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Contact:

Jim Finley [\(203\) 804-6895](tel:(203)804-6895)

Kachina Walsh-Weaver [\(203\) 710-9525](tel:(203)710-9525)

Kevin Maloney [\(203\) 710-3486](tel:(203)710-3486)

Coalition Works to Pass Critical Legislation to Provide Important Assistance to Municipalities While Protecting the Environment

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) and the government relations firm of Gara & Markowski, LLC working closely with: key state legislators; key officials with the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP); and the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, negotiated and marshaled through critical state legislation in the last days of the 2012 General Assembly session which will:

(1) Provide increased Clean Water Fund funding for municipal water pollution control projects concerning phosphorous removal;

(2) Ensure that municipalities will have a seat at the table by requiring DEEP to collaborate with affected municipalities on the state's approach to dealing with phosphorus reduction in inland non-tidal waters, which will impact at least 40 municipalities across Connecticut and cost millions of dollars in wastewater treatment plant upgrades in order to comply; and

(3) Place some restrictions on the use of phosphorus containing fertilizers, in an effort to reduce overall phosphorus non-point source effluent.

“Phosphorus reduction is a statewide problem and addressing it should not be placed on the backs of a few select municipalities, especially during these difficult fiscal times and just on the heels of multi-million dollar plant upgrades to address Nitrogen effluent,” said CCM Executive Director and CEO Jim Finley. “This legislation strikes the right balance between achieving meaningful phosphorus reduction and attempting to mitigate the impact on municipalities of overwhelming, mandated compliance costs.”

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is in the process of implementing a Phosphorus reduction strategy, which will impact at least 40 municipalities across Connecticut and could have cost millions of dollars in wastewater treatment plant upgrades in order to comply. This is being done in response to the The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requiring regional administrators to enforce the provisions of the federal Clean Water Act, and requiring states to create mechanisms for addressing phosphorus levels in waterways.

The particular approach first *chosen* by DEEP to meet EPA's requirement placed the burden of a statewide need to reduce Phosphorus levels in waters on the backs of certain water pollution control facilities - thus placing the financial burden of this Strategy on the ratepayers and residential and business property taxpayers of these towns and cities.

Early cost estimates to comply with the stringent standards proposed in DEEP's Strategy, based on consultant reports some towns have already undergone, indicate a *statewide impact of greater than \$100 million*.

Calculations that have been made for just five municipalities totaled \$88.2 million.

- *Cheshire \$7.2 million*
- *Danbury \$30 million*
- *Meriden \$13.5 million*
- *Southington \$18.5 million*
- *Wallingford \$19 million*

These costs don't even touch the ongoing operating and maintenance costs for each facility after the plant upgrades have been completed and placed online. Many of the affected municipalities have cited that meaningful reduction levels could be achieved through additional chemical treatment at a fraction of the cost of the plant upgrades - somewhere in the range of *\$500,000 per plant*.