

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

May 25, 2021 Meeting Minutes

A telemeeting of the Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG) was held by Zoom

An audio recording (16 MB) is available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/WPCAG_2021/2021-05-25_WPCAG_Audio.mp3

A video recording (296 MB) is available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/WPCAG_2021/2021-05-25_WPCAG_Video.mp4

Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Karen Burnaska	Save the Sound
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
Alicea Charamut	Fisheries Advisory Council
Virginia de Lima	USGS CT Water Science Center
John Hudak	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Patrick Kearney	Manchester Water & Sewer
Fred Klein	CT Power and Energy Society
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Tom Tyler	MDC
Brenda Watson	Operation Fuel

Other Participants:

Jonathan Avery	Hazardville and Jewett City Water Cos.
Ally Ayotte	PURA
Corinne Fitting	DEEP
Kelvin Green	Western CT Council of Governments
Alexandria Hibbard	DEEP
Iris Kaminski	
Gannon Long	Operation Fuel
Lori Mathieu	DPH
Christine O'Neill	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Martha Smith (alt.)	Rivers Alliance
Karen Weeks	
Bruce Wittchen	OPM

Members Absent:

Eric Hammerling	CT Forest and Park Association
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
David Knauf	Darien Health Department
Joan Nichols	CT Farm Bureau Assoc.
Jeff Pugliese	Middlesex Chamber of Commerce
Vacancy	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.

1. Call to Order

Alicea Charamut asked everyone to introduce themselves and called the meeting to order at 1:34.

2. Approval of draft 4/20/2021 Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [draft 4/20/2021 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with John Hudak abstaining.

3. Water Planning Council Update

a. Water Planning Council Update

- Operation Fuel presentation

Brenda Watson provided an overview of [her presentation to the WPC](#). She said the CT Dept. of Social Services will handle the federal funding providing assistance with water bills but does not yet know what the process will be. She said the [Low Income Household Water Assistance Program](#) (LIHWAP) is a temporary authorization from the [US Dept. of Health & Human Services](#) and provided further background of the program. She said funding will likely go through community action agencies. She added that it is a waiting game, but she will send an update by email. Her presentation is available on the WPC website.

b. Implementation Work Group (IWG)Update

- Follow-up regarding Alliance for Water Efficiency work

Virginia de Lima encouraged water companies to reach out to the [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#) (AWE) regarding the rates model presented at the [AWE workshop](#) earlier this year. The [South Central CT Regional Water Authority](#) (RWA) volunteered for a case study using the model, which was presented at the March workshop.

- Topical Sub-Work Groups

Virginia said the private well group is finalizing its recommendations and provided an overview. She said Steve Rugar gave a walk-through of the recommendations that the group will make based on its review of the 2017 drought response. She added that he noted some of those recommended changes were incorporated into the 2020 drought response.

Virginia said the outreach work group is working on a disclaimer saying that people giving presentations regarding water planning are not speaking on behalf of the WPC. The plan implementation work group is on hold until the legislative session ends.

- Other IWG matters

c. Other State Water Plan matters

There was a discussion of interest in a survey of AWE workshop participants and Virginia de Lima said the AWE has spent all the funding provided to it and Alicea Charamut said Operation Fuel's Gannon Long has offered to help with a survey. Alicea suggested participants be asked if they found the workshop to be useful and, if not, why not and what can we do? Virginia offered to contact AWE about this and invited people interested in helping to contact her.

4. Old Business

a. Water-related legislation update

Josh Cansler said Alicea said utilities are paying close attention to [HB 6615](#), *An Act Concerning Safe Drinking Water*, which is awaiting action by the House. He also mentioned [HB 6643](#), *An Act Concerning Revenue Items To Implement The Biennial Budget*, and said the original bill language included a provision about Safe Drinking Water Act fees and would eliminate the sunset date.

John Hudak said bills regarding training for road salt application ([SB 1031](#)) and solar siting on farmland ([HB 6498](#)) died. Denise Savageau said the solar siting issue is waiting for guidance from DEEP. Alicea Charamut said someone is trying to strip the local option language from [HB 6441](#), *An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation*. Denise mentioned [HB 6496](#), *An Act Concerning Certain Soil-Related Initiatives*, and said it needs to be called to the floor at the House. She added that environmental bills are supposed to be called this week and noted that pressure against it by real estate developers.

