

House Republican Press Release

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REP. HETHERINGTON INTRODUCES BILL TO FUND CLEAN WATER ACT



Legislation would provide increased funds for grants and loans to help towns protect rivers, streams and the Long Island Sound.

HARTFORD— State Representative John Hetherington of New Canaan, has introduced a bill to provide funding to municipalities for clean water projects, HB-5607, *An Act Concerning an Appropriation for Clean Water Projects*. The bill has been referred to the General Assembly's Environment Committee.

Rep. Hetherington's bill appropriates the sum of \$157 million to the Clean Water Fund, from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, and the sum of \$137 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009. This money would be used for grants and loans to municipalities for clean water projects.

The Connecticut Clean Water Fund (CWF) is the state's environmental infrastructure assistance program. The fund was established in 1986 to provide financial assistance to municipalities for planning, design and construction of wastewater collection and treatment projects. This program was developed to replace state and federal grant programs that had existed since the 1950s. The 1987 amendments to the Federal Clean Water Act required that states establish a revolving loan program by 1989. The fund was modified in 1996 to include the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) to assist water companies in complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act by providing low cost financing.

Through its low interest rate and generous grant funding, the CWF provides Connecticut municipalities with one of the most favorable financing packages for wastewater projects in the United States. The CWF provides a combination of grants and loans to municipalities which undertake water pollution control projects at the direction of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Municipalities receive a grant of 20% of the total project costs and a loan for the remainder of the project costs, excluding projects which correct combined sewer overflows (CSO).

“Currently, the \$20 million annual funding level is significantly less than the \$ 144 million and \$ 120 million Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has requested the past two years,” said Rep. Hetherington. “The DEP based its requests on the number

of treatment plants throughout the state that completed the design phase of their projects and were ready for construction,” added Rep. Hetherington

According to the DEP, there were 29 facilities waiting to be funded as of May, 2006. DEP's funding priority list has 12 of these projects, with an estimated project cost of \$ 107 million, would be partially funded. Work on the remaining 17 projects and the non-funded portion of three projects cannot proceed because of the limited funding. These projects must be built to meet the August 2009 discharge limit.

Rep. Hetherington said, “We need to fully fund this important program. Given that the 2009 Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) nitrogen reduction limit is less than four years away, it is imperative that the 17 projects be funded in the next 12 to 18 months.”

Rep. Hetherington said, “Environmental groups have made this a top priority to increase the woefully underfunded program.”