

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

September 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

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

NOTE: NEED MEANING OF SOLAR ACRONYM IN PUBLIC COMMENT AND/OR WEB LINK

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/24219>

Video: https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2024-09-17_WPCAG_Video.mp4

Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
Alicea Charamut	Fisheries Advisory Council
Kathy Czepiel	Save the Sound
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Patrick Kearney	Manchester Water & Sewer
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Sonia Marino	CT Association of Directors of Health
Darryl Newman	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.
Aimee Petras (alt.)	Farmington River Watershed Assoc.
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Martha Smith (alt.)	New Haven West River Watershed Coalition
Kelsey Sudol (alt.)	Lake Waramaug Task Force
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.
Chris Bellucci	CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)
Lauren Bergman	CT Water Co.
Nicoletta Blevins (alt.)	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Virginia de Lima (alt.)	
Matthew Hallock	SOLAR
Martin Heft (WPC)	CT Office of Policy & Management (OPM)
Iris Kaminski	
David Kuzminski (alt.)	Portland Water & Sewer Commission
Marcus Yancoskie	Rome Smith, Kowalski

Members Absent:

(NOTE: This list might include members who joined the meeting after introductions)

Bonnie Burr	UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources
Nicole C. Deziel	Yale School of Public Health
Alison McHorney	CT Office of Consumer Counsel
Jeff Shaw	CT Outdoor Recreation Alliance
Steve Woltornist	Marmon Water Residential Filtration/Water Quality Assoc.
Vacancy	Electric Power
Vacancy	River Protection

Staff:

None

1. Call to Order

Co-chair Alicea called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of draft 8/20/2024 Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [draft 8/20/2024 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with Carol Haskins abstaining because she had missed the meeting.

3. Old Business

a. WPC and work group updates

- WPC meeting

There was a discussion of the WPC meeting, which considered various work groups but did not assign any new task to the WPCAG. Alicea Charamut noted the need to convene the annual report work group to prepare the WPC's annual report and added that the nominating committee must provide a slate for the WPC's consideration.

Alicea also reported that DEEP had provided an update on Farmington River ecological releases by the Army Corps of Engineers. Alicea mentioned that discussions of goals of the WPC and implementation & updating of the water plan will remain standing items of business. Virginia de Lima asked that people from work groups provide updates on their groups for inclusion in the annual plan. Alicea will reach out to people who contributed to last year's annual report and provided further background regarding the report development process.

- Watershed Lands Work Group [next *quarterly meeting is Sept. 13*]

Kathy Czepiel said a small group met in a quick meeting and highlighted that Steve Vitko has agreed to co-chair the group. Alicea Charamut thanked Steve for volunteering and she and Dan Lawrence approved him being co-chair. Kathy mentioned that the work group's meeting also included mentions of DEEP's Release Based Regulations and of the Regional Water Authority's potential acquisition of Aquarion.

There was a discussion of the impact of such an acquisition on WPCAG membership due to the RWA and Aquarion each being represented. Alicea mentioned other potential policy concerns, highlighting the desire for local control of water resources and suggested bringing it up as old business. Denise Savageau agreed with bringing it up separately from this work group's report and there was further discussion of the impact on WPCAG membership.

- Source Water Protection Work Group

Denise Savageau described this group's focus on gaps in source water protection and its draft white paper, which will initially be distributed to WPCAG members and then to others. She explained the organization of the report, highlighting that it identifies relevant regulatory and statutory frameworks and also relevant sections of other agency plans. This section is not intended to be exhaustive, but she invited feedback regarding things that might have been missed.

Denise described the group's approach for identifying gaps in source water protection and providing recommendations. They are looking for additional content, not just minor corrections. She explained how to submit comments and noted there might be a joint work shop with the Watershed Lands Work Group. The group's next meeting will be postponed, probably the 22nd or 29th of October.

The group's work can be incorporated into the state water plan. Denise explained the term source water protection for the purposes of the [Safe Drinking Water Act](#). She also pointed out that the act does not apply to private wells, so further work must focus on those. Denise also described how the report addressed the efforts on nonprofit organizations, initially focusing on organizations represented on the WPCAG. She invited other thoughts.

Kathy Czepiel agreed with Denise's suggestion for the Watershed Lands and Source Water Protection groups to hold a joint workshop. Dan Lawrence asked about potential guidance for private wells and Denise noted that the education group has developed a private well guidance document and will ensure it's passed along. Denise described the work being done and some of the confusion regarding ground water protections.

Denise said further discussion is needed regarding private wells, including a potentially expanded state role. Dan Lawrence pointed out various contamination concerns and Denise mentioned the need for drought guidance too. There was further discussion of potential private well concerns and of concerns regarding small public systems and the role of local health departments.

