



NORWALK RIVER WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION, INC.

www.norwalkriver.org

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GEORGETOWN
CT 06829

July 15, 2009

Ms. Amey Marrella, Acting Commissioner
State of Connecticut
Department of Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

RE: Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards

Dear Ms. Marrella,

The Norwalk River Watershed Association is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization whose members reside in the six Connecticut towns of the Norwalk River's watershed and beyond. Our members support NRWA's many efforts to protect the quality of this region's drinking water, watercourses, and wetlands, as well as the quality of life in the region, as outlined in our mission statement. They entrust the NRWA Board of Directors with due diligence on matters that affect environmental quality.

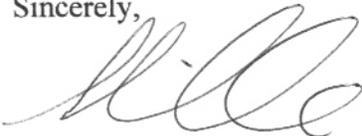
We have a sincere interest in the triennial review of the State's Water Quality Standards (WQS) and are dismayed that this current review is so long overdue. We would particularly like to provide you with our comments regarding the anti-degradation provisions of the WQS as well as nutrient control implementation strategies. We strongly urge you to consider the following brief summary of our comments and concerns:

- In December of 2005, in recognition of the Norwalk River's impairment for *E.coli* bacteria, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) established a Total Maximum Daily Load ("TMDL") for this pollutant. However, implementation of actions to address the TMDL has been negligible.
- One of the tools we use to prioritize our decisions and community-based projects are the water quality data reports from the Harbor Watch/River Watch (HW/RW) Program, a state-approved water quality testing laboratory at Earthplace in Westport, CT. HW/RW has been collecting and analyzing data from the Norwalk River and its tributaries since June 1998 with funding from the CT DEP through June 2005. Since then, HW/RW has continued to collect this monitoring data with the aid of other sources of funding, and has continued to provide this critical data to the CT DEP on a regular basis.
- HW/RW data indicate a continuation of degraded resources, elevated presence of *E.coli*, as well as phosphorus and other nutrients, in the Norwalk River. These elevated pollutant levels continue to be well above the applicable water quality standards. Actions to curtail these elevated levels need to be implemented.

- The ongoing monitoring data provided by HW/RW is an important component in NRWA's decisions and statements. This data should also be carefully considered by the State when issuing new or renewing existing permits for sewage treatment plants and other dischargers to the river.
- In addition to bacteria, the CT DEP's recent stressor report for the Norwalk River (provided by Chris Bellucci in February 2009) identifies total phosphorus, elevated temperature and dissolved oxygen as consistent stressors throughout the entire watershed. Copper, zinc, chloride and flow alteration were additionally identified as pollutant stressors within segments of the river.
- Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Multimetric Score (MMI) information contained in the 2009 stressor report indicated a continued decline in the overall health of the river at all sampled stations since biomonitoring began in 1997. Scores showed trends of progressively worse health as sampling stations approached the mouth of the river at Norwalk Harbor.
- There are no current WQS for flowing water within the State, despite the fact that flowing sections of the river are also critical for supporting aquatic life and highly factor into the water quality of the impoundments and receiving water bodies which they feed. The State should adopt WQS for flowing water.
- The State should adopt stringent WQS for temperature based upon the necessary habitat requirements to support native fish populations (e.g. trout). Temperature WQS are particularly important for streams where no baseline water quality currently exists.
- Effluent from sewage treatment plants (STPs) discharging to the river pose significant concerns to water quality throughout the year. Current SPDES permits for these STPs exempt them from having to run bacteria-disinfecting UV lights all year, allowing them turn off the lights from October to April. However, this is a water body with a TMDL for bacteria, and routine water quality monitoring data consistently document astounding spikes in bacteria levels when the UV light equipment is turned off. Water quality is not meeting current WQS standards for bacteria when this equipment is turned off. We strongly urge the State to require that bacteria-disinfecting technology be utilized all year.
- Among the three upstream STPs, the Rt.7 STP in Ridgefield (HW/RW Site #NR16) is considerably outdated and regularly discharges elevated total phosphorus levels. Funding to upgrade this STP should be made a priority.

We thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Sara N. da Silva
President, NRWA Board of Directors