

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

September 20, 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/2022-09-20_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
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Patrick Kearney	Manchester Water & Sewer
Fred Klein	CT Power and Energy Society
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Sonia Marino (alt.)	CT Association of Directors of Health
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance
Darryl Newman	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Tom Tyler	MDC
Steve Vitko	South Central CT Regional Water Authority

Other Participants:

Judy Allen	
Paul Aresta	CEQ
Jonathan Avery	Hazardville & Jewett City Water Companies
Chris Bellucci	DEEP
Kim Czapl	DEEP
Rich Hanratty	CT Water Co.
Ali Hibbard	DEEP
Dave Kuzminski (alt.)	Portland
Christine O'Neill (alt.)	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Aimee Petras (alt.)	Farmington River Watershed Association
Martha Smith (alt.)	Rivers Alliance
Lisette Stone	DPH
Brad Weeks	Kowalski Group

Members Absent:

Virginia de Lima	USGS CT Water Science Center
Eric Hammerling	CT Forest and Park Association
Brenda Watson	Operation Fuel

Vacancies

Agriculture
Business & Industry – Association

1. Call to Order

Alicea Charamut called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of draft 7/19/2022 Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [7/19/2022 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with Fred Klein and Steve Vitko abstaining because they had not attended the meeting.

3. Discussion: [State Water Plan Update & Prioritization](#)

Alicea said there is no update today but the group will discuss the report to be prepared by the WPC on the state Water Plan. That is next on the agenda.

4. Water Plan Updates

a. Annual Report Summaries

Alicea Charamut explained that the WPC will be preparing the annual report that is required to be submitted to the legislature, but that has not been submitted since 2019. We will compile what the WPCAG has been done during that time and said they will try to have that ready by the time of this group's next meeting.

b. Water Planning Council Update

Alicea said the WPC approved the updated [state drought plan](#) and provided a brief overview of the update process. Alicea also mentioned that the WPC will not receive congressionally directed spending for the upcoming [state water plan](#) update. They are pursuing other options.

c. Implementation Work Group Update

Alicea noted that IWG co-chairs Virginia de Lima and Dave Radka are not here to provide an update but said a call has gone out for people who are interested in participating in a USGS data needs work group, which will be a topical sub-work group under the IWG.

- **Topical Sub-Work Groups**

- [Outreach & Education](#)

Denise Savageau said the group is looking at a couple things. They are developing recommendations for updating the WPC website, and she noted some deficiencies. They also are looking at branding and a logo. Finally, they continue to work on a series of workshops this fall with a focus on the monitoring of water quality and quantity. She noted that recent WPC meetings have included discussions of drought education and highlighted that the plans also cover drought preparedness, not just response. They are looking at what should be done there. She mentioned some existing education programs and possible connections with climate change education. They are looking for more members;

there is a lot of work to do. Judy Allen said she will send some information to Denise.

5. WPCAG Work Groups

a. Watershed Lands Work Group

Karen Burnaska said the group met and she mentioned presentations by Regional Water's John Triana about the authority's land protection program, by Aaron Budris on the WUCC story map done to help municipal leaders and developers understand the importance of watershed lands. It is under review by DPH and will be hosted on DPH's website. Karen also mentioned that the group also discussed a riparian buffer study that is underway and a [petition for a declaratory judgment regarding the MDC and the Colebrook Reservoir](#), noting concerns about impacts on the future drinking water supply and maintaining flows on the Farmington River.

Karen said the group also discussed the WPC's response to the proposed letter regarding legislative land conveyances that the WPCAG had provided for the WPC to consider sending to the [Government Administration & Elections \(GAE\)](#) Committee. She said the WPC had some concerns and the letter is being redrafted by WPC member Graham Stevens of DEEP and Alicea for review at the next WPC meeting. Karen listed the WPC's concerns regarding the letter, which have been discussed at the WPC meeting and at the watershed lands group's meeting. She also described the WPCAG's goals for the letter. Alicea provided a brief overview of procedural considerations that had gone into the drafting of the letter.

Margaret Miner said legislators and public officials are interested in developing plans, not in implementing them. They are happy to fund plans. Margaret said that, as for the proposed letter to GAE, the WPC has decided to take a different approach than suggested by the Watershed Lands Work Group and WPCAG. She recommended we spend no further time on it.

Margaret said other groups are also concerned about the conveyance bill process and she expects that they and their members will be getting in touch with legislators about their concerns. She said the GAE Committee would like to avoid annual conflicts with environmental groups and seems receptive. Margaret said the WPC expressed concern about requiring reverter clauses, saying agencies might not want a property back after giving it away, and she responded by asking what is in the public interest. She believes those details are important but we could spend a lot of time on this and recommended letting other group having more clout do this.