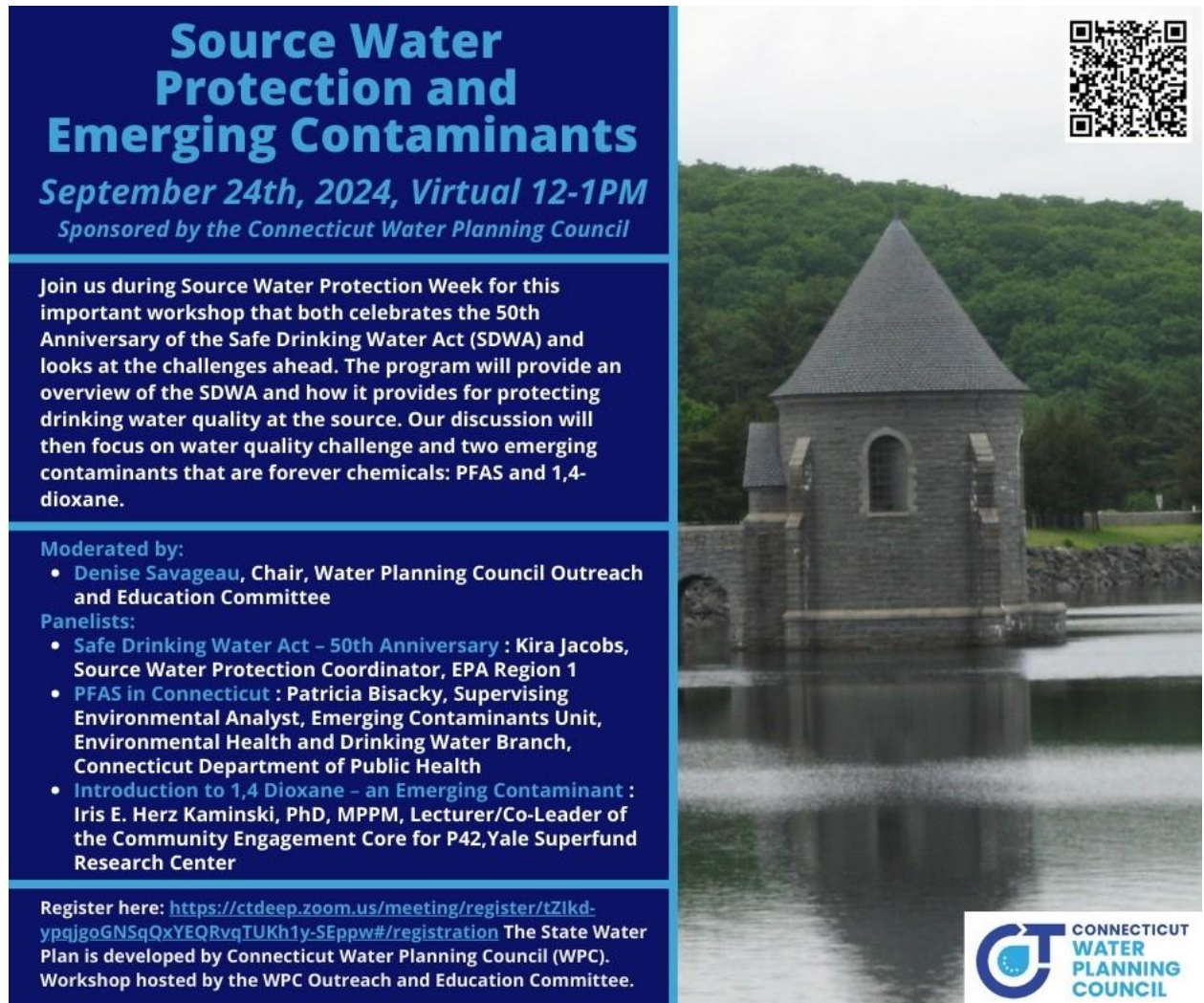
Virginia de Lima said people with private wells often are ignorant of important needs and suggested informing the real estate industry and lenders. Sonia explained health department roles and volunteered to assist. Denise said the group will highlight this gap and Virginia de Lima suggested looking at how other states address this. Denise acknowledged the contributions to this work by Alicea Charamut, DPH's Lisette Stone, and DEEP's Kim Czaplá. She invited other volunteers. There was a discussion of how Chat GPT was used in developing the white paper and Alicea pointed out the growing significance of PFAS and other contaminants from septic systems migrating into drinking water.

- Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis Work Group

Alicea Charamut said a meeting has not been scheduled yet.

- Outreach & Education Work Group

Denise Savageau mentioned an upcoming 9/24 webinar and also [CT Sustainability Week](#), providing further details about the webinar. They expect to hold a flash drought webinar in October and Denise also described ideas for webinars in 2025, highlighting interest in resilience and inviting others to join the group. Alicea Charamut noted that recent years' experiences with flooding and drought match climate predictions discussed in the state water plan.



Source Water Protection and Emerging Contaminants
September 24th, 2024, Virtual 12-1PM
Sponsored by the Connecticut Water Planning Council

Join us during Source Water Protection Week for this important workshop that both celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and looks at the challenges ahead. The program will provide an overview of the SDWA and how it provides for protecting drinking water quality at the source. Our discussion will then focus on water quality challenge and two emerging contaminants that are forever chemicals: PFAS and 1,4-dioxane.

Moderated by:

- Denise Savageau, Chair, Water Planning Council Outreach and Education Committee

Panelists:

- Safe Drinking Water Act – 50th Anniversary : Kira Jacobs, Source Water Protection Coordinator, EPA Region 1
- PFAS in Connecticut : Patricia Bisacky, Supervising Environmental Analyst, Emerging Contaminants Unit, Environmental Health and Drinking Water Branch, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Introduction to 1,4 Dioxane – an Emerging Contaminant : Iris E. Herz Kaminski, PhD, MPPM, Lecturer/Co-Leader of the Community Engagement Core for P42, Yale Superfund Research Center

Register here: <https://ctdeep.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlkd-ypqjgoGNSqQxYEQRvqTUKh1y-SEppw#/registration> The State Water Plan is developed by Connecticut Water Planning Council (WPC). Workshop hosted by the WPC Outreach and Education Committee.

CONNECTICUT WATER PLANNING COUNCIL

- Nominating Committee

Committee chair Haskins said the committee has not met and noted they are seeking an additional in-stream representative on the committee. WPCAG vacancies filled include energy and river protection representatives and she noted that a number of alternate positions remain. They will proceed as soon as possible.

b. Other old business

- Website changes

Becca Dahl said there is no update, but the staff group will meet again for further updates in the next week or two. She described some recent updates and invited comments.

- WUCC update

Dan Lawrence said WUCCs meet as needed and mentioned an inquiry about a 12-unit affordable housing project, a development small enough for its water system to not be classified as a community water system, and described the location as not being near a bus line, a grocery store, or anything. Jonathan Avery said it has also been quiet in the Central and Eastern WUCC regions. The groups have not met recently.

- Interagency Drought Work Group

Becca Dahl said the group did not meet in September but continues to monitor conditions. They anticipate meeting in October for a presentation by a DPH intern. She noted the high fire danger in parts of the state. Carol Haskins pointed out that they have reached the first low flow threshold today, four week's after August's flooding. Kelsey Sudol said Lake Waramaug has dropped a foot in the past month.

4. New Business

- a. Expectations for 2025 legislative session

Denise Savageau mentioned the DEEP review of the CT Siting Council (CSC) required by [PA 24-144](#) and pointed out the concern that the CSC application does not ask if a proposed site is in a public water supply watershed. She noted that the CSC could change its process to require applicants to provide such information but would not be obligated to continue, so there is interest in legislation mandating that.

Denise mentioned discussions to bring back [HB 5004](#), An Act Concerning the Implementation of Certain Climate Change Measures, which failed in 2024, and noted the question of whether it should be multiple small bills or one large bill. She provided further background and mentioned interest in incorporating language regarding nature-based solutions.

Alicea Charamut mentioned legislative efforts in 2024 promoting affordable housing by reducing wetland and wastewater reviews and expressed concern about the potential impacts. She said affordable is getting increasing attention but changes like these are a Trojan horse to reduce water protections. She attended the 9/11/2024 housing forum of the CT Chapter of the American Planning Assoc. and planners said affordable housing development is limited because of the housing needed not fitting the business model of many developers. The issues are complex and we should not allow this to weaken regulations having an impact on resiliency and water supplies.

Darryl Newman suggested adding language that would incentivize developers by expediting local permitting processes without reducing environmental protections. Alicea said last session's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) bill ([HB 5278](#)) would have supported the identification of areas appropriate for TOD due to their access to transit and utilities but not wetlands.

Denise Savageau compared efforts to undermine the Clean Water Act at the federal level and efforts to undermine environmental regulations here. We know there are challenges in permitting processes, but affordable housing is not the business model of many developers and one-size-fits all regulatory changes intended to support a particular kind of development will not be limited to that. She also noted the importance of source water protection in low density areas for supporting denser areas. [Desegregate CT](#) has come full circle on this and recognizes that we need affordable housing and to protect the environment. We can do both and need to use the regulatory tools to have both.

Sonia Marino said development depends on water and wastewater systems and she understands the frustrations that Darryl pointed out with different town departments signing off on different permits. Some towns do not want development while others do, but the public health codes that she works with have specific criteria to work with. She added that other processes change from town to town and that higher environmental standards applying to all towns would be better.

