

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
Meeting Location: 2061 Durham Road, Madison, Connecticut

AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, June 11, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – May 14, 2025 meeting
3. Witch Hazel Harvest Update: Bob Haines
4. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
5. Other land items
6. Notification of Committee Chair Election in July
7. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
8. Adjourn

*This is an in-person meeting. In the event of rain *ONLY*, the meeting will be held at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut and by teams. To view meeting documents, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/3antbz44>. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email at jslubowski@rwater.com.

SAFETY MOMENT

Fire It Up Safely: Grilling Safety

Summer has officially kicked off and millions of Americans have started grilling. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) urges consumers to check their grills and “fire it up safely” to prevent fires and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Before lighting the grill, do a safety check:

Has your grill been recalled? Check [SaferProducts.gov](https://www.saferproducts.gov). If the grill has been recalled, contact the manufacturer and stop using it until you get a repair or replacement.

Visually inspect the hoses on a gas grill for cracking, brittleness, holes and leaks. Make sure there are no sharp bends in the hose or tubing and that all connections are secure. Replace if necessary.

Check for propane gas leaks. Open the gas supply valve fully and apply a soapy solution with a brush at the connection point. If bubbles appear, there is a leak. Try tightening the tank connection. If that does not stop the leak, close the gas valve and have the grill repaired by a qualified professional.

Is the grill clean? Regularly cleaning the grill, as described in the owner’s manual, and also cleaning the grease trap, will reduce the risk of flare-ups and grease fires.

Once the safety check is complete, make sure to operate the grill as safely as possible using these three steps:

1. Use grills outside only
2. Never leave your grill unattended
3. Keep children away from the grilling area

TapInto
Safety



Regional Water Authority



Service – Teamwork – Accountability – Respect – Safety

 Regional Water Authority

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
May 14, 2025

Minutes

The regular meeting of the Land Use Committee (“Committee”) of the Representative Policy Board (“RPB”), of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District (“RWA”), took place on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 233 Skiff Street, Hamden, Connecticut. Chair Levine presided.

Committee Members Present: M. Levine(R), P. Betkoski(R), P. DeSantis(R), B. Eitzer(R), M. Horbal(R), G. Malloy, J. Oslander, and J. Mowat Young(R)

RPB: R. Harvey, N. Campbell, T. Clifford(R), J. DiCarlo(R), C. Havrda(R), C. Mancini(R), S. Mongillo(R)

Authority: S. Sack(R)

Management: S. Lakshminarayanan(R), V. Benni, J. Hill, and J. Triana

Chair Levine called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

On motion made by Ms. Horbal and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its April 9, 2025 regular meeting and the April 17, 2025 special meeting, as presented.

At 4:33 p.m., Mr. Betkoski entered the meeting.

Mr. Triana, the RWA’s Real Estate Manager, provided a historical overview and update regarding the property at 233 Skiff Street in Hamden, Connecticut. He reported that this was the last remaining rental house from a group of 15 designated for disposal or demolition since the early 2000s. This property, which is located next to the Mill River, is designated as Class 1 and Class 2 land and is slated for sale as part of the *Land We Need for the Water We Use* program.

The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, determined that the house in question was likely constructed in the mid-1800s, as indicated by the architectural features observed in the basement. Although the basement's cinder block foundation suggests a more recent 1950s-1960s era, the wooden beams exhibit characteristics that point to a much earlier period of construction.

Mr. Triana noted that the town of Hamden requested use of the front yard to serve as a staging area for the reconstruction of the Skiff Street bridge, resulting in a license agreement established in late 2015. Construction commenced in 2016 and progressed approximately three years. By late 2019, the construction of the bridge, sidewalk, and storm drain in front of the property was completed. However, it was later discovered that the bridge and sidewalk encroached beyond the property line. This necessitated a license agreement for the storm drain and an access easement, leading to protracted negotiations with the town that were resolved 15 months ago. The town was granted the ownership of the sidewalk and bridge, along with the easement for the drainage. Subsequently, preparations were made to delineate the lot for the house, which required obtaining variances from the Planning and Zoning (P&Z) board due to prior subdivisions. Now that the process has been completed, Mr. Triana will begin drafting the disposition application for approval by the Representative Policy Board.

At 4:50 p.m., Mr. Malloy entered the meeting.

