



March 7, 2024

TESTIMONY OF  
KEITH CAGLE, PRESIDENT  
FRIENDS OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN  
ON  
HB 5355 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONSERVATION OF CERTAIN WATERS AND LANDS OF THE  
UPPER FARMINGTON RIVER

Co-Chairs Lopes and Gresko, Ranking Members Harding and Callahan and Members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Keith Cagle and I am President of Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen, a nonprofit 501(c)(4) advocating for the preservation of hunting, fishing, trapping and recreational shooting for current and future generations of Connecticut residents. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 5355 An Act Concerning the Conservation of Certain Waters and lands of the Upper Farmington River.

The operation of Colebrook Dam seems to be a regulatory hot potato, caught between the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) the US Army Corps of Engineers and DEEP, somewhere in between, resulting in impacts to the flow of the River and jeopardizing its viability and habitat.

As you know, the Farmington River is Connecticut's largest and most valuable trout fishery that attracts anglers from around the Country. The trout population expanded in response to changes made by DEEP over the years, including establishing Trout Management Areas, improving fishing regulations, and implementing an innovative Survivor Trout Program. Recent data indicates that the total number of trout fishing trips is likely around 100,000 annually – double that of its previous DEEP reported 50,000 per year back in the 1980s..

But today, more than fifty years of cooperative work is at risk due to the MDC's ongoing effort to terminate its contract with the US Army Corps of Engineers over operation of Colebrook Dam. The result is uncertainty over how, and by whom, approximately 10 billion gallons of water storage capacity will be managed into the future. No one seems to be leading the effort with an eye toward developing a plan for maintaining the ecological and recreational benefits that the Farmington River provides and Connecticut residents have enjoyed for more than a half-century.

The bill before you contains language that studies the need for a plan. Respectfully, that option is insufficient. A study of a plan isn't needed; *a plan is needed*. The plan must reinstitute flow regimes that support and enhance aquatic life and recreational opportunities of this nationally recognized gem.

The buck stops here. The Environment Committee can act to ensure that the Farmington River flows continue uninterrupted. On behalf of more than 100,000 Sportsmen in the State of Connecticut, I urge you to do just that.

Thank you.