Save the Sound®

January 5, 2015

Melissa Spear
Executive Director
Common Ground – New Haven Ecology Project
358 Springside Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515

Dear Melissa,

Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE)/Save the Sound is excited to continue our partnership with Common Ground and the New Haven Ecology Project, focused on addressing clean water and environmental justice challenges impacting the West River in New Haven, Connecticut. We write to express our support of Common Ground's proposal to the EPA Environmental Justice Small Grants Program for the Common Ground West River Stewards, and to express our commitment to join in this important work.

CFE/Save the Sound is ready to support Common Ground's West River Stewards, by:

(1) Offering the training and technical assistance necessary to conduct stream inventories on the tributaries of the West River.
(2) Providing feedback and guidance to the West River Stewards as they develop public education resources about water quality in the West River.
(3) Partnering with Common Ground students and staff to identify and implement clean water demonstration projects that align with other important initiatives along the river, discussed below.
(4) And mobilizing the additional support of neighborhood residents and grassroots environmental groups.

This is an exciting and important time to be working on water quality issues in the West River. CFE/Save the Sound is leading numerous projects in the watershed to repair the health and function of the West River, including removing aging infrastructure and barriers to fish passage, such as the Pond Lily Dam—scheduled for summer of 2015, and installing self-regulating tide gates near the mouth of the river and hosting volunteer plantings at Edgewood Park to restore tidal marsh—completed in 2012. We are working with the City of New Haven, the Greater New Haven Water Pollution Control Authority and numerous citizen groups to develop a watershed management plan, and to construct green infrastructure projects that will help address pollution in the river caused by stormwater runoff and combined sewer overflows.

This past October, we held a public kick-off meeting for the West River Watershed Management Plan. Though the planning process is being facilitated by CFE/Save the Sound, it has grown out of the efforts of an organized coalition of watershed residents who are interested in restoring water quality in the West River and in making the river an inviting and accessible resource to all

watershed residents and visitors. As a part of this effort, we plan to partner with the West River Stewards to survey many of the watershed's tributary streams as well as the main reaches of the West River. Their efforts will help us to identify priorities for restoration along the West River while empowering citizens to participate in the stewardship of the watershed and its resources.

This proposed partnership builds on CFE/Save the Sound's work with Common Ground over the last four years. During this time, we provided guidance and support to Common Ground's West River Stewards on ongoing macro-invertebrate monitoring and invasive species removal in the Pond Lily Nature Preserve. In 2012, a crew of Stewards worked under the supervision of a Common Ground science teacher with the support of CFE/Save the Sound staff to monitor water quality along different segments of the river to determine the impact of the 2012 tide gate installation and marsh restoration project. More recently, with EPA Environmental Justice Grant support, the Stewards completed an inventory of all sewer outfalls along an impaired section of the West River in New Haven and contributed their findings to the West River Watershed Management Plan.

The Stewards have contributed valuable information on the West River to the watershed planning process; they have brought public attention to the West River through articles in the New Haven Register and videos produced by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; and they have demonstrated their capacity as emerging scientists and environmental leaders. These projects have been genuinely successful and have had a real impact on the students, the environment, and the greater New Haven community. CFE/Save the Sound was proud to honor these young people and their good work at our 2013 annual meeting, and we look forward to continued work with the West River Stewards.

We are ready and eager to build on this experience and grow our partnership with Common Ground. Thank you for sharing our commitment to a cleaner environment.

Sincerely,

Kendall Barbery

Green Infrastructure Program Manager
Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound