

**Public Health Committee
Energy and Technology Committee
Environment Committee
Planning and Development Committee**

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Consideration of the Connecticut State Water Plan

Testimony Submitted by:

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The Metropolitan District (MDC), a public non-profit municipal corporation, was created by the General Assembly in 1929 to provide quality potable water and sewer systems for people and businesses located in the greater Hartford area. Today, the MDC is comprised of eight member towns, Bloomfield, East Hartford, Hartford, Newington, Rocky Hill, West Hartford, Wethersfield and Windsor, and provides potable water services to over 400,000 people located within these eight member towns as well as parts of East Granby, Farmington, Glastonbury, Portland, South Windsor and Windsor Locks. It is governed by a Board of Commissioners which includes twenty-nine appointed voting members representing each of the eight towns and four non-voting members representing East Granby, South Windsor, Glastonbury and Farmington.

On July 1, 1930, the MDC started operations by assuming responsibility for the 9.5 billion gallon Nepaug Reservoir, located in the towns of Burlington, Canton and New Hartford, the 3 billion gallon "Compensating Reservoir" (a/k/a Lake McDonough) located in New Hartford and Barkhamsted, as well as five smaller reservoirs located in West Hartford and Bloomfield. A year later, construction of the Barkhamsted Reservoir began. Today, the Barkhamsted Reservoir is the largest single water supply reservoir in the State with a capacity of 30.3 billion gallons. In anticipation of further growth, the West Branch Reservoir and Goodwin Dam (once known as the Hogback Dam) were built. The MDC manages a total of 16 billion gallons in reservoirs on the West Branch of the Farmington River, West Branch Reservoir and Colebrook River Lake. With these additional reservoirs, the MDC manages and controls almost 60 billion gallons of water.

Water released through Goodwin Dam now helps the ecosystem of the Farmington River by enhancing flow during extended dry periods. The MDC typically releases an average of more than 150 million gallons of water per day from Goodwin Dam directly into the Farmington River. MDC releases a minimum of 50 cubic feet per second (cfs), which is equal to 32.5 million gallons per day, even during dry extended dry periods when natural river flows would be 10 cfs or less. As a result, this section of the Farmington River has received a federal designation as a Wild and Scenic River, and the MDC has been exempted from streamflow regulations.

The MDC charges its customers the actual cost of supplying its water, with no profit. As noted above, the MDC Board includes appointed representatives from the eight member towns, all of which are appointed by either this legislature, the Governor or the governing body of the member town. None of these commissioners receive any compensation for their services.

In order to protect its reservoirs and to insure that no contaminants reach its pristine water, the MDC is the second largest owner of land in the State, currently owning more than 25,000 acres of watershed property in Connecticut that is regulated by the State Department of Public Health. The MDC also owns more than 6,200 acres of watershed property in Massachusetts. The land, the dams, the extensive infrastructure, and the treatment plants which provide water to over 400,000 residents were all constructed or purchased with public money.

The MDC allows public recreation on much of its property. These recreational opportunities, which include hiking, biking, boating, fishing and swimming are enjoyed by tens of thousands of people annually. The MDC is the second largest provider of public recreation in the state, after the State itself.

Since the MDC is a regional body, governed by unpaid volunteers, providing water at cost, with assets obtained through public funds, we would submit that the MDC is a "public trust." The commissioners are entrusted by the public with the responsibility of managing and protecting MDC's watersheds and water resource assets in order to provide water which is clean, safe and affordable to all, as well as supporting the public trust through its public recreation programs. We would respectfully submit that any addition to the State Water Plan adding language which seeks to define the ownership of this public asset as a public trust is duplicative and unnecessary, potentially wresting control of a public asset from the public which created it.

With this strong reservation regarding the inclusion of the term "public trust," the MDC supports the adoption of the State Water Plan.