

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 248
Public Health Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
March 21, 2022

Co-Chairs Daugherty Abrams and Steinberg, Vice-Chairs Anwar, Kushner, and Gilchrest, Ranking Members Hwang, Somers, and Petit, and members of the Public Health Committee:

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) is the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its ~130 land trusts. We advocate for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and work to ensure the long-term strength and viability of land conservation in Connecticut. CLCC was a member of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) Forests Sub-Group and, more recently, a member of the Policy on Resilient Forests for Connecticut's Future (PRFCT Forest) Working Group.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in support of **Senate Bill No. 248, An Act Concerning The Connecticut Drinking Water Supply (with suggested modification.)**

Designated and observed by the United Nations, today (3/21) is International Day of Forests and tomorrow (3/22) is World Water Day. It is fitting that we have an opportunity to celebrate these days one after another – promoting the importance and interrelationship between healthy forests and clean water.

Healthy forests are critical to providing clean water, including our drinking water. From the GC3 Forest Sub-Group Report¹:

Forests are also indispensable in production of our drinking water. Approximately 85% of Connecticut residents get their drinking water from public water systems. Forests that surround public water supply reservoirs and private wells improve water quality and can greatly reduce costs for treatment by filtering surface water and maintaining groundwater reserves, ensuring this vital natural resource is not degraded. Forested wetlands and floodplains along rivers retain and slow the movement of vast quantities of water during storm events, protecting nearby municipalities from flooding and reducing stormwater runoff. Forests can positively impact the quantity, quality and filtration costs associated with a city's water, sometimes even reducing the need for costly concrete and steel infrastructure. (GC3 Forests Sub-Group Report Page 15)

CLCC supports SB 248 which recognizes the critical connection between forests (and other natural and working lands) and water quality by requiring the Connecticut Siting Council to consider drinking water supply watersheds when reviewing the siting of utility scale solar infrastructure. To further strengthen the bill, CLCC suggests removing the reference to acreage and extending the review to any land in a drinking water supply watershed on line 41 as requested by the CT Council on Soil & Water Conservation in its testimony.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments, and for all you do. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Climate-Change/GC3/GC3-Working-group-reports>