Karen Burnaska said she has not seen the WPC's draft but pointed out that this conveyance bill issue has been going on for a long time. She described suggestions the work group received from various people experienced with the conveyance process, noted the possibility of changes in committee membership, and recommended continuing the discussion with current committee leaders. Alicea Charamut summarized Margaret's and Karen's points and said she and Graham will follow through on the WPC's version of the letter to the GAE Committee and have it ready for the next WPC meeting.

Alicea mentioned that she had typed the link to the petition for declaratory ruling Karen had mentioned earlier into chat. She provided some background regarding the situation regarding the Colebrook Reservoir. She described the history of the [Metropolitan District Commission](#)'s (MDC's) contract with the [US Army Corps of Engineers](#) (USACE) that required the MDC to pay certain amount and reserved an amount of water for future MDC water supply purposes.

Alicea said the USACE-MDC contract has expired and the MDC does not want to continue the arrangement that allows that water to be considered a future water supply. To do so, DPH expects the MDC to submit an updated water supply plan and a source abandonment application. The MDC's petition for declaratory ruling seeks a ruling that it is not obligated to do that. Alicea said such a decision would limit DPH's ability to regulate future water sources.

Margaret Miner said a letter from the WPC could be beneficial in this situation and Alice noted that DPH could not participate and it cannot be discussed in that forum. Margaret said this is a problem with a multi-agency group that has no independent legal existence. She said future water supplies are a significant part of water planning and, one way or another, the WPC should be expressing itself. Too often, cases like this go into dockets or litigation and the WPC says it cannot say anything. This is a key issue and she is sorry the WPC has difficulty weighing in on important questions.

Alicea said Colebrook Reservoir is identified as a future source in the plans of the Western and Central [Water Utility Coordinating Committees](#) (WUCCs) and asked if WUCCs have a role in this, noting that no one has to answer today. Margaret Miner added that there are other issues that can also be relevant to WUCC plans, which are the state-approved water supply plans and said WUCCs should have a role.

6. Old Business

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

Alicea Charamut said a WUCC implementation meeting is scheduled in November. Aaron Budris said a Western WUCC meeting is scheduled on 9/27 and Jonathan Avery said the Eastern WUCC will meet 11/16 and that will be followed by the WUCC implementation meeting. He added that a Central WUCC meeting currently scheduled in October might be moved to the same day. There was a discussion of the schedule not yet being confirmed.

b. Interagency Drought Work Group update

Alicea Charamut said the [Interagency Drought Work Group](#)'s September meeting was immediately after the heavy rains at the beginning of the month. It was too soon to observe how much conditions would improve so the group did not change the Stage 2 and Stage 3 declarations. The group will meet again on Oct. 6.

c. Nominating Committee

Carol Haskins said Regional Water's Steve Vitko was appointed to replace Regional Water's John Hudak and noted that the WPC would like to see a more iterative process for identifying new members in the future. She identified the members who are up for

renewal at the end of the year and mentioned vacancies for the agricultural and business association positions. Carol mentioned that they are considering the possibility of moving Darryl Newman from the water-intensive industry position to the agricultural industry position because it might be easier to find someone to fill the water-intensive industry position.

Carol listed some industries that can be considered for that position, including golf courses and breweries, but pointed out that a final decision has not been made yet. She said the WPC would be asked before proposing such a change. Carol noted that the New Haven and the Waterbury chambers of commerce are under consideration for the business association position. She also listed some options for an agricultural position.

Fred Klein said there might be a beverage association that could be considered for the water-intensive industry position that would be more broadly based than breweries but include them. He highlighted that such businesses would have a very different consumption profile than agricultural users. Fred mentioned that ski areas, which also are under consideration due to snow making, might not be appropriate because their peak water use season does not align with other users' periods of peak demand. There also was a discussion of choosing the CT irrigation contractors association and Darryl Newman offered to reach out to the executive director.

Carol recommended proposing the various options to the WPC but noted the need to identify people who can participate. She also asked members who know they will be unable to attend a meeting to ask their alternate to attend if they have an alternate. She will circulate the list as a reminder.

d. Hydrilla update

Alicea said she was unable to attend the most recent hydrilla meeting but her understanding is that there has not been a big change regarding funding. She also said hydrilla is a more significant problem this year than last year and noted the impact on recreation.

7. New Business

There was no new business.

8. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

9. Next Meeting Date

Alicea Charamut read the dates of upcoming meetings.

October 4, 2022:	WPC
October 11, 2022:	IWG
October 18, 2022:	WPCAG

Alicea mentioned that an item not included on the agenda was that the WPC approved the proposed rate recovery & conservation pricing work group and they are looking for

members. Members do not need to be in the WPCAG or IWG and she added that they would also like to know of any people who are interested and have expertise but cannot commit to attending meetings. Those people can help when the group is completing its work of identifying options. A call for members will go out in the next week and Alicea noted that the group's work will be central in moving forward with year-round conservation and enabling the state to be more responsive to drought helping the state avoid having to respond to drought so soon. Both will be important as droughts possibly become more frequent.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM