

***Written Testimony of Elizabeth Beiter Oldfield on the January 1, 2008  
Draft Integrated Resource Plan for Connecticut ~ February 7, 2008***

My name is Elizabeth Beiter Oldfield and I'm writing today as a private citizen who volunteers on a grassroots level to improve local and global environmental conditions. I also try daily to maintain sound environmental practices in my and my families' life, set a good example for others to learn from, and to have a "continuing education" approach to reducing my carbon footprint.

Though I do not represent any particular organization, I volunteer with Connecticut Clean Water Action as well as Milford's Environmental Concerns Coalition (ECC).

Over the past few years I have become increasingly active in supporting conservation and energy efficiency as sound and effective ways of combating climate change and other forms of pollution while also saving money. This approach is very logical to me because it allows ordinary people to immediately adjust their habits and households to reduce their energy use, expenditures, and carbon output. I strongly support Recommendation 1 in your report to dramatically increase investments in consumer energy efficiency programs.

While conservation is more simple, efficiency does require an investment of some sort, such as purchasing EnergyStar appliances, compact fluorescent light bulbs, and improvements to one's home and means of transportation that allows us to lift our individual burden on resources (such as coal, nuclear power, water, oil, natural gas) and reduce emissions.

Very few reasonable people will deny that waste... or to be more kind, "carelessness of use"... is very prevalent in American society. While there are certain folks who conserve due to how they were raised, due to budgetary restrictions, or because they are environmentally astute, the norm is for excess and waste either due to carelessness, lack of understanding or education about how resources support our lifestyle, or lack of opportunity to make the investment necessary for energy reduction (such as purchasing updated, efficient appliances or making home upgrades). I say this to suggest that before we consider providing more energy to support what is perceived as an increased energy need, we make an aggressive effort to reduce energy waste. Because there is so much waste from lack of conservation and inefficiency, an immediate and robust investment in efficiency programs and strong, sincere outreach programs (to connect with as many citizens as possible), will be money well spent to rein in all that waste with the intent of lowering energy use and reducing harmful emissions.

I do see a change in people's attitudes in Connecticut, especially over the past year. Increased awareness of global climate change and other environmental concerns (toxins in many items we use daily, large scale food contamination crisis) coupled with the ever-increasing cost of goods and services are getting more people's attention and they are seeking information about what to do about it. On Saturday, January 26, Milford's ECC hosted an Energy Fair at the local library and it was estimated that about 300 attended to learn how to save energy. "Greening" is becoming increasing more mainstream with products and services.

As our national elections heat up, I often hear of concerns regarding the economy, often more than concerns about the environment. Though this is understandable, I think it's best for our future that the majority of us (including business and civic leaders) believe that a sincere investment in improving the environment will result in improvements to our economy. Also, because people are concerned about the increased cost of everything, including energy, they will welcome any and all assistance at becoming more efficient in order to stay on budget.

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The creation of “green jobs” will support both the environment and the economy. So far I have mostly seen individual start-up companies for things like solar technology. That’s good, but a state-wide efficiency investment plan could fund training for efficiency-specific skills, and invest in appropriate equipment and facilities. Additionally, such a plan could invest in outreach programs to educate and inspire citizens to become more efficient and fund support for citizens who have questions or are running into problems when attempting to buy efficient items or use incentive programs.

I see the reduction of Connecticut’s energy consumption and peak demand being key to meeting climate and environmental goals, as well as economic goals. When businesses use less energy they save money, and hopefully layoffs or relocations to other states will not occur. Also, less energy use means less negative emissions and a slowdown of the great strain on non-renewable resources. If we have the opportunity to be a leader in the North East to make robust energy efficiency programs successful, we should take that opportunity. An immediate increased funding scenario such as in the proposed plan will put us on the correct course for such an endeavor.

Give citizens a real chance to reduce their energy. Continuation and/or expansion of programs like the Summer Energy Savers (my home qualified for the 20% tier of savings and we reinvested in additional efficiency efforts). Rebate programs to turn in old air conditioners and get new, EnergyStar-rated ones. Incentives for people to trade in their old refrigerator and get a new EnergyStar-rated one and programs to allow more people to afford such an investment. Incentives for salesmen and saleswomen to convince citizens that the extra money spent on efficient items is worth it. Contests and programs to engage citizens, businesses and civic leaders in reducing their energy use. Programs to encourage citizens to “reinvest” at least a portion of their energy saving dollars into becoming even more efficient. Finally, keep in mind that an investment in training and “attitude coaching” for the utility companies and all personnel involved in the programs who have any contact with the public will go a very long way in ensuring the success of these programs.

I do think the time is right to immediately launch an aggressive energy efficiency programs in Connecticut. Citizens concerned about their budgets, the economy in general, and the environment, coupled with a sincere effort to launch **and support** efficiency programs will result in a significant reduction in energy use, and therefore reduction in harmful emissions. I urge the promotion and support of strong and immediate energy efficiency programs as part of an overall approach to how we perceive and tackle energy needs and attempt to secure a better environmental future.

Thank you.  
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