

Water Planning Council Advisory Group – Watershed Lands Workgroup

September 9, 2022

Meeting Notes

The meeting video is at: https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/Watershed_Lands_2022-09-09_video.mp4

Attendees: Alicea Charamut (Rivers Alliance), Aaron Budris (NVCOG), Rich Hanratty (CT Water Co.), Amy Patterson (CLCC), Eric Lindquist (OPM), Eric Hammerling (CFPA), Jonathan Avery (Jewett City Water), Lisette Stone (DPH), Paul Aresta (CEQ), Amanda Branson (NW CT Land Conservancy), Mary Pelletier (Park Watershed), Martha Smith, Judy Allen, Margaret Miner (Rivers Alliance), and Karen Burnaska (Save the Sound).

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

Legislative Updates: Letter to GAE Co-Chairs Re: Land Conveyance Concerns – WPC Discussion

Karen explained the WPC discussed the draft letter at its September 6, 2022 meeting. The outcome was that Graham Stevens of DEEP and Alicea Charamut, Co-Chair of the WPCAG, will work on a redraft of the letter. The redrafted letter will be discussed at the October 4, 2022 meeting of the WPC and, if approved, signed by the WPC and the WPCAG. She noted that the WPC had several concerns about the letter: that the letter was a legislative matter, it should be tied to the State Water Plan and the mission of the WPC, and that the letter should clarify what was hoped to be accomplished. Some WPC members also felt that it would be better to meet with the GAE Committee to discuss the issues.

Margaret stated that the WPC chair supported the letter and that the letter had been discussed for many months. She also noted there was no legislative change requested. Finally, she felt that no more time should be spent on the letter.

Other members made the following comments:

- the reverter clause language was a concern of at least one WPC member (Alicea)

- Rich explained the legislative time schedule for land conveyance bills, the role of LCO attorneys in the process, his concern for the language of a reverter clause, and suggested to request a meeting with the GAE Committee Clerk, GAE Co-Chairs, and the LCO Attorney who handles conveyance bills.

- Eric added to Rich's last comment that the legislator who shepherds all GAE bills, and is not a member of the GAE Committee, be invited to the meeting.

Alicea will advise when she will be meeting with Graham. That meeting will probably take place the third or fourth week of September.

Regional Water Authority's Land Protection Program: John Triana (Focus will be on protection of watershed land containing Class I & II waters not currently connected to the system.)

John's presentation focused on 'impacts to Water Quality.' His slides are attached. Some highlights of his presentation included:

- Background information on RWA

- Why RWA buys watershed land (Forest coven is the best protection for watershed land.)
- The matrix developed by RWA to evaluate and prioritize land. It is a weighted point system and does not include availability of cost of the land.)
- RWA's use of the DEEP OSWA matching grant program.
- Examples of properties purchased.

John talked about how RWA works with land trusts, other conservation organizations, and municipalities to protect land.

Rich Hanratty talked about how CT Water acquired land in Old Saybrook and the importance of a fiscal impact analysis. Lisette asked about a development in Groton.

Draft Framework for Riparian and Headwaters Protections: Alicea Charamut, Rivers Alliance of CT

Alicea explained that Rivers Alliance has an intern working to put together a framework of policies to help protect headwaters and wetlands. The draft is currently being circulated among various environmental organizations for comments. There are various levels of recommendations. A final document should be ready for our December 9, 2022 meeting.

WUCC Report:

Aaron Budris noted that the story map, designed to help developers and municipal land use officials understand the importance of protecting watershed land and the process to be followed, was sent to DPH to finalize. DPH will host the map on its website. Lisette thanked Aaron for the great job he did and said the map should be up by the end of the year.

Lisette added the general comment on the WUCCs that it is difficult to get participation in them and that there is a repetition and overlap of activities and committee between the WUCCs and other groups. Jonathan Avery concurred.

Other Issues:

MDC Colebrook Reservoir: Alicea explained that MDC has petitioned DPH for a declaratory ruling that the 10 billion gallons of water in the Colebrook Reservoir be deemed not a drinking water source. She gave a history of the reservoir, including MDC's contract with the Army Corps of Engineers which MDC says has expired. The Army Corps does not agree. There is concern that if the water in the reservoir is not needed as a drinking water source, MDC can request approval of DPH to abandon the reservoir. If the reservoir is abandoned, the land around it would be reclassified and could be sold. MDC has said it has no intention to sell the land. A public hearing on the petition will be held sometime later this month.

As an aside, referring back to the discussion of the WUCCS, it was noted that the reservoir was in two WUCCS. The question arose as to whether or not the WUCCS would weigh in on the question it being a water source.

Alicea also explained the concerns of recreationists and member town of the Hogback Watershed Recreation Commission that discharges need to be made to the Farmington River. MDC says it has not

authority to do that and it has requested residents to contact state officials and ask them to order the release.

STEPS Program: Alicea said that the WPCAG has not sent it comments and suggestions to DEEP on the STEPs Program. No information has been received on the status of the program.

GENERAL: All thanked John and Alicea for informative comments.

Nest Meeting: December 9, 2022

KB

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