

To: Alicea Charamut, WPCAG Co-chair
Josh Cansler, WPCAG Co-chair
Virginia DeLima, SWP-IWG Chair

From: Denise Savageau, WPCAG and SWP-IWG member

Date: January 4, 2021 (corrections 1-14-21)

Re: Need for Source Water Protection Sub-Committee

At the last WPCAG meeting, I brought up the issue of the need for the WPCAG and/or the SWP-IWG to take up issue of Source Water Protection. Alicea requested that I send a committee description to you for consideration.

There are several reasons that this needs to be brought to the forefront:

1. There are continual and emerging threats to our public and private water supplies and approximately 80% of source water supply watersheds are not owned by the water utilities, much is in private ownership.
2. DPH is the lead agency on source water protection but unfortunately has limited regulatory authority over private land use in watersheds. However, there are numerous local and statewide policy and regulatory frameworks that could support the work of DPH including state, regional, and local plans of conservation and development, State and local inland wetland and watercourses regulations, planning and zoning regulations, DEEP 401 and stormwater regulations, Siting Council, and PURA.
3. The recent work of the WPCAG Watershed lands committee brought to light that many folks on the WPCAG or subcommittees do not understand the term "source water protection" as defined by the Safe Drinking Water Act. It also reminded us of the silos that our State agencies sometimes get caught up in. For example, since DEEP has membership on the Siting Council, there is a requirement to identify Aquifer Protection Areas (DEEP program) but no requirement to identify a public drinking water supply watershed. This is a disconnect that needs to be corrected. We need WPC members and their staff to understand both the Safe Drinking Water Supply Act (generally DPHs domain) and the Clean Water Act (generally DEEPs domain) and how all the agencies can work together on this critical issue.

DPH is the lead on public drinking water supplies in our state, but they should not be carrying the burden of source water protection on their own. The Water Planning Council brings together the 4 key state agencies involved in providing safe, abundant water in our state. Although it was a quantity issue that was the impetus for the formation of the Council and the State Water Plan, there is a need for all members to embrace source water protection from a quantity and quality perspective. This extends to all of the various agencies' staff involved in water resource management and members of the WPCAG and the SWP-IWG.

4. The Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) has identified changes in precipitation patterns and storm events that includes less frequent but more intense rainfall. This is expected to result in extended periods of drought, followed or bookended by localized flood events. These

patterns not only change the hydrology and stream flows impacting quantity but also impact water quality. This already appears to be impacting drinking water supplies. The most comprehensive way to address this is a robust source water protection program. DPH, working with EPA Drinking Water section, has already established a Source Water Collaborative in our state made up primarily of water utility folks, some key federal partners including EPA, USDA Forest Service, and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Conservation districts. These are primarily folks involved in working on land use and watershed management. However, the work of the Source Water Collaborative is not known by the entire WPC, their agencies, or the WPCAG.

5. The State Water Plan has numerous items for implementation that deal with water quality. Unfortunately, the term source water protection is not identified as the overall arching theme.

Given these reasons – and others I have not mentioned here – source water protection is an urgent issue that needs the collective attention of the WPC and its committees.

Here are two potential charges:

1. Charge for a WPCAG Subcommittee on Source Water Protection

The WPCAG Source Water Protection Subcommittee will review that status of source water protection in Connecticut looking at the roles of the WPC agencies, federal and state programs, and regulations, the GC3 report, and ongoing efforts such as the Source Water Collaborative; and identify ways that the WPC and WPCAG can advance source water protection in CT.

2. Charge for the SWP-IWG Subcommittee on Source Water Protection

The SWP-IWG Subworkroup on Source Water Protection will review the water quality recommendations identified as priorities in the SWP as follows:

Land Use/ Water Quality

7 Public Water Supply Lands¹ (Sec. 5.2.3.1)

8 Low-Impact Development¹ (Sec. 5.2.3.1), (Sec. 6.8.2)

9 Groundwater Protection¹ (Sec. 5.2.3.1)

10 Green Infrastructure¹ (Sec. 5.2.3.2), (Sec. 6.8.2)

11 Stormwater Management¹ (Sec. 5.2.3.2), (Sec. 6.8.2)

12 Nonpoint Sources¹ (Sec. 5.2.3.2)

13 Watershed and Aquifer Protection where Incentives are Lacking²(Sec. 5.3.2.12)

This review will identify work to identify ongoing work in each area and where additional work is needed with recommendations on strategy for implementation. It will coordinate efforts with the WPCAG Subcommittee on Source Water Protection especially relating to any short-term needs identified in the GC3 report.

You could have the WPCAG take on the second charge instead of the SWP-IWG, rather than have two committees, and report back on their recommendations to assist with the SWP-IWG. I just I didn't want to assume that was the way to go. I do think that not all the Source Water Protection work that is needed is listed in the SWP.