Update on *The Land We Need for the Water We Use Program* – Mr. Triana reported:

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
April 30	92%	98%	94%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
April 2025	2.76	3.78	4.26
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	36.82	58.77	42.68

Land We Need for the Water We Use Program (Dispositions/Acquisitions)

- Madison, Weber property – Reviewed draft of the survey. Received signed P&SA from seller. We executed the P&SA and sent the deposit to the sellers’ attorney to hold in escrow.
- Cheshire, Bis property (CH 5) – Corresponded with DEEP about updating the survey and legal description.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Updated survey and resent to Planning Office.

Forestry Update

- Organized the planting of 1,100 tree and shrub seedlings over two weeks at various RWA properties, including but not limited to Gaillard, Peat Swamp, Brenski Swamp, Maltby Recreation Area, and Saltonstall.
- Met with Nathan Pitruzzello on April 3rd to discuss the firewood permit program and renewal process as a first step in developing an online renewal and payment system with WebTrac software and support.

Recreation

- Held walk on history of Genesee area and had 15 attendees.
- Bethany Horsemen worked on the horse bridges at Chamberlain.
- Corresponded with trail coordinator in West Rock area about adding trails on our property.
- About 1800 trout were stocked in the Maltby Lakes. 12 large fish had tags and one was caught the first week.
- Docks were put into Lake Saltonstall and the broken railing piece was repaired.
- Four new heavy-duty picnic tables were purchased for Saltonstall and Maltby rec areas.
- Boat rentals began at Saltonstall on April 26th.
- Awarded grant (\$750) from Whitetails Unlimited for assistance with the kid’s archery event.
- The Water Wagon was brought to two events by the recreation staff. Rain canceled the third event.

	April		March	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,974	4,972	4,842	4,827

Special Activity Permits

- American Distilling, Inc. (Mr. Christopher Hanson)-tour of active witch hazel harvest site for CT Woodlands Master Program, RWA property near 2061 Durham Road, Madison, (4/23/2025).
- Native Plant Trust (formerly New England Wild Flower Society) – (Erik Sechler, Ecological Program Coordinator) – survey and seed collection of CT endangered plant species with CTDEEP approval species name *Hydrastis canadensis*, *Limosella australis*, *Eriocaulon parkeri*, Beaver Head Swamp (Guilford) and Lake Saltonstall (East Haven and Branford) (5/10/2025-12/31/2025).
- Shoreline Hikes (Trevor Cash)-School project is focused along the Connecticut Shoreline and the purpose is to promote all the local trails, make the information including descriptions, difficulty, photos, and more accessible online. Teach the community about nature, help keep the trails clean and safe.
Madison, Guilford, Clinton, Old Saybrook, Killingworth-Connecticut Shoreline area (4/17/2025 – 4/17/2026).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Agricultural agreements – Met with abutters of the Sperry Rd., Woodbridge field to talk about our expectations, especially annual mowing to control invasives. Corresponded with tenant of one of the Downs Rd., Hamden fields about adding a shed, greenhouse, and/or bee hives.
 - Madison, 752 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Met with abutter. He said the materials would be removed.
 - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Certified letter sent to abutter. Met with him and stated our intent to reset the points and install a fence. Abutter supplied a survey of his own that showed a different geometry for the lines. Our survey is on the land records, but his is not.
 - New Haven, Whalley Ave. PRV – Noticed two vehicles parked there all the time.
 - West Haven, Shingle Hill Tanks (WH 7) – Reviewed draft of the new license agreement with attorney.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in West Haven, Haddam, Hamden, and North Branford. Portions of the Great Hill Rd. were cleared of autumn olive.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	5.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	3 acres

- Arbor Day 2025 – NRA coordinated team of RWA staff to plant trees in East Haven and North Haven.
- Killingworth, Kroupa Pond dam (KI 8) – Discussed ownership of the dam with Engineering staff. Reviewed our files and checked the site in the field. Met with DOT surveying crew at the site.
- Guilford, Goat Lot Rd. gate – Received notice from Guilford Town Engineer that they approved the installation of a gate to prohibit vehicular access. We are required to post a sign saying the road is still open to pedestrian use.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – Emailed surveyor about producing the maps separately for UI and the town.
- Land Use Plan – Sent out draft of West River, Maltby, and Prospect sections to staff for comments.

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- North Branford, North St. fence – Researched responsibility for fence at the cul-du-sac on North St. Determined we are responsible for the fence and one of our police officers submitted a work order.
- Drone flights – Conducted a drone flight at the Whitney Dam to collect base map information for the engineering's CBYD blueprints. Conducted drone flights at Lake Gaillard and LGWTP to exercise new drone-detection sensors installed at the treatment facility.

At 5:07 p.m., Ms. Young entered the meeting.

There were no other land items to report.

At 5:13 p.m., Ms. Campbell entered the meeting.

Chair Levine noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 11, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in Madison for an update on Witch Hazel harvesting.

At 5:15 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Oslander, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

Mark Levine, Chair

(R) = Attended remotely.

June 11, 2025
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
May 31	98%	98%	93%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
May 2025	6.74	5.44	3.95
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 – 5/31/25)	43.56	64.21	46.63

Land We Need for the Water We Use Program (Dispositions/Acquisitions)

- Madison, Weber property – Inspected property prior to closing. Executed MOA with Yale. Final draft of the survey completed and reviewed. By the end of the month, we had everything in line except Yale's money so the closing would need to occur in June.
- North Branford – Corresponded with property owner of 97+/- acres.
- Cheshire – Corresponded with property owner of 4+/- acres.
- Wallingford - Corresponded with property owner of 30+/- acres.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Reviewed P&SA and sent to town's attorneys.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) - Filed re-subdivision survey on the land records.

Forestry Update

- Planted trees at Maltby Recreation Area in the vicinity of southern pine beetle salvage area, and adjusted some deer cages around seedlings and saplings planted in previous years.
- Worked with ISD staff regarding transferring firewood payment process onto WebTrac platform.
- Marked timber for Saltonstall slash wall harvest and submitted NDDB request.

Recreation

- Forest management tour at Lake Saltonstall had 15 attendees.
- Kids fishing derby at Maltby Lakes had 21 attendees.
- New Haven Bird Club walk at Lake Chamberlain had 13 attendees.
- New Haven Bird Club walk at Lake Watrous had 10 attendees.
- Continued corresponding with trail coordinator in West Rock area about adding trails on our property.
- The vehicle barriers at the Lake Chamberlain causeway were moved by storm waters. Engineering had a contractor put them back in place.
- One of the new picnic tables was assembled and placed at Maltby Lakes.
- The Water Wagon was brought to four events by the recreation staff. Rain canceled the two other scheduled events.
- Two new applicants for the recreation staff were interviewed.

	May		April	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,979	4,571	4,974	4,972

Special Activity Permits

- Resources in Search and Rescue, Inc.-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)- Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, Prospect Reservoir/Cornwall Street (5/15/25 & 5/16/25).
- Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments-(Ms. Christine O'Neill and designee)-NVCOG is creating open space inventory for the Naugatuck Valley region using photos. Photo is needed of Pine Hill Park Seymour to be included in the report. (5/15/2025 – 9/1/2025).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Madison, 752 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Abutter has moved some, but not all, of the materials.
 - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Spoke to abutter about his survey which differed from ours. Reviewed his deed and it matched our survey. Spoke to abutter again and advised him to get lawyer to review and then contact us.
 - Bethany, Bethany Horsemen trail agreement – Signed annual agreement for use of the trails around Lake Chamberlain for horseback riding.
 - Agricultural agreements – Corresponded with tenant of several fields on the west side of the system about his intentions.
 - Cheshire, 795 Mountain Rd. (CH 5) – Sent letter to abutter about trees that were girdled behind his house.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Branford and North Branford. Portions of the Cherry Hill Rd. field were cleared of shrubby invasives. All Habitat treated the Great Hill Rd. field in North Branford with herbicide to control autumn olive.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	37 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	11.5 acres

- Killingworth, Kroupa Pond dam (KI 8) – Sent letter to DOT authorizing access to our property for survey and geotechnical work. Sent email to DOT on behalf of Engineering asking for results of their borings when complete.
- Land Use Plan – Sent out draft of West River, Maltby, and Prospect sections to staff for comments.
- New Haven, Sachem St. easement – Sent Yale a map to use for the easement.
- Bethany, 377 Carrington Rd. (BE 9) – Contacted by abutter about their plans to install a solar panel within the side setback. They are going to ZBA for a variance.
- Deer hunt – Lottery for hunters was run. We have 180 participants, 20 of those are first year participants. The breakdown by site: Gaillard – 127, Prospect - 20, Bethany - 25, Ansonia/Seymour – 8.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – Separate surveys were completed for each property owner. Contacted town staff again. Murtha was contacting UI about acquiring their easement.
- Land Use Plan – Sent out draft of the Birmingham, North Cheshire Wellfield, and miscellaneous parcels sections for staff comments.
- Boundaries – Checked and marked boundaries in North Branford and Hamden.

Attachments

- May 6, 2025 - Connecticut launches pilot program to test farm soils for 'forever chemicals' – News12
- May 12, 2025 - NVCOG Releases Draft Open Space Map and Report for Public Comment – NVCOG press release
- May 13, 2025 - Fight against invasive weed in CT 'scaled back' due to federal budget standstill – NH Register
- May 20, 2025 - Connecticut man arrested twice for riding dirt bike with a baby; 911 call, police footage released – Fox61
- May 16, 2025 - Denting the rain deficit: Connecticut is officially drought-free – WTNH
- May 27, 2025 - First evidence of longhorned tick infection found in Connecticut – WFSB
- June 3, 2025 - Sleeping Giant State Park to expand after years of delay: 'historic victory for conservation' – NH Register

Upcoming Agenda Items

July 2025 – former Bis property - Cheshire

Connecticut launches pilot program to test farm soils for 'forever chemicals'

News 12 - May 6, 2025

Connecticut is rolling out a new pilot program to research soil contamination levels in farms across the state, aiming to better understand the presence of PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly known as “forever chemicals.”

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) announced the initiative as concerns mount over PFAS toxicity.

Exposure to these substances has been linked to a wide range of health issues, including high cholesterol, immune system suppression, hormone disruptions, thyroid disorders, pregnancy complications and neurodevelopmental effects, according to CAES.

PFAS contamination in soil can leach into groundwater, affecting drinking water supplies and can be absorbed by crops, leading to consumption by humans and animals.

A major source of PFAS in agricultural soils is land-applied biosolids, which originate from wastewater treatment plants and may contain PFAS from household products and industrial waste.

Under the new pilot program, farmers can submit soil samples for free analysis at the Johnson-Horsfall Laboratory at the New Haven CAES campus.

Samples must be collected using a CAES-provided sampling kit and delivered within 48 hours to maintain integrity.

State officials see this effort as a critical first step in identifying contamination levels, which could lead to future regulations to safeguard public health.

Farmers can set an appointment to collect a CAES sampling kit by emailing CAES.PFASTesting@ct.gov.

NVCOG Releases Draft Open Space Map and Report for Public Comment

by Press Release | May 12, 2025

The Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) has published a draft Open Space Inventory map and report for public comment from May 12, 2025, to June 13, 2025. The interactive map displays every open space property across the 19-town region, with information on ownership, acreage, use, and level of legal protection, while the report provides important background and highlights key properties for each municipality. The map and report are available at nvcogct.gov/osi.

The term “open space” covers a variety of undeveloped land used for conservation, recreation, historic preservation, agriculture, or similar purposes. Understanding where open spaces are located within the region, what they are used for, and whether they are legally protected from development helps local governments and land trusts engage in well-informed planning.

The interactive map allows users to click on any open space property in the region and access details about it. Data layers related to endangered species, farmland soils, and demographics can be overlaid on the map to identify areas of interest.

To accompany the map, a report and guide document provides background on open space, details research methodology, lists key regional findings, and highlights each municipality with a unique two-page profile. The report has been designed to serve as a snapshot of existing conditions and a planning tool for municipal staff, commissioners, and open space advocates in the region.

NVCOG’s Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping department has long maintained an online open space inventory, with data acquired from various sources through the years. A \$92,000 grant from the U.S. Forest Service in 2023 empowered NVCOG to perform a comprehensive, town-by-town update that involved extensive land records research to make protection determinations on each property.

The Naugatuck Valley region contains the communities of Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethlehem, Bristol, Cheshire, Derby, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Oxford, Plymouth, Prospect, Seymour, Shelton, Southbury, Thomaston, Waterbury, Watertown, Wolcott, and Woodbury.

Public comments may be submitted to coneill@nvcogct.gov.

Fight against invasive weed in CT 'scaled back' due to federal budget standstill

By Alex Putterman - May 13, 2025 – NH Register

Researchers have slowed efforts to eradicate a noxious weed called hydrilla from the Connecticut River due to a lack of federal funding, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers confirmed Monday.

Keith Hannon, who manages the project, said in an email it has not received any new funding during the 2025 fiscal year, which began in October, because the federal government has been operating under a continuing resolution, as opposed to a formal budget.

"While prior-year funding allows limited continuation of efforts, planned field demonstrations for FY25 have been scaled back," Hannon said, adding that the Army Corps of Engineers "remains committed to supporting ongoing research and tracking hydrilla's spread, particularly as it continues to spread outside of the lower reaches of the river."

