



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Keith Ainsworth,
Acting Chair

Alicea Charamut

David Kalafa

Kip Kolesinskas

Matthew Reiser

Charles Vidich

William Warzecha

Paul Aresta
Executive Director

March 9, 2023

Re: House Bill 6809 - An Act Concerning Financial Incentives for Certain Streamside Buffers and Committee Bill 5214 - An Act Concerning the Conservation of Certain Waters and Lands of the Upper Farmington River.

Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko, Vice Chairs Sen. Hochadel and Rep. Palm, Ranking Members Sen. Harding and Rep. Callahan, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) is a nine-member board that works independently of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to assess the condition of Connecticut's environment and report its findings annually to the Governor; recommend actions to improve state environmental programs; advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed projects; and investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.

The Council **supports** House Bill 6809 that would 1) provide a mechanism for establishing conservation easements along streams and rivers in the state and 2) require that these easements remain in a vegetated condition. Riparian buffers provide for many important functions, including but not limited to reducing erosion, reducing non-point pollutants from entering streams and rivers¹, and providing critical habitat. The Council recommends that the definition of "vegetated condition" in the proposed bill not restrict the removal and or control of invasive plants within any designated conservation easement.

The Council also **supports** Committee Bill 5214 that would require DEEP to study how best to conserve land and riparian rights in the Upper Farmington River Valley and its watershed area. This is especially important if the status of the land changes and is no longer protected as a drinking water supply watershed. The Council recommends that the legislature include provisions for both proposed bills that would encourage public engagement and consideration of stakeholder comments.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Paul Aresta,
Executive Director

¹ The Case for Riparian Corridor Protections, Western Connecticut Council of Governments, August 10, 2021; <https://westcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/WestCOG-Riparian-Protections-and-Zoning-Strategies.pdf>