

Aquarion Cannondale Well Application Suggested Comments

Aquarion has a pending application with the Dept of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to pump up to one million gallons per day from a previously unused well next to the Norwalk River in Cannondale for a period of 25 years. The stated purpose is to increase drought resiliency in southwestern Fairfield County. This is an important goal and one NRWA completely supports, but we question the need for this well at this time, especially given the impaired state of the Norwalk River.

Please write to or call:

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Some of the points NRWA has made regarding the application:

- **We question the need for this diversion at this time. We ask that Aquarion, the CT DEEP, and the local towns instead focus on conservation measures** including repairing leaking infrastructure, conducting water use audits especially on large-scale users, phasing in rate systems that further encourage conservation, passing local ordinances that restrict the use of water for lawns and any other measures that would help us accomplish the goal of drought resiliency without negatively impacting the Cannondale groundwater supply and the flow and health of the already impaired Norwalk River.

As Aquarion reports, 40 percent of water is used outdoors in this region, and in the summer that number jumps to 70 percent. “Smart” watering systems can cut water use 40 percent or more. A delay in this well activations would allow time to make changes such as this and assess their effects.

We know from Aquarion’s Water Conservation Plan Phase I study that many leaks in the system far exceed its 15% goal. Ridgefield alone has areas that leak 52% of the water being transported. Why not repair leaks rather than activate new wells?

- **The river is impaired and we oppose action which would further erode water quality.** The 2018 Harbor Watch report on water quality in the Norwalk River shows it failed to meet minimum state standards 81% of the

time. The river is impaired for swimming, recreational use, and aquatic life. Reducing the flow of the river by diverting cool, clean groundwater will exacerbate this problem and further negatively affect the boating, fishing, shell-fishing, and other industries in Norwalk Harbor that require clean water.

- **We oppose permitting this well until up-to-date testing has been completed.** Testing of the well, which is located just 150 feet from the Norwalk River, was performed in 1984 with some follow-up work in 2013. Both tests were done during times of unusually heavy rainfall. Also, land use conditions have changed since the tests. There has been significant development in the Cannondale area including the addition of more than 75 large homes. In addition, applications are pending for two large developments along the river. These all increase impervious surface area and storm water runoff and therefore conditions at the site.
- **We request an evaluation of aquatic and terrestrial habitat be done in the field.** The evaluation was based on Natural Diversity Data Base and “is not necessarily the result of comprehensive or site-specific field investigations. We ask that a complete inventory of critical species be done on site.
- **The Norwalk River is already over allocated.** The river supplies drinking water, absorbs discharges from 4 wastewater treatment plants and industrial waste from businesses, receives runoff from the heavily developed Route 7 corridor, provides water for golf courses, nurseries, swimming pool water supply companies and other private diversions, and is absorbing construction sediment from current DOT projects including Walk Bridge, Yankee Doodle bridge, and Route 7/Route 15 Interchange projects. The health of the river is already impaired and its use is at capacity.

The impact of the reduced stream flow caused by pumping will be felt the entire length of the river below the well and all the way to Norwalk Harbor. The river already is impaired with excessive levels of e-coli and depleted dissolved oxygen levels. Reduced stream flow due to pumping will exacerbate these issues threatening recreational uses of the river, the harbor and beaches and negatively impacting aquatic life and the shellfishing industry. The fragile wetlands (and their amphibious life forms) located in the vicinity of the proposed well will also be imperiled. Due to development of the Route 7 corridor, there are few remaining intact wetlands along the river. Preserving these should be a top priority, especially since the need to pump may very well be obviated by appropriate conservation initiatives and regulations.