The project received \$6 million in the 2023 fiscal year and \$5 million in the 2024 fiscal year, Hannon said.

Hydrilla is an invasive weed, dubbed "the world's worst invasive aquatic plant" for its tendency to clog rivers and reduce the oxygen levels necessary to sustain other underwater life. It was first discovered in the Connecticut River in 2016 and by 2019 occupied nearly 200 acres of the river.

As of 2023, hydrilla had additionally been detected in six Connecticut lakes not connected to the river.

"Hydrilla can disrupt, slow down, or divert water flow," the USACE wrote in an advisory last year. "It increases the water's pH, and it outcompetes and replaces native aquatic plants upon which aquatic and terrestrial organisms depend."

In 2023, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers launched a project to track, study and possibly eradicate hydrilla at various spots along the southern part of the Connecticut River. The effort represented a collaboration of federal, state and regional agencies, as well as universities and non-profits.

Researchers say they've found success in combating hydrilla through safe and effective herbicides.

The project has been disrupted due to the Congress's failure to pass a new budget, Hannon said. Lawmakers have instead passed "continuing resolutions," which maintain federal funding levels at roughly the same level as previously, sometimes with minor tweaks.

Because the hydrilla project would need a new funding allocation to continue, Hannon said, it does not receive any additional money under a continuing resolution. That means researchers are left for now to spend down its existing funding and hope more will arrive in the future.

Even without new federal funding, Hannon said, the USACE will continue its efforts around hydrilla, including by studying of a patch in Agawam, Mass., which will mark the first time the project will cross state lines.

Additionally, he said, Connecticut and the federal government are collaborating on a program "to support local and state efforts to manage hydrilla and other invasive aquatic plants" that could launch in 2026.

Still, the USACE will need the federal government to allocate new funds in order for the hydrilla project to continue and expand, Hannon said.

"A new FY26 appropriation to continue and expand the project is still possible, but what that may look like is up to Congress to determine, not the USACE," he said.

Connecticut man arrested twice for riding dirt bike with a baby; 911 call, police footage released

May 20, 2025 – Fox61

NORTH BRANFORD, Conn. — A Connecticut man has been arrested twice in the past two months for allegedly riding a dirt bike while carrying a baby.

North Branford police announced Friday that they arrested 35-year-old Timothy Sherrick, a resident from the town's Northford neighborhood, after he is said to have driven a dirt bike on the road while holding an 11-month-old child.

For this incident, Sherrick was charged with risk of injury to a minor before being released. This isn't his first offense, however, according to the police department.

On April 2, Sherrick was arrested by North Branford police after the department received numerous 911 calls reporting a man riding a dirt bike with a baby, who was then around nine months hold. This was seen on the grounds of Northford Park.

North Branford police say that during this incident, Sherrick fled from responding officers through the park on the dirt bike, all while holding the child.

He allegedly failed to comply with officers' commands and took off in the direction of a wooded area owned by the Regional Water Authority. He was later caught and arrested.

"We have had a lot of dirt bike calls in this town, but I've never actually responded to an infant or a minor on the dirt bike," said Officer Brandon Cosenza, with the North Branford Police Department.

For the April 2 incident, Sherrick was charged with reckless endangerment, criminal trespass, interfering with an officer and risk of injury to a minor.

According to North Branford police, Sherrick has appeared in court following his April 2 arrest.

In both cases, the dirt bikes have been seized and are being held at least until the court proceedings conclude.

North Branford police noted in their release that the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt in a court of law.

However, the repeated offense has cause people on social media to call on child protective agencies to get involved.

"Take the child away before there's a funeral," said Daniel LaTorraca, on Facebook.

"All cases that we handle, we'll follow the correct protocol and make sure that all agencies that need to be notified are aware of what's going on," Cosenza told FOX61.

Denting the rain deficit: Connecticut is officially drought-free

by: Ashley Baylor - May 16, 2025 - WTNH

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (WTNH) — Connecticut is officially drought-free for the first time since September!

Technically, Greenwich, Stamford, Stonington, and Pawcatuck are still considered “abnormally dry,” but most of the state is completely out of the drought.

Starting Sept. 24, 2024, 63% of Connecticut was considered “abnormally dry.” By Nov. 5, 2024, all of Connecticut was under a moderate drought. Two weeks later, most of the state was under a severe drought.

Our May showers have put a significant dent in the rain deficit. So far, the shoreline has picked up almost two and a half inches of rain for the month.

Since the start of the month, inland areas have received over five inches of rain, which is about three and a half inches above normal.

The month isn't over, and the numbers will increase since we have rain in the forecast for next Thursday and Friday.

First evidence of longhorned tick infection found in Connecticut

By Kimberlyn Bouley – WFSB - May 27, 2025

FAIRFIELD, Conn. (WFSB) - Scientists have identified the first U.S. case of the invasive longhorned tick carrying a bacteria that causes Ehrlichiosis in Fairfield.

According to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), the tick was first discovered in the U.S. in 2017 and has since spread into at least 21 states.

Ehrlichia chaffeensis is typically transmitted by the lone star tick and causes flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, and muscle aches.

If untreated, it can lead to severe complications like kidney failure and respiratory issues.

While the longhorned tick has been found to carry various pathogens, including those that cause Lyme disease, this is the first confirmed instance of it carrying *E. chaffeensis*.

Dr. Goudarz Molaei, an associate professor adjunct to the Yale School of Public Health, emphasized the importance of public awareness and prevention measures, such as tick repellents and performing tick checks after outdoor activities.

Molaei highlighted the need for expanded tick surveillance programs to monitor the spread of invasive tick species and the diseases they may carry.

Residents are encouraged to report tick bites and seek medical attention if they develop symptoms consistent with HME.

For more information on tick prevention and surveillance, visit the CAES website or contact local health departments.

Sleeping Giant State Park to expand after years of delay: 'historic victory for conservation'

By Eric Bedner – NH Register - June 3, 2025

HAMDEN — Decades of efforts have finally come to fruition as the Sleeping Giant Park Association has announced the acquisition of 28 acres that will expand the more than 1,500 acres of existing land at the state park.

While the association had closed on the property in 2023, efforts have been underway to clean up the formerly privately owned parcel, leading to the "major milestone" in preserving Sleeping Giant, association officials said.

The parcel, located on the northern side of the park, was the largest remaining privately owned holding within the park's boundaries. It is a diverse, ecologically valuable parcel that includes acres of open meadow, forest, and wooded wetland, the association said. The land's name comes from the Doolittle family, which was among the earliest settlers in the region, according to the association's website.

"The acquisition of the Doolittle property marks a historic victory for conservation at Sleeping Giant," association officials said.

Jeff Borne, the chairman of land acquisition for the association, said that the association had tried several times to purchase the property during foreclosure proceedings, but were repeatedly thwarted.

Several interested parties drove the price up in past years, leading to the association to pay \$470,000 for the land, he said.

"We just thought we had to do it," Borne said. "It just made so much sense to protect it as part of the park."

The Sleeping Giant Park Association first showed interest in acquiring the land in 1986, when Jessie Doolittle, the widow of Clifford Doolittle, still lived on the property. Aside from a few exceptions, the property remained in the family's hands for more than 200 years.

Discussions with the family and what is now the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection spanned decades, with the association making a final offer in 1996 only to see the property sold to another buyer.

Although the association remained interested in the property, a deal wasn't reach, and the site deteriorated over the years.

Between 2014 and 2023, the property faced threats of foreclosure, and the association prepared bids each time, only to have the sale repeatedly averted until the foreclosure process advanced in July 2023.

The association acquired the property in September of that year, with cleanup beginning immediately to prepare it for its formal incorporation into the state park system, according to the association's website.

Restoration work included removing dilapidated structures, vehicles, trailers, boats, and scrap metal, all of which were most concentrated within the four acres around the old house site.

"This work laid the foundation for a new chapter in stewardship," association officials said. "Planning is underway to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the meadows and surrounding areas."

Since the property was acquired, invasive plants and overgrown vegetation have been cleared, native meadow plants have been seeded in bare soil patches, and the old, eroded driveway has been stabilized, association officials said.

Considering the freshwater and diverse habitats, the land offers the potential for various types of wildlife, Borne said.

"From a natural resources point of view, it's just a wonderful addition to the park," he said.

The association envisions trails extending through the Doolittle property to connect to existing routes on the mountain, but for now, the entrance remains gated to prevent unauthorized access and there is no formal parking at the site.

The public is asked to not visit the site until the property is suitable for visitation.

There are still some regulatory steps to be taken by DEEP in order for the land to be officially added to the state's parks portfolio.

That process must be completed before the public is allowed to use the new land, Borne said.