

February 22, 2018

Dear Honorable Senator Miner, Senator Kennedy, Representative Demicco and distinguished members of the environment committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association which has a network of over 1000 active participants working to protect and improve water quality and wildlife habitat in our 7-town watershed. We urge the environment committee to approve SB 103 "An Act Concerning Hydraulic Fracturing Waste in CT." It is time for the state to act to protect our waterways from this toxic, radioactive waste. In the Norwalk River watershed, we have begun to act locally because of the lack of action on the state level. Redding has just passed an ordinance banning waste from oil and gas extraction processes and Weston, Ridgefield and Norwalk have votes scheduled.

At the Norwalk Ordinance Committee meeting this week, the room was overflowing with residents who came to support a ban on this waste. Speakers included a Norwalk Community College student as well as her professor, a resident who has seen the devastation this waste has brought to her family's property in Western Pennsylvania, an Oyster industry employee, and many more.

Richard Harris of Copps Island Oysters, who has devoted his life to protecting and improving water quality in the Norwalk River, pointed out that water quality in Norwalk Harbor is much improved over the last 20 years (reports available at norwalkriver.org). He added that the oyster industry brings in a commercial harvest worth \$30 million a year. This figure does not include the value of recreational oyster harvests. In Norwalk 77,000 acres are considered oyster grounds and roughly 600 people are directly involved in harvesting. This number does not include many hundreds more that make up the fringe employment, truck drivers, shippers, inspectors, etc. The kelp industry is a new arrival, with a defined market still emerging. Another new industry underway is a large-scale effort to raise oysters on land through the early larval stages when they are most open to predatory forces (aquaculture) and then releasing them to the wild once they set. All of these industries, established and emerging, involve food products and are predicated on clean water. One instance of contamination will shut down these businesses.

Our organization along with others such as Trout Unlimited and Harbor Watch work tirelessly, engaging hundreds of volunteers every year, to improve water quality in the Norwalk River and Harbor. In 2014 we succeeded in having two sections of the river removed from the Impaired Waterways list by the EPA. The Norwalk River watershed has an un-remediated brownfield and a superfund site, which contaminated drinking water in the 1970s and 1980s, so we know what

contamination looks like. We look back on the leaders of the past who allowed such environmental and economic devastation to occur and wonder 'what were they thinking?' The waste from today's oil and gas extraction processes is the 21st century version of these threats.

Westchester County passed a permanent fracking waste ban in 2012, signed into law by the Republican County Executive. Republican-dominated Putnam County followed the next year. Across the Sound, Nassau & Suffolk Counties, passed waste bans years ago, and have gone back to amend and strengthen them since. All five boroughs of New York City banned fracking waste in 2016. The State of Vermont and many parts of New Jersey also have bans in place. It is time for Connecticut to wake up to the problem and do our part to protect Long Island Sound.

Please protect our industries, beaches, drinking water, fish and wildlife, and future generations from the sort of contamination we have seen in other states. There have been over 6,600 spills of this waste. Spills and inadequate treatment followed by discharge have contaminated rivers and drinking water supplies harming fish, wildlife and human health. What more proof do we need to pass a state ban? This is a public health and economic issue as well as an environmental one. We urge you to support SB 103 and to consider strengthening it to include the more comprehensive language we adopted in Redding, CT.

Sincerely,

Louise Washer, President
Norwalk River Watershed Association
PO Box 197
Georgetown, CT 06829
203-856-1497 (cell)