Margaret Miner mentioned [SB 931](#), *An Act Concerning Emissions Standards For Medium And Heavy Duty Vehicles*, which would require a study of the possible adoption of California's emissions standards for medium and heavy duty vehicles. Denise pointed out that the previously-mentioned HB 6441 still includes storm water authority language and other worthwhile language regarding climate change adaptation.

b. [Water Utility Coordinating Committee](#) (WUCC) update

Dan Lawrence said there was another regional meeting last week, a meeting of representatives of all three WUCCs. He mentioned upcoming meetings of the Central WUCC on 6/15 and the Western WUCC on 6/8. He added that the western group has received requests for new noncommunity systems. Jonathan Avery pointed out that the Central WUCC meeting conflicts with the next WPCAG meeting. He said the Eastern WUCC will meet soon and noted that the group has to replace Mark Decker, who is retiring. Josh Cansler added that the regionalization subcommittee will meet soon.

c. [Interagency Drought Work Group](#) update

Bruce Wittchen said the interagency group has not yet declared a any part of the state to be in Stage 1, but parts of the state are getting dry. The group is scheduled to meet again next week. Alicea Charamut said her organization is concerned about stream flows being so low going into the summer and is getting the word out.

Denise Savageau said a number of monitoring points are currently shown as below normal or much below normal on US Geological Service mapping. She explained that the previously-discussed drought topical subgroup discussed fall-winter drought that can impact conditions in spring. She added that spring precipitation can be deceptive and it is important to pay attention.

Margaret Miner mentioned the Shepaug River litigation in the 2000s and said Waterbury has kept up with the agreed-to management plan, but the river is running low. She said advocates are looking at the scale of Waterbury's unaccounted-for water, which can be up to 30%. That is water that is not in the stream.

5. WPCAG Work Groups

a. Watershed Lands Work Group

- Update – WPC consideration of [Final Draft Report](#)

Karen Burnaska said that the group is past that draft report now and noted the draft solar siting recommendations listed below. She also said she and Margaret Miner continue to work on the conveyance bill concerns discussed in previous meetings.

Margaret said she is contacting people and mentioned that it is the legislature's [Government Administration & Elections Committee](#) (GAE) that handles conveyances of non-DEEP land. She and Karen are following up on information that is lacking when conveyances are being considered, including the public's cost for land that is conveyed. They are still advocating for the process to require that adequate water resources information be provided. She also highlighted some deficiencies in current conveyance bill language.

b. Source Water Protection Workgroup

Alicea Charamut thanked John Hudak and Dave Murphy for their edits to the [Source Water Protection Outline](#). She provided an overview of the document and John mentioned the [CT Section of the American Water Works Assoc.](#) (CT-AWWA) has a source water protection group. There was a discussion of agency involvement in the process and the connection between water and energy. Alicea noted that DEEP is working on a soup-to-nuts process for energy facility siting.

There was further discussion of the Source Water Protection Outline and [Draft Solar Siting Recommendations & Work Plan](#). Alicea asked for volunteers to put a final document together. Margaret Miner, Denise Savageau, and Gannon Long volunteered and Fred Klein asked to be included on any emails.

6. New Business

There was no new business.

7. Public Comment

Margaret Miner mentioned Aquarion's [Southwest Regional Pipeline Diversion Permit Application](#) and said people of Fairfield County are unaware of this process and of WUCC plans. She added that the legislature is playing catch-up and recommended people read a [May 5 opinion piece by Peter McGuinness](#) in the CT Post regarding water and housing. She listed the variety of plans related to water and said she thinks Aquarion is above average at communicating.

Margaret asked what is CT water policy and noted that people used to talk about appointing a water czar. She said there are issues with projections and we need more focus. She added that Kirk Westphal, the lead consultant for the water plan, said he had never worked in a state with as many plans as CT. She said the Plan of Conservation & Development prepared by OPM used to be the state's plan.

Jonathan Avery said DEEP is the governing party overseeing the diversion permit process. Alicea said she thinks DEEP's adjudications process does see the big picture, such as considering the lack of conservation. She thinks DEEP looks at one thing, not the whole. She added that this is not just regarding the Aquarion pipeline.

Margaret Miner said DEEP is in charge of the diversion permit, but DPH is in charge of water system planning and PURA and the WPC are involved too. She contrasted that with the process in other states and said the problem is with CT's process. Dan Lawrence mentioned that Aquarion has the diversion information on its website and Alicea said Aquarion has done a great job with outreach. Dan said water companies are responsible for their system plan and that conservation is a big topic.

Alicea Charamut said Rivers Alliance received funding for a water podcast.

8. Next Meeting Date

Josh Cansler read the dates of upcoming meetings:

WPCAG:	June 15, 2021, 1:30
WPC:	June 1, 2021, 1:30
IWG:	June 8, 2021, 1:30

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM