CONNECTICUT RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL
The River Connects Us
deKoven House 27 Washington St., Middletown, CT 06457

Ms. Traci Lott
Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse,
Planning and Standards Division
79 Elm St.
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Comments from CRWC on Proposed Water Quality Standards

Dear Ms. Lott:

After careful review, I would like to submit the following comments regarding the Proposed Water Quality Standards on behalf of the Connecticut River Watershed Council. The Connecticut River Watershed Council is a non-profit organization which promotes recreation, advocacy, outreach and restoration for the Connecticut River and its tributaries.

CRWC supports CT DEP's movement toward classifications based upon EPA's Tierred Aquatic Life Uses and eventually effects-based water quality criteria, so long as these do not eliminate precautionary measures. We feel that the EPA tiers for antidegradation are the perfect next step to build upon the antidegradation standards Connecticut has had in place. It is critical that we are able to track changes in water quality before a water body jumps from healthy to impaired. BCG analysis, including the benthic macroinvertebrate multimetric index, and later, other indices, is the most current scientific way to do this. CRWC agrees that Connecticut's dissolved oxygen (DO) standards need to match those being implemented in New York and Long Island, because Long Island Sound is regional resource which we share. However, in the proposed standards, it is not clear that the decision to uphold New York DO standards is scientifically based. We also support subjecting estuaries to DO regulation at a pro-rated level. In addition, we are in favor of including macrophyte criteria in the Lake Trophic Standards. One addition we would also recommend, possibly in the section regarding assessment of environmental value on the bottom of page 3, is that preservation of native species assemblages be taken into account.

CRWC would like CT DEP to re-examine the proposed sewage treatment standards. Although it may be convenient to use I-95 as barrier to divide waste water treatment plants (WWTP's) which should continuously treat their effluent from those that only need to provide seasonal treatment, this does not come across as a science-based policy. We encourage DEP to consider associating geographic features or latitudes with this demarcation. Furthermore, the most severe sewage contamination of the Connecticut River is the stretch from Hartford to Middletown, which lies north of I-95. CRWC would like to see Connecticut adopt sewage treatment standards that match those implemented upstream in Massachusetts. There, sewage treatment is required April 1 through October 31. Many recreational groups in Connecticut are on the river during those months and are disturbed by the fact that raw sewage is released into the river at times when they use it. The Glastonbury, Farmington, Avon, Xavier, and Lewis Mills crew teams begin practice on the river as early as March 22. Weather-permitting, the Trinity and

Wesleyan crew teams, each amounting to 60-80 athletes, are on the river February 15th. Middletown's Head of the Connecticut Regatta attracts 1000 competitors and the Riverfront Recapture regatta attracts 2500 rowers from both within and outside of the state. These events are annually held in October. The proposed regulations prevent these individuals from safely using the river to its full capacity.

CRWC is pleased that CT DEP is making strides in managing anthropogenic nutrient loads to freshwater systems. Nonetheless, there are a few changes we would recommend for the associated document, "Connecticut Methodology for Freshwater Nutrient Management Technical Support Document." On page 1, the word "available" should be inserted in the phrase, "...encouraging algal growth which reduces the light available to plant leaves and stems." On page 2, the word "water" should be inserted in the phrase, "...goals for total phosphorus that are fully protective of water uses." We also recommend that the parenthetical note on the same page read, "(streams without or with very little human disturbance)." In Table 1, the phrase, "agricultural land" should be added to the box which reads, "Upstream Drainage Area Contains Greater than 25%." On page 3, the word "stream" should be "streams" in the phrase, "...wetlands function like forests by filtering nutrient loads to surrounding streams." The word "than" should replace the word "that" in the phrase, "...quantities of sediment that may be of different composition than the 'natural' underlying sediment" on the same page. On page 6, the parentheses around Cleland 2003 should be removed, Table 3 should be capitalized, and the subscription of "i" should be consistent in the text. The word "than" should be replaced with the word "that" in the phrase, "...anthropogenic eutrophication of a resource that may not be currently assessed..." on page 8. Lastly, the points for the Waste Water Treatment Plants category in Figure 9 also require explanation. None of the other categories have points marked outside of their standard deviations.

CRWC would also like to see more explanation for some of the decisions made in the design of the Freshwater Nutrient Management study. For example, why is change in water flow due to storms estimated with a ¼" storm? Perhaps it is the typical storm seen in Connecticut today, but this may not be the case in future times. The logic behind this decision should be provided so that future generations can adapt the work done in this study as they revisit the Water Quality Standards. Similarly, an explanation as to why WWTP's which contribute more than 2% and not some other percentage of the phosphorus load to an impaired water body are considered significant.

In addition, several of the points addressed in this study raise questions for follow-through. As its very title indicates, this study only examined the impact of phosphorus on freshwater systems. Should not WWTP's operating along the Connecticut River or Long Island Sound estuaries also be subject to regulation of their phosphorus output? Secondly, the study suggests that any future development which would increase the phosphorus load in a watershed will implement best management practices (BMP's). This implies the need for a watchdog to keep an eye on development proposals, because BMP's can be but are not always required. Otherwise, the assumption made in these calculations that BMP's will be implemented needs to be retracted.

Our final comment pertains to the third element of the Water Quality Standards, the Classification Maps. We did not find any apparent problems with the information portrayed in the maps, but we believe that they would be easier to read and therefore more useful if a more appropriate color scheme was selected to indicate the various categories. It is intuitive that clean water is blue and dirty water is brown. However, we recommend that DEP build on this and

designate the cleanest water the darkest shade of blue and transition through lighter shades of blue and lighter shades of brown, until the least-pristine water classification is the darkest shade of brown. A similar approach with graded coloring should be taken when representing the Groundwater Classifications.

In closing, we appreciate the time and effort CT DEP has dedicated to ensuring that these water quality standards serve their purposes to the best of our state's ability at this time. Thank you for considering CRWC's comments.

Sincerely,

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