

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

March 21, 2023 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/2023-03-21_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:

Paul Aresta	CT Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Jonathan Avery	Hazardville & Jewett City Water Cos.
Lauren Bergman	CT Water Co.
Kim Czapl	CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)
Rebecca Dahl	CT Office of Policy & Management (OPM)
Betsy Gara	CWWA
Rich Hanratty	CT Water Co.
Ali Hibbard	CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)
Christine O'Neill (alt.)	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Mary Pelletier	Park Watershed
Martha Smith (alt.)	Rivers Alliance
Lisette Stone	CT Dept. of Public Health (DPH)

Members Absent:

Bonnie Burr	Agriculture
Eric Hammerling	CT Forest and Park Association
Jon Morrison	USGS CT Water Science Center
Brenda Watson	Operation Fuel

Vacancies

Business Organization

Staff:

Bruce Wittchen	CT Office of Policy & Management (OPM)
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1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of draft 2/21/2023 Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [2/21/2023 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Updates

a. Water Planning Council Update

Alicea Charamut said the funding desired by the WPC was not included in the Governor's budget and, although the WPC agencies cannot advocate for the legislature to add it to the budget, other people can. She also mentioned [HB 6890](#), *An Act Concerning Qualifying Transit-Oriented Communities*, noting that it would establish a coordinator at OPM with one of the responsibilities being to providing staff for the WPC. There was a discussion of the bill being unlikely to pass because of opposition to other aspects of the bill.

Denise Savageau mentioned [HB 6659](#), *An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, And Making Appropriations, Therefor*, and she provided an overview of [testimony she had submitted](#) on behalf of the CT Assoc. of Conservation Districts, part of which advocated for funding state water planning. She noted that she had mentioned the need to update the plan to better address climate change, water quality, and source water protection. Mary Pelletier agreed that this is important and said land trusts and other members of the environmental community should also get involved.

b. Implementation Work Group Update

Denise Savageau noted the overlap between the WPC's annual report and the mission of the water plan implementation/tracking group. She mentioned activities of the USGS data needs and the outreach & education work group's and described the latter's upcoming workshops. Denise also described the need to fill vacancies on the IWG and outlined some of the considerations involved. She also pointed out that the WPC will consider expanding the eligibility to provide more options.

c. State Water Plan and staffing update

This was discussed earlier.

d. Water Plan Update Priorities Discussion

Dan Lawrence said two people have contacted him to express their interest in participating in a few meetings to discuss priorities. He invited anyone else who is interested to contact him and he will schedule that meeting.

4. WPCAG Work Groups

a. Watershed Lands Work Group

Karen described the group's 3/10/2023 meeting (see [draft notes](#) and [recording](#)). She highlighted the amount of information regarding land conveyance requests available this on the [Government Administration & Elections Committee](#) (GAE) webpage. Karen also mentioned a presentation by OPM's Paul Hinsch regarding procedures for [state agency land transfers](#). She added that Margaret Miner will compile a list of additional questions for Paul. Karen said the rest of that meeting focused on legislation and noted that a discussion of legislation is later on the agenda of this meeting.

There were no updates regarding the source water protection or solar siting work groups and Alicea said she will contact people who expressed interest in the [Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis Work Group](#) to schedule the first meeting, which will be announced more broadly once scheduled.

5. Old Business

a. Legislative update (see [2023-03-20 Bill Update](#))

Alicea Charamut mentioned [SB 985](#), *An Act Incentivizing Housing Production*, which she noted is not included in the update list. She pointed out that it would eliminate planning & zoning commission, sewer commission, water commission, wetlands commission, conservation commission, and historic preservation commission review of projects in the development districts.

Alicea said [SB 1147](#), *An Act Concerning The Environmental Justice Program Of The Department Of Energy And Environmental Protection*, would add "facility with a diversion of more than two million gallons of water per day" to [CGS Sec. 22a-20a](#)'s definition of an "affecting facility" that could require an elevated level of review under that section of statutes. There was a discussion of the intent and of the potential implications for water utilities.

Alicea mentioned [SB 1001](#), *An Act Concerning Certain Sewage Disposal Systems*, which would increase the size of subsurface sewage disposal systems overseen by DPH instead of DEEP to 10,000 gallons per day. She added that DPH expressed concern about the additional workload and additional funding for staffing is proposed, but does not seem adequate.

Karen Burnaska said [HB 6483](#), *An Act Concerning The Open Space And Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program*, would dedicate \$10 million per year to the [Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program](#) (OSWLA) for the next two years. Karen also mentioned [SB 101](#), *An Act Establishing An Account In The General Fund To Provide Grants To Towns That Need Pfas Testing And Remediation*, and [HB 5616](#), *An Act Improving Standards For Inland Wetland Commission Authority Membership And Enforcement*.

Rich Hanratty mentioned water utility opposition to [SB7](#), *An Act Strengthening Protections For Connecticut's Consumers Of Energy*. Despite its focus on energy, it would negatively impact private water company operations. Alicea Charamut said no road salt bills were proposed this session and there was a discussion of potential lead paint contamination resulting from bridge maintenance and that there is inadequate

local notice of upcoming state work. There was further discussion of current and potential research on the impacts of road salt. Dan Lawrence noted the potential impacts of brine discharged from water softeners and Mary Pelletier mentioned apparent salt contamination in her watershed emanating from the UConn Law School salt shed.

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

Dan Lawrence said meetings continue.

c. [Interagency Drought Work Group](#) update

Bruce Wittchen said the interagency group continues to meet monthly and that agency staff are discussing potential changes to drought triggers and other aspects of the state drought plan.

d. Nominating Committee

Carol Haskins said she will provide some requested information to OPM's Rebecca Dahl and also mentioned water themed trivia nights being held in her area.

e. Hydrilla update

There was no update.

6. New Business

There was no new business.

7. Public Comment

Denise Savageau mentioned an ongoing effort by a Northeast/Mid-Atlantic partnership including EPA Regions 1, 2, & 3, the US Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. They held a [kickoff meeting last year](#) and she provided an overview of the partnership's interest in forests, source water protection, and ecosystem services. Alicea Charamut mentioned an upcoming presentation about the USGS's [new report](#) on the Northeast's 2022 drought. Lisette Stone thanked people involved in this meeting for providing so much useful information.

8. Next Meeting Date

Alicea read the list of upcoming meeting dates:

April 4, 2023:	WPC
April 11, 2023:	IWG
April 18, 2023:	WPCAG

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:38.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM