

February 6, 2017

To: Members of the Environmental Committee

I am writing on behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association in support of HB6123, the bill introduced to help control excessive tree removal work the DOT has been doing along state highways. While the removal of dead tree limbs and dead trees for public safety is needed of course, excessive tree removal is expensive, harmful and unnecessary.

All trees, but especially roadside trees, are important for stormwater control and flood mitigation as well as for the protection of our surface waters and groundwater-drinking water supplies. Our highways become fast moving streams of dirty contaminated water during storm events. Roadside trees and other vegetation along with healthy (uncompacted) soils can help filter and remove toxic pollutants before they can reach our surface waters. Highway stormwater pollutants include heavy metals such as zinc, lead, and cadmium; sulphates; petroleum products; bacteria and de-icing salts.

Some of the DOT tree removal seems to have been done with little or no consideration for the health and sustainability of roadside wetland areas. Retaining trees in wetland areas is key to their healthy functioning, for water purification, groundwater re-charge, shade and flood control. In addition, trees act as noise buffers and provide privacy. Many homeowners along the Merritt Parkway have lost a large measure of privacy and noise abatement from the buffer that was provided by trees removed for no apparent reason. There is a real decline in property values in both residential and commercial areas where excessive tree removal takes place. There is a real and significant dollar value associated with the ecological services roadside trees provide. They should not be cut down unless absolutely necessary.

Our mission at the Norwalk River Watershed Association is to protect the water quality and natural habitat of the watershed, and we strongly support HB6123.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Y Craig, Secretary

Norwalk River Watershed Association

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