

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

July 16, 2024 Meeting Minutes

A telemeeting of the Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG) was held by Zoom

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/24215>

Video: <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=23163>

Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Bonnie Burr	UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
Alicea Charamut	Fisheries Advisory Council
Kathy Czepiel	Save the Sound
Virginia de Lima (alt.)	
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Sonia Marino	CT Association of Directors of Health
Alison McHorney	CT Office of Consumer Counsel
Darryl Newman	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Jeff Shaw	CT Outdoor Recreation Alliance
Kelsey Sudol (alt.)	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Tom Tyler	MDC
Steve Vitko	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Steve Woltornist	Marmon Water Residential Filtration/Water Quality Assoc.

Other Participants:

Paul Aresta	CT Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Lauren Bergman	CT Water Co
Nicoletta Blevins (alt.)	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Jonathan Avery	Hazardville & Jewett City Water Cos.
Ally Ayotte	CT Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA)
Ryan Carboni	CT Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Kim Czaplá	CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)
Becca Dahl	CT Office of Policy & Management (OPM)
Maggie Favretti	Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed
Harry Harwood	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Martin Heft (WPC)	CT Office of Policy & Management (OPM)
Ali Hibbard	CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)
Iris Kaminski	
Barbara Masi	
Imani Rodriguez	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition

Members Absent:

Patrick Kearney	Manchester Water & Sewer
Vacancy	Electric Power
Vacancy	River Protection

Staff:

Bruce Wittchen [CT Office of Policy & Management](#) (OPM)

1. Call to Order

Co-chair Alicea Charamut called the meeting to order at 1:32 and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of draft 5/21/2024 Minutes (the group did not meet in June)

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [draft 5/21/2024 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Special Session Recap

- [June SS PA 24-1](#)

Alicea Charamut said Item 4 will be discussed before Item 3 because Dan Lawrence will be late and should be present for Item 3. She provided an overview of Sec. 34 – 42 of [June SS PA 24-1](#), explaining that these sections authorize the [South Central CT Regional Water Authority](#) (RWA) to attempt to acquire Aquarion Water Co., which Eversource has proposed to sell. She described concerns about this proposal being very specific and not going through the ordinary legislative process during the regular session, which would have included a public hearing. There were no questions or further comments.

3. Assignment from WPC: WPCAG Review of Workgroups

- Review assignments for continued need and priority.
 - Watershed Lands
 - Interagency Drought
 - Outreach and Education
 - USGS Data
 - Conservation Pricing
 - Source Water Protection
- Standing Committee, Ad-hoc Committee, Topical Committee
 - Differences
 - Who should each fall under: WPC or WPCAG?
- Which assignments should instead be handled by WPCAG?

The group returned to Item 3 and Alicea Charamut explained the assignment, noting that this is part of the process of integrating the former Implementation Work Group into this group. WPC member Martin Heft said the agenda's outline covers the topic and described the WPC's interest in reviewing the groups. He noted that some groups had already ended their work and mentioned the WPC's process for creating new groups. He added that different approaches can be appropriate for different groups, with some topics to be handled by the WPCAG.

Dan Lawrence asked if documentation created to establish the current groups is available. Alicea said it is available for the Outreach & Education (O&E), USGS Data, Conservation Pricing, and Source Water Protection groups, which were established under that system, but

the Watershed Lands group was established earlier. She also pointed out that the Interagency Drought group is different from the others, being a group of state agencies.

Alicea highlighted the terms *Standing Committee*, *Ad-hoc Committee*, and *Topical Committee*, saying she considers the latter two to be interchangeable. She mentioned the USGS Data committee as being an example of those: it was a group formed to study a defined topic for a defined time. She and Dan Lawrence agreed that the Watershed Lands group is different; it is a standing committee. There was a brief discussion of the Outreach & Education group and it also should be considered a standing committee because it is not expected to end even as it completes topical assignments from the State Water Plan.

There was a discussion of having the Watershed Lands group continue to report to the WPCAG and the O&E group report to the WPC. The O&E group is more of a working committee for the WPC. There was further discussion of the most appropriate place for groups more directly involved with plan implementation. Kathy Czepiel said it is better for the Watershed Lands group to report to the WPCAG because of the range of perspectives represented on the WPCAG and she noted the Watershed Lands group's involvement in tasks not specifically included in the water plan, such as its efforts regarding legislative land conveyances.

Martin Heft said this conversation is what the WPC is looking for and suggested the WPCAG prepare a 1-pager for reporting back on each subgroup. Virginia de Lima pointed out the different histories of the various groups and the different character of their assignments, especially the research orientation of groups that had reported to the IWG. She noted that the O&E group was originally expected to be a more research-oriented topical group but now is a continuing group. There was further discussion of differences among the groups and Becca Dahl pointed out that she had compiled much of the needed information last year and offered to re-share it.

