

House Republican Press Release

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Miller: Caswell Cove Dredging Needs Review



Project Should Be Halted Until Tests Conclusively Show No Toxins

HARTFORD- State Representative Larry Miller (R-122) today formally called on the Commissioner of the State's Department of Environmental Protection to halt the dredging of the Caswell Cove Marina in Milford and the deposit of the silt upstream in Shelton until conclusive laboratory tests demonstrate that the dredge material is free of harmful toxins. The DEP recently granted a permit for Caswell Cove to dredge 23,000 cubic yards of sediment that is filling the boat mooring area.

Miller noted that the condition of the Housatonic River has improved incredibly over the past several years. "This great improvement is evident from the increased use by boaters, fishermen, oyster and clam harvesting, swimming, canoeing and other activities," said Miller. "The DEP has been active in their effort to provide a policy of fisheries management by restricting sizes of fish that can be caught and lobster takings, as well as limiting the months of open fishing season."

Now, Miller says the DEP risks reversing much of the progress they helped achieve by placing in jeopardy the ecosystem balance of the river by potentially threatening spawning grounds for a number of species of fish. Further, Miller observed that the DEP has hardly been convincing in its assertion that the environmental impact of any pollutants was not a problem based on fifteen year old data, and they may be ignoring side impacts of filling the deep trenches at the site where the silt is deposited. "This silt originates from an area where a condo's boat marina and industrial site were known to have dangerous toxins that effect marine as well as human life."

"Many species spawn in the Housatonic River such as alewife, shad, Atlantic sturgeon, blueback herring, rainbow smelt, striped bass and white perch," said Miller. "These species might be utilizing the deeper waters for spawning. Most of the experienced fishermen in the area believe this."

Miller added: "I have very serious concerns that this project is ignoring an issue critical to the health of area residents, and critical to the marine life. I have submitted a letter to the Commissioner of the DEP asking her to halt this project until scientific lab testing proves the material is safe, and that there are reasonable assurances that spawning locations are not being jeopardized."