



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture
In Support of S.420 / H.2711 An Act relative to stream flow standards
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As was amply demonstrated in 2016, Massachusetts does not have a policy on maintaining stream flows during a drought which adequately protects the people or the environment. The 2014 Water Management Act, as implemented in its regulations, has been extremely weak. For the most part, those regulations failed to ameliorate stream flow problems, as was apparent last summer when many permanent streams went totally dry.

This bill, sponsored by Sen. James Eldridge and Rep. Frank Smizik, mandates that the regulations allowed under the 2014 legislation be strong enough to address the problems. The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports this legislation.

The argument may be made that this legislation is writing regulations, which the legislature ought not to do. We feel, instead, that these bills strengthen the existing law by mandating that the regulations written pursuant to the Water Management Act are comprehensive and based on sound science and engineering. By having sound technical standards, the environmental review process is made more predictable for all interested parties.

These bills further mandate that environmental considerations be on an equal footing with commercial interests in supporting the water supply. Environmental considerations are essential for Massachusetts to maintain aquatic habitats and our streams in the long term and continue to be the beautiful state we all love. We would note that tourism based on our environment is an important source of revenue.

Sen. Eldridge's and Rep. Smizik's bills address these issues in a thoughtful and carefully crafted way.

Since 1983, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has supported means to ensure adequate and equitable distribution of the Commonwealth's water resources under all situations and further supports mandated water conservation measures through a variety of means. That is exactly what these bills do.

The LWVMA supports these bills. Please use this summer's respite from drought to enact these bills and thus be prepared for the future.

Thank you for your consideration.