Ali Hibbard noted that the USGS data group had wrapped up its work in March and Kim Czapl described how agency staff who are working on the website update had organized the groups on the [WPC Workgroups page](#). One category is identified as *Standing Groups* and includes the O&E and Watershed Lands groups. The second category is identified as *Ad-hoc Groups* and includes the Conservation Pricing and Source Water Protection groups. Alicea Charamut agreed with that other than that the O&E group should be listed as reporting to the WPC. Kim said the listings can include each group's original proposal and members. She also described the approach for individual group pages and there was further discussion of expectations.

There was a discussion of the previously unmentioned annual report group. Virginia de Lima highlighted that the group originally was created to prepare a report but it now is also creating a process by which future reports will be prepared. Carol Haskins mentioned the WPCAG's nominating committee and there was further discussion of reporting on the various groups.

5. Old Business

- a. WPC and work group updates
 - WPC meeting

Alicea Charamut mentioned the WPC's discussion of the assignment the WPCAG has been discussing today and Carol Haskins added that the WPC had also discussed [June SS PA 24-1](#), which this group considered earlier in today's meeting, and the WPC also discussed [Public Utility Regulatory Authority](#) (PURA's) review process.

- Nominating Committee [*no update expected*]

Carol Haskins said the group will follow up on changes at some organizations represented on the WPCAG and pointed out that there is a vacancy on this committee.

- Watershed Lands Work Group [*quarterly meeting was June 14*]

Kathy Czepiel said the group continued its discussion with [Western CT Council of Governments](#)' (WestCOG's) Charles Vidich of watershed considerations in land use controls, including enforcement issues, municipalities' different approaches, and overlays. She added that he said CT is the state that is least protective of riparian corridors in New England. Denise Savageau said this needs to be in municipal plans of conservation & development (POCDs) and Steve Vitko invited feedback from this group and Kathy added that the group also discussed legislation.

- Source Water Protection Work Group

Denise Savageau mentioned the group's draft white paper and said they are looking at gaps and hope to provide a draft to the WPCAG by the end of next week and to the WPC after that, along with a public hearing.

- Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis Work Group [*meeting to be scheduled*]

This update followed the Outreach & Education group report. Alicea Caharamut said this group will reconvene in the fall.

- Outreach & Education Work Group

Denise Savageau provided an overview of plans for webinars this fall connected to the 20th anniversary of the CT Aquifer Protection Act and 50th anniversary of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. She also pointed out that the state water plan is not just for state agencies and we need to learn who else is implementing it through their work. The WPC should identify Stewards of the State Water Plan.

b. Other old business

- Website changes

Ali Hibbard described the most recent work of the four agency staff who are updating the website and Alicea Charamut pointed out the importance of this.

- [Water Utility Coordinating Committee](#) (WUCC) update

Dan Lawrence said there is no report but noted that the WUCC chairs met to discuss various topics a month ago. Jonathan Avery added that WUCCs are approving occasional small projects.

- Interagency Drought Work Group

Becca Dahl said the group met this month and the state is not in any drought stage. The group is scheduled to meet again in August.

6. New Business

Denise Savageau said she is concerned about the WPC not discussing funding for the State Water Plan or for a water chief position. Alicea Charamut recommended the WPC follow the same approach used to build awareness of [PFAS contamination](#) to similarly build support for the state water plan, especially after the recent special session. There was a lengthy discussion of a desire for greater effort by the WPC to seek funding for the water plan and the water chief position.

Alicea said the WPCAG can request that the WPC organize a presentation to the legislature on the importance of funding a water plan update and the water chief position, as was done to encourage action regarding PFAS. There was further discussion of how to frame that request of the WPC and also of how the PFAS presentation had been organized. Carol Haskins asked if the [CT Council on Environmental Quality \(CEQ\)](#) is a model of how the state can fund the state water plan and water chief and Alicea said it might not be similar enough. There was further discussion of the various ideas raised today and this topic will be included on this group's August agenda.

7. Public Comment

There no additional public comments.

8. Next Meeting Date

Alicea Charamut read upcoming meeting dates (subject to change):

July 16, 2024	Source Water Protection Work Group (9:00)
Aug. 6, 2024	Outreach & Education Work Group (9:00)
Aug. 6, 2024	WPC (1:30) – <i>Note: this meeting might be postponed</i>
Aug. 8, 2024	Interagency Drought Work Group (1:00)
TBD	Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis
Aug. 20, 2024	Source Water Protection Work Group (9:00)
Aug. 20, 2024	WPCAG (1:30)

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:11.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM