

Water Planning Council Advisory Group – Watershed Lands Workgroup

June 9, 2023

Meeting Notes

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

Attendees: Alicea Charamut (Rivers Alliance), Aaron Budris (NVCOG), Paul Aresta (CEQ), Rebecca Dahl (OPM), William Henley (RWA), Dan Lawrence (Aquarion), Justine Phillips Gallucci (OPM), Pat Kearney (Manchester Water), Mary Pelletier (Park Watershed), Margaret Miner (Rivers Alliance), and Karen Burnaska (Save the Sound).

Notes of March 10 Meeting: There were no comments or corrections.

Charge to the Watershed Lands Workgroup “The WPCAG Watershed Lands Work Group was established by the Water Planning Council in 2012 to review and determine the adequacy of current statutory/regulatory provisions to protect drinking water supplies and maintain Class I and II lands, as well as comparable lands that are not owned by water companies.”

Some highlights of past and current activities and topics discussed by the Watershed Lands Workgroup are:

- Statutory change for the sale of Class II land by a water company to eliminate the need to include Class III and in the parcel;
- Tax incentives for the protection of the watershed land;
- Proposed New Britain/Tilcon quarry;
- Participation in the drafting of the State Water Plan;
- Policies and procedures for siting of solar projects;
- Legislative procedures for the conveyance of state land;
- Processes followed for the transfer of land; and
- Presentations on the Green Plan, protection of agricultural land, and programs of water companies to protect drinking water watershed land.

Discussion followed on how to proceed in the future along with topics of interest from the participants. The list below includes general topics, ideas, and concerns on the overall topic of protecting drinking water watershed land.

- There is need for more information for local communities on how to protect watershed land; more specific information on source water protection and source aquifer protection.
- There needs to be a balance between having 169 ways to do things and an overall state approach.
- There is a need for local ordinances and regs but the reality is that local approval is not easy to obtain. There also needs to be enforcement of ordinances and regs.

-Infrastructure needs are key: who should do them, where should they be done, the cost of improvements, and who will pay for them. (This may be a topic for inclusion in an update of the State Water Plan.

-Consider having an information session or webinar on where towns can get information.

-Specific comment about concerns in the Hartford area re: MDC and response about activities of the Hartford Revitalization Group.

--There was an additional comment on the need to look at infrastructure and infrastructure sprawl, followed with acknowledging the need for more aquifer and aquifer protection awareness.

--The watershed land cannot be protected town by town. We need to look at drinking water watershed land not owned by water companies. More teeth are needed in the aquifer protection regs and more response from DEEP.

-The cost to improve water and sewers "goes on the backs of the ratepayers."

-It would be good if towns had more control over things that pollute water.

TAKEAWAYS:

1. There is general support for continuing to work on the protection of all source water lands.
2. There is apparent support for reviewing aquifer protection regulations. (Ideally, these regulations should be the uniform regulation that applies to all towns.) Education about the regs and enforcement of them is a critical part of the process.
3. With a focus on drinking water watershed land not owned by a water company, any state land conveyed or transferred that contains this land should be thoroughly reviewed with protective conditions placed on the sale or conveyance. (This statement was not made at the meeting but is a follow up to the discussions of the group on conveyances and transfers.) MM and KB

TASKS:

1. Please submit any other ideas to Margaret, Becca, and Karen by June 23, 2023. Also send copies of any local regs and educational regarding aquifer protection.
2. Local regs and information will be distributed prior to the next meeting.

Updates:

-MDC Petition to Abandon the Colebrook Reservoir: Although a public hearing will not be held on the application, comments may be submitted to DPH by June 16, 2023.

-GAE Conveyance Legislation and public publication of information: Legislative land conveyance request questionnaires and environmental information supplements were posted on the CGA website prior to the public hearings. Language in the conveyance bills contained more specific information than in the past. Our thanks to the GAE co-chairs and staff for their help.

-WUCC update: Dan Lawrence explained that there are three WUCCs in the state. The WUCCs review requests for water service if it is not in their ESA. He also stated that DPH has approved all the materials developed by the WUCCs on protecting watershed land. They should be up on DPH's website soon. The

WUCC Implementation Workgroup will meet on July 19th and talk about “available water” and what should be in Water Supply Plans.

2023 Legislation:

-HB 6483 OSWA funding: \$10 million/year is included in the budget for DEEP’s Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program.

-HB 5616 – additional training for Inland Wetland Commissioners was combined with HB 6809 “Buffer bill” - the use of stormwater funds to purchase riparian buffers. This bill was not passed.

-SB 1147 Environmental Justice: Passed.

-HB 6733 DPH Revisions Bill: Section 20 - Underscores DPH’s jurisdiction over current, future, and emergency water sources. Passed.

-HB 6791 – Housing and Environmental Justice: the budget implementer bill (HB 6941 included a section under “housing growth zones” that deleted the mandatory review by IWC for certain housing projects. And IWC review of an application must be referred by the PZC.

-Other: Funding for PFACS testing was passed; but bills for neonics and rodenticides did not pass.

There were no other discussion items and no other comments.

Next meeting is September 8, 2023, 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.

KB