Connecticut Port Authority

Re: Small Harbors Improvement Incentive Program (SHIIP)

Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center, Connecticut Audubon Society

 314 Ferry Road, Old Lyme, CT.

Dear\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

I am very pleased to submit this letter in support of the application of the Connecticut Audubon Society through its Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center (RTPEC) under the Small Harbor Improvement Incentive Program (SHIIP). The proposal is for the development of a one-acre parcel adjacent to approximately 9 acres of Town-owned open space and land owned by the State of Connecticut. The parcel is within 1,000 feet of a small Town-owned beach and the Town dock. The Connecticut DEEP marine headquarters and a small state park are located at the end of the street on the other side of the Town’s open space. This area is the historic Old Lyme harbor that served ferries that connected eastern Connecticut to New Haven and New York City by both rail and water.

I believe that the proposal submitted will pull together the environment and research resources located on Ferry Road and begin the creation of a research and education cluster focused on the lower Connecticut River and its estuary. The proposal will leverage investments already made in the area by the Town and the State. The vision is that this site will become the entrance to the area and provide the public with information concerning the river, the estuary, the surrounding environment, the history and the importance of the area to the state and Long Island Sound. This information could also include real time information on weather, tides, fish and bird migration and habitation and current research projects.

The Connecticut DEEP Marine Headquarters located at the end of Ferry Road has been proposed as the site for the Connecticut River National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).

The NERR will be a source of research on the aquatic and limnology of the Connecticut River and its interface with Long island Sound. This proposal provides the opportunity for facilitation of collaboration and interface with the public of southern Connecticut as well as interested parties from throughout the region.

This project will provide a stimulus that will enhance access and understanding of the Connecticut River and its relationship to development. Old Lyme’s small harbor provided a vital economic link to western Connecticut. The harbor can again provide an economic link in the development of research and education resources that cannot be replicated anywhere else. Improvement of the harbor area would also enhance access to environmental resources for both pleasure and research. The RTPEC will also contribute economically to the Town directly through a current employment of two full-time and four part-time employees.