



Connecticut Fund  
for the Environment

Save the Sound®

June 8, 2017

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## **CFE/Save the Sound Reacts to Legislative Outcomes**

New Haven, Conn. – Connecticut Fund for the Environment and its bi-state program Save the Sound responds to outcomes on the last night of Connecticut's 2017 legislative session. Issues include clean energy policy, funding raids on critical programs, defense of environmental and public health laws, water policy, and more.

### **Fighting for a clean energy future**

Claire Coleman, climate and energy attorney:

“Now that the U.S. has left the Paris accord it's up to states to lead the fight against climate change, but lawmakers missed big opportunities this year. The legislature's failures to establish interim greenhouse gas reduction targets or to extend the Renewable Portfolio Standard, and the caucus budget proposals that propose to strip funding from clean energy and efficiency programs and the Green Bank, imperil Connecticut's ability to meet its climate commitments.

“Rather than committing to actions that would transition Connecticut to a renewable energy future, some Connecticut lawmakers instead chose to focus this legislative session on propping up outdated nuclear power [SB 106, SB 778]. Despite unanimous opposition from environmental and consumer advocates, a bill passed through the Senate in the wee hours of the morning that would have given a corporate handout to Millstone. That legislation died in the House on the last night of session, but citizens and advocates will need to make sure this proposal doesn't come back during budget negotiations. A special deal for Millstone would come at the expense of locally-owned renewable energy growth in Connecticut.

“There were a couple of bright spots, however. Clean energy credits have been extended [HB 7036], and Virtual Net Metering limits were extended for farms [SB 943].

“Governor Malloy added Connecticut to the United States Climate Alliance just a few days ago, which CFE hopes will reenergize meaningful climate action in Connecticut. We look forward to working with the administration and legislators next year to build on this year's conversations and ensure Connecticut lives up to its Paris Climate Accord commitment.”

### **Defending against rollbacks**

Andrew Minikowski, legal fellow:

“Corporate special interests made a bid to weaken environmental and public health protections, attempting to pass laws that would give corporations a free license to violate environmental laws by suspending civil penalties [SB 818] and stripping the DEEP commissioner of his authority to update consent orders that are no longer sufficiently protecting the public [HB 7134]. Corporations should not be above the law, and Connecticut should be supporting the laws and institutions that protect our environment, not undermining them.

“Thanks to fierce public opposition, these corrosive proposals were halted. But they should not have gotten nearly so far as they did. Legislators must continue to stand up to polluters and do what’s right for their constituents’ health and our shared natural resources, particularly at a time when federal emphasis on these priorities is waning.”

### **Protecting CT’s natural resources**

Karen Burnaska, water coordinator:

“Protecting our water supplies was another area where much was needed but little accomplished. Multiple bills with strong community support died on the vine.

“But there were also a few good drops in the bucket: a measure to promote water conservation during droughts [SB 506], and another to provide greater transparency in water planning information [HB 7221].

“There’s more to do. Connecticut still needs a strong State Water Plan, and communities need assurance their rivers won’t be handed over to corporations to bottle and sell, and the forests that filter their drinking water won’t be blasted into mines or housing developments.”

Andrew Minikowski, legal fellow:

“Connecticut’s green canopy has been seriously damaged over the last few years by overly aggressive roadside tree removal by ConnDOT and electric utilities. That’s why we’re glad to see legislation pass that establishes fines for utilities that don’t comply with the law when cutting trees on municipal property or roads [HB 6356].

“A common-sense proposal to require the DOT to develop tree removal guidelines got through the House, but alas, died in the Senate [HB 6123]. The legislature, ConnDOT, and DEEP should take action to protect the trees that provide habitat to innumerable species, filter drinking water, prevent erosion, and keep our state lush and beautiful.”

### **Funding for a sustainable future?**

Karen Burnaska, Transit for Connecticut:

“After years of work, we’re thrilled to see the passage of a resolution that will finally allow the public to make their voices heard on the critical issue of reliable, sustainable funding

to maintain the transportation infrastructure that keeps Connecticut moving. A referendum on a transportation funding lockbox will come before voters in November 2018.”

Leah Lopez Schmalz, program director:

“In a session characterized by uncertainty, some of the biggest questions about Connecticut’s future are yet to be decided. The legislature will soon hold a special session to finalize a budget—and the implications for your air and water, and our state’s economy, are tremendous.

“Current budget proposals could cut Long Island Sound Resiliency and Green Infrastructure funds that protect coastal communities from flooding and help stop water pollution. Significantly reduced investments in the state’s Clean Water Fund would slow progress on getting raw sewage out of our waters, and reduce the number of nitrogen and phosphorus upgrades at municipal sewage treatment facilities. And if that happens, Long Island Sound and our lakes will remain low on oxygen and wildlife will continue to suffer for years to come.

“The staggering raids proposed on the energy efficiency funds and Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative proceeds will hurt small businesses and low income families while damaging the state’s efforts to combat climate change. This new energy tax, which takes from ratepayer dollars and deposits it in the general fund, is bad for both the economy and the environment.

“While the magnitude of the plight our state faces is massive, we will be fighting hard to limit the devastation to these critical funds that serve as the backbone of our protected lands, clean air, and healthy water. Connecticut’s citizens must also continue to be vigilant through the special budget session. Please reach out to your state senator and representative, and tell them to preserve the funding that protects your health and the landscapes you love.”

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