills before you today.

HB 6647 AAC THE STATE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Connecticut's forests, wetlands, riparian buffers and so many more of our natural resources in their natural state will be the cheapest and most cost effective solution to minimizing and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Water quality degradation, toxic algal blooms, increased flooding, and acceleration of drought impacts are the cumulative result of land-use change decisions that do not adequately take the value of the ecosystem services that our natural lands provide into consideration.

I am currently a Co-chair of the CT Water Planning Council Advisory Group and served on the Policy Subcommittee during the development of Connecticut's first State Water Plan (SWP). I also chaired the Rivers Sub-working group of the Working and Natural Lands Workgroup for the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3.) The SWP and GC3 processes required a dedication of resources from our agencies and significant amount of volunteer time from representatives of many respected organizations, dedicated experts and concerned, informed citizens.

It is imperative that the time, money and effort to develop these plans and recommendations bring about the necessary changes needed to address the impacts of climate change. Other planning efforts and statutory/regulatory/permitting/land-use decision processes should not remain "siloes" and disconnected from implementation of consensus recommendations.

The State Plan of Conservation and Development is a cornerstone for our land-use decisions. Climate change is already having an impact on our state resources and local communities. Climate change as well as an alignment with recommendations of other state plans and initiatives should be up front and center in this proposed language. This could be an opportunity to curb land-use decisions that provide short-term financial benefit for very few, but will end up being a financial burden for all of us a decade or two in the future.