

Water Planning Council Advisory Group – Watershed Lands Work Group

December 8, 2023

Meeting Notes

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

https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2023_12_08%20Watershed%20Lands%20Meeting.mp4

Attendees: Alicea Charamut (host, Rivers Alliance), Ally Ayotte (PURA) Aaron Budris (NVCOG), Paul Aresta (CEQ), Betsy Gara (CWWA), William Henley (RWA), Kathy Czepiel (Save the Sound). Richard Hanratty (CT Water Co.), Ali Hibbard (CT DEEP) Pat Kearney (Manchester Water), David Kuzminski (Portland), Robert LaFrance (Audubon CT), (Eric Lindquist (CT DPH), Margaret Miner (Rivers Alliance), Mary Pelletier (Park Watershed), Denise Savageau (CT Association of Conservation Districts), Charles Vidich (NW CT COG), Steve Vitko (Regional Water Authority), Ethan W ()

Notes of September 8 Meeting:

Margaret Miner summarized the notes. Charles Vidich commented that his COG is doing a statewide study of zoning regulations on public water supply lands that are NOT owned by water companies and therefore are not protected as Class I or II lands. The privately owned land amounts to about two-thirds of public source water land. He is also seeking from DPH more information on the breakout of land parcels on the local level. The COG is preparing a report on its findings relating to zoning. The group expressed strong interest in seeing the report. Rich Hanratty asked Charles if he was looking at aquifer protection regulations as well as zoning. Answer was no or not directly. It is complicated. Presently Rich is doing a review of the aquifer protection regulations for this group.

Source Water

Denise Savageau reported that the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation has developed and made available a mapping tool looking at all source water, existing protections, priorities for protection. It includes data by parcel. Rich Hanratty and Charles Vidich said that the tool is extremely helpful. The product was created by UConn CLEAR. Keeping it up to date will be a challenge. The link is: <https://clear.uconn.edu/projects/sourcewater/>

Aquifer Protection Regulations

Richard Hanratty reported progress on his review of aquifer protection regulations (APR) and their efficacy. Denise Savageau reported that the work group on source water protection is developing a comprehensive white paper on source protection. Margaret Miner suggested that two key questions on the regulations are (1) what they allow to be done in open space, and (2) the rules for existing “nonconforming” businesses in regulated areas. Alicea Charamut remarked on the extensive inconsistencies among towns in following the regulations. Charles Vidich elaborated on the complexity of overlapping protection programs and the need for uniform zoning. Aaron Budris said the towns in his COG area are inconsistent with regard to compliance. Steve Vitko agreed that the towns in the RWA region started with good compliance, which weakens over time. He recommended taking the DEEP online educational course in aquifer protections regulations.

The link is:

https://clear.uconn.edu/training/ct-deep-training-certificate-courses/deep_apr_training/

Alicea asked for information from DEEP on APR compliance.

Rich said that all this information will be helpful to the group in deciding where to focus its efforts.

Class II Land, definition 2

The group has been asked to clarify definition 2, under which water company land that appears to be Class III (outside the source-water watershed) is in some cases classified as Class II. So far, no clear explanation has emerged. Erik Lindquist (DPH) said he would ask his agency for information.

Legislation

Nothing specific to report. This is normally on the agenda of the WPCAG.

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

Action Items

- Adequacy of current Aquifer Protection Statutes and Regulations. *Ongoing.*
- Class II Land Definition (Outside Drinking Water Watershed). *Pending.*
- Identify area or areas with adequate source water protection but where unusually fast development will, if continued, put source water (including reservoirs) at risk. Goal would be prevention. *TBD by group in March.*
- Identify areas or areas where rapid or intense development has already affected or put at risk source waters. Goal would be mitigation and prevention of future harm. *TBD by group in March.*

Other topics raised by the group regarding the protection of drinking water watershed lands

- Inventory and Mapping of Source Water Lands
- Statewide zoning regulation with respect to source water protection (Vidich/COG study)
- Aquifer Mapping and Local Land Use
- Public and Private Well Inventories

NEXT MEETING: March 8, 2024 9:00am

Charge to the Watershed Lands Work Group “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.”