

Water Planning Council Advisory Group – Watershed Lands Workgroup

March 11, 2022

Meeting Notes

A recording is available at https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2022-03-11_Watershed_Lands_video.mp4

Attendees: Alicea Charamut (Rivers Alliance), Eric McPhee (DPH), John Hudak (Regional Water Authority), Pat Kearney (Manchester Water), Aaron Budris (NVCOG), Ally Ayotte (PURA), Rich Hanratty (CT Water Co.), Denise Savageau, Joe Welsh (Aquarion Water Co.), Deb Mosher Dunn (Save the River Save the Hills), Don Danella (Niantic River Watershed), Penny H. (East Lyme Natural Resource Commission), Judy Allen, Bruce Wittchen (OPM), Margaret Miner (Rivers Alliance), and Karen Burnaska (Save the Sound).

Notes of December 10, 2021 Meeting: There were no comments or corrections.

Watershed Lands Issues and Concerns

*DEEP STEPS Program on Solar Siting: The WPCAG Solar Siting subgroup will present its recommendations to the WPCAG and, when approved, the recommendations will be sent to DEEP. Denise raised concerns that the STEP process has not moved forward. (Additional comments re: solar siting were made under the legislative portion of the meeting, SB 248.)

*Protection of watershed land containing AA water not currently connected to a utility: Margaret gave an overview of her concerns stating that her first interest is to protect AA water. She presented examples of projects over the years that appear to have put AA water at risk. She questioned if water companies feel they have any stewardship responsibilities for AA waters within their watersheds even if these waters are not being currently used. (FYI, Margaret's comments were emailed to everyone on the Watershed Lands Workgroup list prior to the meeting.) The conversation that followed focused on the steps that water companies and DPH take with respect to reviewing project applications for potential impacts on source water, and the importance of protecting the purity and adequacy of supply. John Hudak explained that RWA expends a lot of resources on land use applications. Pat Kearney concurred with John, explaining that all applications he receives are reviewed. He noted that various other local agencies review applications. Eric McPhee stated that DPH electronically receives local land use applications. The submissions vary from town to town. DPH is working on guidance to help municipalities better understand and facilitate the land use reporting process. He is also working with Denise on a source water protection tool to help municipalities identify important aspects of watershed land to be protected and to rate the land under consideration for development. Denise added that stormwater management is critical to protecting drinking water watershed land. She also explained the concept of "One Water" and the important role a real estate conveyance fee can play in helping towns protect watershed land. Alicea noted her concern with the increase of impervious surfaces caused by major development. Joe Welsh suggested that incentive be given to municipalities to protect watershed land and noted the importance of the OSWA grant program in protecting watershed land. The question of the role of water companies in protecting AA waters not currently connected to a utility still remains.

*Overall land use planning and future water supply sources: Aaron briefly explained the development of a story map by the WUCCs to promote a better understanding between water companies and municipalities about procedures and decision making involving development and watershed land. Alicea announced that Rivers Alliance is working on various proposals, one being the need for riparian buffers. John suggested looking at impervious coverage and review at the local level.

Legislative Update:

*CGA Land Conveyance Request Questionnaire -environmental supplement: Karen reported that the Clerk of the GAE Committee informed Margaret and her that the Watershed Lands Workgroup proposed supplement requesting environmental information was sent, along with the current questionnaire, to all legislators two weeks ago and will be used in this year's land conveyance review.

*[SB 240](#) AAC the Use of Sodium Chloride to Mitigate Snow and Ice Accumulation: The bill was supported by CWWA, Rivers Alliance, and various other environmental organizations. Rick informed us that DEEP had submitted testimony supporting it but stating that it did not have the resources to cover it this year.

*[SB 248](#) AAC Drinking Water Supply: The bill includes the electronic notification of local land use applications to water companies. It also includes a provision for DPH to have another layer of review for solar projects where there will be a disturbance of forest land. The minimum acreage for a project receiving review would be one acre. Denise noted that the second provision should not be just for forest land and did not favor a one acre minimum for solar projects. Both Alicea and Denise would like the one acre requirement removed. A public hearing on SB 248 has not yet been scheduled. Denise also presented the [current CT Siting Council guidelines](#) and explained they should be revised to include review of drinking water watershed land projects and not just land classified as aquifer protection. Denise also questioned why only groundwater classifications are reviewed.

*AAC the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Private and Semipublic Well Testing: This is a raised bill. No bill number has been assigned and not public hearing scheduled:

Other Business:

*Alicea announced that MDC is considering selling some of its land. She introduced Judy Allen who explained that MDC is considering the sale of 43 acres of land in West Hartford. Judy also reported that MDC is working on federal legislation to bypass an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers re: Colebrook Reservoir. Additional review was suggested.

Next Meeting: June 10, 2022

KB

Rev. draft 3/13/22