

## **Water Planning Council Advisory Group – Watershed Lands Workgroup**

**June 10, 2022**

### **Meeting Notes**

(The meeting was recorded. The link to the recording is: )

**Attendees:** Alicea Charamut (Rivers Alliance), Eric McPhee (DPH), Ron Wallace (Regional Water Authority), Pat Kearney (Manchester Water), Aaron Budris (NVCOG), Ally Ayotte (PURA), Rich Hanratty (CT Water Co.), Joe Welsh (Aquarion Water Co.), Bruce Wittchen (OPM), Eric Lindquist (OPM), Dave Kuzminski (Portland), Eric Hammerling (CFPA), Brendan Fox (MDC), Lisette Stone (DPH), Dustyn Nelson (CNLA), Amy Petras (Farmington River Watershed Association), Jeff King (Middletown), Margaret Miner (Rivers Alliance), and Karen Burnaska (Save the Sound).

**Notes of March 11, 2021 Meeting:** There were no comments or corrections.

**Legislative Updates:** Funding was included in the 2023 budget adjustments to provide for Green Sno Pro training; \$15 million was included for the OSWA matching grant program; among other items, HB 5500 included the requirement to distribute educational material to renters and home buyers on the testing of private wells (The provision that a private well be tested prior to sale was not included.); SB 248 that contained the provision that municipalities electronically forward copies of land use applications to water companies was not voted on. Following up on this last item, Ron Wallace of RWA said that RWA is receiving some applications electronically and is working with other towns.

### **GAE Land Conveyance Process:**

Eric Hammerling explained CFPA's concerns with this year's conveyance process and applications received. He said that six conveyances were proposed and five were approved by the legislature within an extremely short period of time after the bills were announced. His main concern was the lack of information presented on the proposed conveyances. He explained CFPA's reasons for opposing all six of the proposed conveyances and outlined suggested improvements to the process. CFPA's testimony is attached.

A draft letter to the GAE co-chairs was discussed. The draft letter requested that the CGA land conveyance questionnaire and the supplemental questionnaire requesting environmental information be posted on the CGA website prior to the deadline for submission of written testimony for a bill's public hearing. The draft letter also requested that any land conveyance must reflect that the land being requested for conveyance is in the public interest, and, if the land requested for conveyance does not meet the proposed use, the land will revert back to the state. It was suggested that the letter also state that before any land requested for conveyance is acted upon the application must be complete and contain all necessary information. All pertinent information should be included in the bill that requests the conveyance.

\*Attendees were asked to submit any additional comments to Margaret, Karen Bruce, and Eric no later than COB on June 14, 2022. A final draft letter will be sent to the WPCAG for its meeting on June 21, 2022.

**Siting of Solar Projects on Watershed Land:** There was no update. The WPCAG is continuing to review its response to DEEP.

**WUCC update on land use planning and protection of source water land:** Aaron Budris noted that the comments received on the draft story map have been incorporated into the draft. The story map is currently being finalized before it will be turned over to DPH. Lisette Stone will distribute a link to the WPCAG.

**How to better protect Class I & II “like” land and other lands classified as having high quality, potentially potable water.**

Discussion included the following points:

-Margaret explained the possible need for a “new approach” for the DEEP stormwater permitting process. Is there a need to simplify the permitting process and be sure that problems don’t “fall between the cracks,” e.g. mining and quarrying?

-Questions were asked about the criteria used by water companies in deciding how to protect critical land that is being proposed for development. What can water companies do besides acquisition?

Ron explained the different water discharges and talked about the information needed for stormwater permits. He also briefly explained RWA’s land acquisition matrix.

-Eric McPhee and Lisette Stone explained the project that DPH is working on with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts to determine what land should be protected. A parcel map delineating characteristics such as soil conditions and slope will be made available to towns and water companies. The map would rank parcels that are a threat to water sources. Alicea added that it is important to include high quality water not used for drinking. It is hoped the project will be completed by next spring.

-Alicea stated the Rivers Alliance is looking at buffers and other protections. She said that a report should be complete by September.

-Joe Welsh explained the difficulty for a water company in balancing local desires for development and the need to protect water quality and quantity. Lisette gave the example of a high-density housing development.

\*The Watershed Lands Workgroup will identify our goals and develop a list of questions related to acquiring information necessary to make recommendations.

**Next Meeting: September 9, 2022:** to include presentations by RWA on its land acquisition matrix and Rivers Alliance on the results of its riparian buffer study.