



TESTIMONY **IN SUPPORT OF**
HB 6809 AAC FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR CERTAIN STREAMSIDE BUFFERS
March 9, 2023

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

From: Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

Thank you for raising HB 6809 and considering the importance of investing in riparian buffers along rivers and streams. If passed, this bill would enable funding to address pollution from stormwater runoff and other water quality issues.

FAST FACTS

- ◆ Riparian buffers are one of the **most cost-effective ways to reduce pollution from contaminated runoff**, or other nonpoint sources by filtering nutrients, pesticides, and animal waste.
- ◆ Riparian buffers reduce nutrient loading and moderate stream temperatures, which **lead to harmful algal blooms in surface water bodies** and **contribute to the hypoxic conditions in Long Island Sound**.
- ◆ Riparian buffers **control erosion and flooding** by slowing down runoff and providing space for flood waters to go.
- ◆ Riparian buffer protection can support MS4 permitting requirements and **reduce costs to towns** in implementing expensive engineered green infrastructure.
- ◆ Riparian buffers provide **critical habitat for wildlife** and are important **flyways for migratory birds**.
- ◆ Tree canopy cover in a 5 meter riparian area in an urban setting can reduce temperatures up to 6°C. Riparian corridors are on average up to 3°C cooler than non-riparian areas under extreme hot weather.
- ◆ The lack of consistent protections of riparian buffers contributes to the **loss of headwater streams and cold-water habitat** which are essential for viable native cold-water species such as brook trout.

Connecticut has the least protective buffer standards of all the New England states. And yet, these vegetated buffers are one of the most cost-effective and efficient nature-based solutions to reducing pollution. Riparian buffers will continue to disappear and impact water quality until Connecticut establishes specific protections for riparian buffers along wetlands and watercourses. The problem is urgent due to climate change and increasing development pressures, which cause water quality degradation, flooding, and drought.

Investing in riparian buffers is a simple and effective nature-based solution to address water pollution. Please support HB 6809.



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