



**Testimony of the Connecticut Audubon Society to the Energy and Technology Committee
of the Connecticut General Assembly in opposition to sections 2 and 3 of
S.B. No. 950(RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE REPLACEMENT OF PUBLIC
UTILITY POLES AND REVISING VEGETATION MANAGEMENT IN UTILITY
PROTECTION ZONES.**

March 3, 2021

The Connecticut Audubon Society thanks the Committee and the sponsors of **S.B. No. 950(RAISED) An Act Concerning the Replacement of Public Utility Poles and Revising Vegetation Management in Utility Protection Zones** for the opportunity to express our strong opposition to sections 2 and 3 of this proposed law.

Sections 2 and 3 of the bill amend Section 16-234 C.G.S. to **eliminate requirements in the current law to obtain a tree warden permit or notify property owners before pruning or removing a tree in a utility protection zone in which "three phase main" electric distribution wires are located. This would include a substantial portion of all distribution wires within a municipality.** It also includes a hazardous tree that could endanger any "three phase main," which would include one on private property outside the UPZ. Current law requires a tree warden permit and some notice to the private property owner for removal of a hazardous tree on private land outside of the public right-of-way.

The amendments would effectively give utilities unlimited power over these trees in the public right-of-way, with no ability of tree wardens or property owners to prevent unnecessary removals, even clear cutting, and to prevent pruning that could be harmful to the health and structural integrity of the trees.

We would also like to recommend that there be language about monitoring and removal of invasive species as a follow up to vegetation management efforts so that native vegetation is not replace by non-native invasives.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick M. Comins, Executive Director

Founded in 1898, the Connecticut Audubon Society is an independent organization that conserves Connecticut's environment through science-based education and advocacy focused on the state's bird populations and habitats. We own and manage 20 preserves covering almost 3,300 acres in all areas of the state, and we work with landowners to help them manage their land for the benefit of birds and other wildlife.