Alicea Charamut said a bill that did not pass in the last two sessions would have required training of wetland commissioners. The review process would work better with trained commissioners and if the Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection had the resources to support 170 wetland commissions. Dave Kuzminski provided further background regarding the process and encouraged creating a boiler plate document for each town to guide the review process. Alicea Charamut noted that the bar has already been raised for the training of planning & zoning commissioners and said it is time to do that for wetland commissioners.

Denise Savageau pointed out previous recommendations to fund an update of the state water plan and to fund a water director and recommended the WPCAG stay on top of this. She complimented the efforts of the WPC's former Implementation Work Group and said nonprofits, water companies, and others should advocate for this if the WPC agencies will not. This effort needs funding and we cannot ignore this. Alicea thanked Denise for bringing this up and said we need to advocate for this as individuals if WPC agencies are unable to. She mentioned some of the key issues and added that other considerations can be added.

Alicea read a question from Carol Haskins about the [Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System](#) (MS4) [general permit](#) that expires in 2025. Alicea said legislative action is not needed and it will go through DEEP's public process for such permits. She mentioned DEEP's ongoing [Release-Based Clean Up Regulation](#) development process and pointed out that it is expected to increase site clean-up efforts.

b. Other

Dave Kuzminski invited people to participate in his water podcast. It is approaching 100 episodes. Alicea Charamut mentioned that, at the previously mentioned 9/11/2024 CT Chapter of the American Planning Assoc. housing forum, there was talk of DEEP and DPH formulating regulations addressing community septic and alternate treatment systems. She would like to know what is being done and the timeline. Sonia Marino said there is pressure to complete that and noted the improvement experienced with an advanced treatment system in her town.

There was further discussion of the regulation development process and Alicea will see if people from DEEP and DPH are willing to update this group. Matthew Hallock recommended the process be strong and pointed out the dynamic of local officials dealing with developers who will exploit any latitude provided in the process. Alicea pointed out the role of legislators in the process and Matthew discussed the influence of developers.

Alicea Charamut returned to the earlier mention of the potential sale of Aquarion and said there needs to be a better understanding of the process and what it could mean for CT now and in the future due to the value of water. She pointed out that a sale must be approved by PURA and described PURA's review of the recent CT Water Co. transaction. She noted that Regional Water rates are not subject to PURA review and the RWA is not beholden to shareholders. The public interest and public trust must be upheld. She described issues arising in other parts of the country and we cannot allow that to happen in CT. We should understand the different sides and what is at stake.

Virginia de Lima asked how Aquarion's and RWA rates compare. Steve Vitko said details can be found in the [Representative Policy Board](#) section of Regional Water's website and Nicoletta Blevins highlighted a [presentation](#) available there. Alicea said Regional Water and Aquarion have been very involved in trying to improve water policy and she considers both to be good actors.

5. Public Comment

Matthew Hallock said he is part of [SOLAR](#), a community group primarily in Fairfield and Easton but he also speaks for the rest of Fairfield County and senior leadership of the towns. He is here to give an overview and start a dialogue leading to a position paper. He is not trying to start a fight but instead to work out a plan for moving forward. People of Fairfield County do not agree with ceding our water rights to the RWA. He noted that he is not a water guy and asked that people contact him to correct any errors he might make.

Matthew outlined the history of Aquarion after it was created from the former Bridgeport Hydraulic Co. until its acquisition by Eversource. He listed concerns regarding the sharing of information between Eversource and Regional Water and other aspects of the current process. He provided an overview of what his group wants to do, highlighting their familiarity with the people. They want an a full inspection of Aquarion infrastructure and to talk with Aquarion employees, who they want to hire, and to audit utilities acquired by Aquarion. He described other issues, including environmental injustices. He listed the desired bill of rights and provided further details for each right:

- Right to local control
- Public ownership of water
- Right to collaborate directly with the federal government
- Right to deliver safe product at lowest possible cost
- Right to trust our provider
- Right to pursue a 100% sustainable water supply
- Right to uphold our deeply-held beliefs
- Right to adhere to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) best practices
- Right to adhere to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) best practices
- Right to set the standard

Matthew said he would like to introduce the people of his team and of Aquarion to each other and work with Eversource.

6. Next Meeting Date

There was no reading of the upcoming meeting dates (subject to change):

Sept. 13, 2024	Watershed Lands Work Group (9:00)
Sept. 17, 2024	Source Water Protection Work Group (9:00)
Oct. 1, 2024	Outreach & Education Work Group (9:00)
Oct. 1, 2024	WPC (1:30)
Oct. 3, 2024	Interagency Drought Work Group (1:00)
Oct. 15, 2024	Source Water Protection Work Group (9:00)
Oct. 15, 2024	WPCAG (1:30)
TBD	Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM