

## Water Planning Council Advisory Group

### February 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes

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

A video recording is available at:

[https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2022-02-15\\_WPCAG\\_Video.mp4](https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2022-02-15_WPCAG_Video.mp4)

#### Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	<a href="#">Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments</a>
Karen Burnaska	<a href="#">Save the Sound</a>
Josh Cansler	<a href="#">Southeastern CT Water Authority</a>
Alicea Charamut	<a href="#">Fisheries Advisory Council</a>
Carol Haskins	<a href="#">Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition</a>
John Hudak	<a href="#">South Central CT Regional Water Authority</a>
Patrick Kearney	<a href="#">Manchester Water &amp; Sewer</a>
Fred Klein	<a href="#">CT Power and Energy Society</a>
Dan Lawrence	<a href="#">Aquarion</a>
Darryl Newman	<a href="#">CT Nursery &amp; Landscape Assoc.</a>
Martha Smith (alt.)	<a href="#">Rivers Alliance</a>
Kelsey Sudol (alt.)	<a href="#">Lake Waramaug Task Force</a>
Tom Tyler	<a href="#">MDC</a>

#### Other Participants:

Ally Ayotte	<a href="#">PURA</a>
Jonathan Avery	Hazardville and Jewett City Water Cos.
Chris Bellucci	<a href="#">DEEP</a>
Corinne Fitting	<a href="#">DEEP</a>
Rich Hanratty	CT Water Co.
Alexandria Hibbard	<a href="#">DEEP</a>
Iris Kaminski	
David Kuzminski (alt.)	Portland
Gannon Long	Operation Fuel
Christine O'Neill (alt.)	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Bruce Wittchen	<a href="#">OPM</a>

#### Members Absent:

Virginia de Lima	<a href="#">USGS CT Water Science Center</a>
Eric Hammerling	<a href="#">CT Forest and Park Association</a>
David Knauf	<a href="#">CT Association of Directors of Health</a>
Jeff Pugliese	<a href="#">Middlesex Chamber of Commerce</a>
Denise Savagau	<a href="#">CT Association of Conservation Districts</a>
Brenda Watson	<a href="#">Operation Fuel</a>

#### Vacancies

Agriculture

#### 1. Call to Order

Alicea Charamut called the meeting to order at 1:33, started the recording, and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

## **2. Approval of draft 1/18/2022 Minutes**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [1/18/2022 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

## **3. Water Plan Updates**

### a. Water Planning Council Update

There was no update.

### b. Implementation Work Group Update

- Topical Sub-Work Groups

Alicea noted that IWG co-chairs Virginia de Lima and David Radka are not here to provide the update. Karen Burnaska said more than 100 people joined the [2/2 event](#) celebrating World Wetlands Day and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CT Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act. She said additional events are planned in May and June. Carol Haskins said one of her organization's members who is more experienced with lands than waters attended and appreciated the history provided. Kelsey Sudol said a story map will be available May-June.

Ali Hibbard said the Tracking Sub-Work Group learned about a Long Island Sound project grant tracking system used DEEP. What they learned about the interim tracking system should be helpful.

- Potential vacancies on the IWG

Alicea Charamut said there will be a vacancy on the IWG because Lou Burch is leaving the environmental field to return to labor. She is the alternate member representing an environmental organization but pointed out that she has a recurring conflict with the schedule of IWG meetings. She is willing to continue as the alternate but invited people to volunteer to replace Lou.

### c. Structures for state water planning and implementation

- [Draft Water Chief Roles & Responsibilities](#)

Alicea said the draft document had been circulated last week and showed it on her screen. There was a discussion of the proposed responsibilities and Alicea pointed out that the person would not take on WPC members' role in legislative engagement but could draft documents and follow-up on legislative matters. The person would not act as a lobbyist or legislative liaison. Alicea also mentioned discussions of the position's relationship with the IWG, noting that some people envision that person being chair of the IWG, while others disagree.

Alicea showed the report's suggested organization charts to highlight logistical questions and noted the need to consider where the person will be housed. She noted that the WPC will make those decisions. The biggest concern of most people in the work group is to avoid having the water chief be beholden to any single agency. Dan said he agrees the water chief should not chair the IWG and pointed out that the person could have undue influence over the group's decisions.

John Hudak asked why some people wanted the water chief to chair the group and Alicea said it was in part an issue of administrative support for the group. There was a discussion of administrative support the IWG and WPCAG receive and John highlighted the advantages of the IWG remaining stakeholder-driven with co-chairs representing different interest to provide checks and balances

Carol Haskin pointed out the implications of the word chosen to describe the position, with terms like "Czar" and "Chief" potentially overstating the role but "Coordinator" understating it. Alicea said the [CT Water Works Association](#) (CWWA) has an Executive Director and Dan Lawrence highlighted that the Executive Director reports to a board, which would be comparable to someone reporting to the WPC. That's how he reads this description.

Iris Kaminski said the WPC should have the opportunity to review the description before the IWG and WPCAG spend further time on it. She expects there will be further iterations. Alicea Charamut agreed with that approach.

Martha Smith asked what authority will the person have and Alicea showed the final sentence of the draft's summary, which says the duties are "...not solely administrative in nature..." She said the person will be the one charged with moving things forward and there was a discussion of the difficulty at this point of trying to specify the level of authority, of where the person would be located, and who the person would report to.

Alicea noted the various concerns and possible approaches including that the position could be at one of the agencies or a consultant. John Hudak mentioned that a consultant role could be similar to that served by Kirk Westphal, who led the original State Water Plan consulting work. Alicea mentioned the [New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission](#) (NEIWPCC) as being another option and there was a discussion of NEWIPCC's role in contracting for the water plan and of roles NEIWPCC fills as a consultant for nearby states.

Aaron Budris said there will be a need for support staff if the person is not at one of the agencies and there was a discussion of the draft's mention of administrative support needs. Alicea Charamut suggested that some of the points raised today should be added and four were identified by the group:

1. The specific job title is important and would Executive Director be more appropriate?
2. NEIWPCC should be considered as a possible consultant or as the conduit to a consultant
3. Administrative and technical support will be important

4. The IWG should remain stakeholder led

Carol Haskins said the inclusion of “or” is confusing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet of the Legislative and Regulatory subsection of the draft:

Assist the WPC with development of proposed legislation consistent with the priorities and decisions of the WPC and Plan goals as recommended by the WPC or consistent with deliverables of the WPCAG or its workgroups.

It should be clear that the WPC makes decisions. Alicea said the first clause of the Duties section covers it:

Under the direction of the Water Planning Council, the Water Planning Chief shall undertake the following:

John Hudak noted that the draft has the person convey information from the WPCAG and IWG. He also recommended changing “Make recommendations...” in the Legislative and Regulatory subsection. There was discussion of the distinction between bringing information to the WPC and being a resource for the WPC and Alicea said she added a comment to the document.

- d. Other State Water Plan matters

- [Governor’s Council on Climate Change](#) (GC3) reporting as it relates to the State Water Plan

Dan Lawrence said GC3 policies should be reflected in the state water plan and Alicea noted the relevance of the prioritization exercise discussed in recent meetings.

#### **4. WPCAG Work Groups**

- a. Revisit [Conservation/ratemaking barriers workgroup proposal](#)

Alicea Charamut showed the proposal on her screen and explained that the WPCAG previously decided this should be done but the WPC waited for last year’s [workshop](#) presented by the [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#) (AWE). She pointed out that the workshop highlighted the need for oversight of ratemaking, but CT utilities are overseen differently. She suggested reporting on the issues we are dealing with and not trying to propose solutions.

Dan Lawrence said we need to identify the conservation ratemaking challenges experienced by municipal water companies or propose statewide restrictions on outdoor water uses. One or the other. Fred Klein said he agrees but asked what the problem is. He noted that the state has established a revenue adjustment mechanism for investor-owned utilities. Should there be further incentives and would it work for water

authorities? Alicea mentioned the AWE presentation's discussion of adjustment mechanisms and the need for oversight.

Pat Kearney said the approach probably would not work for municipal systems. An elected body sets the rates and, because rates are seen the same as a tax, they try to keep the rates low. He added that the state should take a role because a water company having more supply will encourage use while another company is seeking reductions. He also said a town wanting to encourage development will keep its water and sewer rates low. Alicea Charamut said these points need to be put on paper as part of the report. Pat said another issue to consider is that a controlling authority will not want to give up its control.

Alicea asked what can be done and Pat said we are doing it backwards and it needs to be addressed on a statewide basis. He said eliminating outside water taps on houses would solve the problem because utilities only have supply concerns because of outdoor water uses. John Hudak said another concern with the approach being discussed is that a municipal or regional authority utility needs cash this year, not the following year. He also said water use is declining. Alicea asked if rate structures are the way to go or not.

Dan Lawrence said we should consider what the barrier is and what approach is successful. He noted that average water demand is declining but pointed out that municipal plans of conservation and development seek growth. The question is how to reduce irrigation demands. Alicea Charamut said she would change the purpose statement. Pat Kearney pointed out the complication created when people who have wells are next to people on a public water system facing restrictions.

There was a discussion of water use restrictions and Pat Kearney said no water company should come out of drought unable to continue operations if its rates are right. He said the solution is to impose conservation universally when needed. Alicea asked how this would be presented to the legislature and Pat Kearney said we need approaches that do not impact only individual water utilities. Alicea Charamut said there is always pushback against proposals such as this and Bruce Wittchen noted that this topic meshes with the [Interagency Drought Workgroup](#)'s ongoing discussion of potential changes in the drought plan and its implementation.

Darryl Newman said that as a business operating in multiple towns, he believes requirements should be evenly applied and enforced. Alicea Charamut said she is concerned about this topic being broadened. Dan Lawrence said Aquarion is applying water use restrictions more consistently now. John Hudak said we should avoid confusing routine conservation with drought restrictions and Alicea said addressing both helps with drought management and mitigation. Dan Lawrence said conservation provides drought resiliency and Alicea said she will make some changes to the proposal and recirculate it.

b. Watershed Lands Work Group

Karen Burnaska said the group will meet again at 9:00 on March 11.

c. Source Water Protection Work Group: [Source Water Protection Outline](#)

Alicea Charamut said she is working with Denise Savageau and there will be an update next month. She thanked people who have submitted their sections.

- d. Solar Siting Work Group: [Draft Solar Siting Recommendations & Work Plan](#)

Alicea said they will communicate with the [Sustainable, Transparent and Efficient Practices for Solar Development](#) (STEPS) program at DEEP and that should be ready next month.

## 5. Old Business

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

Dan Lawrence said there is a meeting tomorrow to work on DPH's [Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity](#) (CPCN) process for new water companies and they will move on to a new topic following this. He outlined the process for keeping everyone informed. Jonathan Avery said he does not have the Zoom link for tomorrow's meeting and said the Eastern WUCC met last week but did not have a quorum. He noted the difficulty of filling vacancies and said 2 of 3 officers were there but they did not have the needed six members. He said they are wondering how to get people to attend meetings and how they fit into the larger WUCC process. Dan said other WUCCs are having the same difficulties.

- b. Interagency Drought Work Group update

Bruce Wittchen provided a brief update regarding the [Interagency Drought Work Group](#), which is continuing its work on the recommendations in the [report submitted by the Drought Topical group](#). He said they are identifying which of the needed changes can be made most easily so they can be adopted more quickly, while changes requiring more effort are handled on a longer term basis.

- c. Nominating Committee

Carol Haskins said she spoke with Denise Savageau about recruiting someone to represent agricultural water interests.

- d. Hydrilla update

There were no updates

- e. SWP Prioritization Discussion

Alicea Charamut said this will take a while and, due to the length of this meeting, should be done next month.

## 6. New Business

There was no new business.

## 7. Public Comment

Karen Burnaska said there will be an event on 3/21/2022, the day before World Water Day. The program will focus on ground water. Alicea Charamut posted a link to [www.ourwaterct.org](http://www.ourwaterct.org).

## **8. Next Meeting Date**

Alicea read the schedule of upcoming meetings:

March 1, 2022:	WPC
March 8, 2022:	IWG
March 11, 2022:	Watershed Lands Work Group
March 15, 2022:	WPCAG

## **9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

*Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM*