

**Testimony of Ron Rhodes, River Steward, Connecticut River Conservancy  
before the Vermont House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife  
Thursday, February 22, 2018**

I live in Pomfret, Vermont and work out of my home for the Connecticut River Conservancy. Our motto is Clean Water, Healthy Habitat, Thriving Communities.

The Connecticut River and its tributaries run thru 182 Vermont towns and 9 of our 14 counties. Our watershed encompasses 53% of the State. Like every other watershed in Vermont, there are pressing Clean Water issues that need to be addressed. The river and the Long Island Sound, which it dumps into, are impaired for nitrogen and are subject to an U.S. EPA cleanup plan (known as a TMDL).

Thankfully the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has spent time and money to develop project lists to address the State's impaired waters for each of the 17 statewide watershed basins. There are roughly 4,000 Clean Water projects listed in the Agency's database that are just waiting to be funded. Everything from stormwater to agriculture projects, and from dam removals to river restoration projects.

But we cannot fix the problems and reduce the number of impaired waters without Clean Water funding. Our towns need help to be able to invest the millions of dollars necessary to modernize their sewage treatment plants and sewer lines to reduce or eliminate overflows. Our farms, ski areas, golf courses and breweries need help to implement conservation practices, such as planting riparian buffers, which reduce runoff so less nitrogen and other pollutants enter our rivers.

Clean Water funding from the State helps all of us apply for and receive additional dollars from other sources - including federal and private foundation grants. We can effectively double our money to implement these Clean Water projects if the State funding is in place.

The Clean Water projects listed in the database will result in real water quality benefits, and help all of our Vermont waters meet the "boatable, fishable and swimmable" water quality standard.

But the dam removal, tree planting and erosion control projects that we implement also have the added bonus of boosting our local economies. Just last year, CRC paid out \$580,000 to 18 different Vermont businesses to help us implement Clean Water projects. Engineers and nurseries as well as forestry, trucking and construction companies all benefited from Clean Water funding.

The 17 towns where those 18 businesses are located include: Brattleboro, Burlington, Chelsea, Colchester, Corinth, East Burke, East Dorset, Island Pond, Jeffersonville, Lowell, Lyndonville, Newark, Randolph, South Royalton, South Ryegate, Waterbury, and Williston. We think that is a win-win for our rivers and our communities.

All of us are here today to urge you to make the long term investment necessary to clean up all of the State's impaired waters. And to do it this session. No more studies, no more delays. 4,000 projects are ready; we are ready. Thank you.