

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

November 19, 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/24221>

Video: https://ctvideo.ct.gov/OPM/2024-11-19_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
Nicole Deziel	Yale School of Public Health
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
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
Tom Tyler	MDC
Steve Vitko	South Central CT Regional Water Authority

Other Participants:

Becca Dahl	CT Office of Policy & Management
Virginia de Lima (alt.)	
Lily Engbith	CT Office of Policy & Management
Betsy Gara	CT Water Works Assoc.
Martin Heft	CT Office of Policy & Management
Iris Kaminski	
Justine Philips-Gallucci	CT Office of Policy & Management
Kelsey Sudol (alt.)	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Marcus Yancoskie	Rome, Smith, Kowalski

Members Absent:

Bonnie Burr	UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources
Patrick Kearney	New Britain Water Dept.
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:

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

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

2. Approval of draft 9/17/2024 Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [draft 10/15/2024 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Old Business

a. WPC and work group updates

- WPC meeting

There was no discussion.

- Annual WPC report

Alicea Charamut said the annual report work group will meet tomorrow and provided some details of the process to be followed.

- Outreach & Education Work Group

Denise Savageau said the group's work continues and it selected extreme weather and watersheds as the theme for 2025. She mentioned a new planning office at DEEP and also described a survey the work group is preparing and will provide for WPC review. The intent is to learn what others are doing that contributes towards implementation of the state water plan and also if they are aware of the plan.

- Nominating Committee

Carol Haskins said the slate was provided to the WPC and provided an overview. She said the group will meet regarding Spring nominations and explained the changed timeline for renewals. There was a discussion of the call for new volunteers, with the message posted on the WPC's website and other locations. Martin noted the process was similar last year, suggested a Feb. 4 deadline for 2025, and there was further discussion of the process.

- Source Water Protection Work Group

Denise Savageau said the group met 10/29 and went over comments regarding the draft white paper. She described some of the comments and the group's expected approach. The group canceled the meeting scheduled for this morning but they have a writing team and the group will meet again 12/17. Denise said the document should be complete in early 2025 and she noted issues regarding definitions and regarding private wells. There was further discussion of the focus on source water protection.

- Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis Work Group

There was no update.

- Watershed Lands Work Group

Kathy Czepiel said the next quarterly meeting will be 12/13.

b. Expectations for 2025 legislative session

Dan Lawrence invited Betsy Gara of the [CT Water Works Assoc.](#) (CWWA) to provide an overview of the association's expectations. Betsy explained how CWWA recommendations are developed. She pointed out that both chambers of the state legislature will have a veto-proof majority, noting possible implications. She listed challenges faced by water companies, including requirements to address lead service lines and [Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances](#) (PFAS), and mentioned working with DPH to identify funding gaps.

Betsy Gara said the water industry is looking at the state water plan. She noted the potential benefit of interconnections for responding to problems and also mentioned the [CT Conference of Municipalities](#) (CCM's) recent [flooding mitigation report](#). She said CWWA is generally supportive and also mentioned the importance of enabling emergency transfers among systems.

Betsy said source water was the #1 concern reported in an [American Water Works Assoc.](#) (AWWA) survey. She noted CWWA interest in riparian buffers and inland wetland commission training, as well as in requiring notification of water companies of projects in their watersheds that are subject to [CT Siting Council](#) (CSC) review. Betsy also mentioned CWWA's attention to potential legislation regarding road salt, invasive species, workforce development, and prevailing wage requirements.

Betsy Gara pointed out that 2024's "Green Monster bill", [HB 5004, An Act Concerning The Implementation Of Certain Climate Change Measures](#), is expected to return for the 2025 session. She mentioned a potential impact on minimum stream flow requirements, which she said is extremely complicated. Betsy also mentioned the CWWA's interest in PFAS liability protections and said the CWWA is also paying attention to any potential changes regarding the regulation of water utilities and rate-making. She concluded by mentioning CWWA paying attention to potential artificial intelligence (AI) restrictions, explaining that some utilities may be using AI.

Denise Savageau mentioned that the legislature's [Environment Committee](#) could have a new senate chair in 2025. She pointed out the large amount of federal funding for public water and wastewater systems. She said states are encouraged to use some for non-point source pollution work, but CT statutes do not allow that. She is interested in a discussion of nature-based solutions with the CWWA and mentioned the significance of federal [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) funding and the federal [farm bill](#).

c. Other old business

- Website changes

Becca Dahl said the four agency staff have completed the initial work and are now meeting only quarterly for further updates.

- WUCC update

Dan Lawrence said there is not much to update about the [Water Utility Coordinating Committees](#) (WUCCs) but they are planning activities for 2025. He noted that DPH's Eric McPhee wants the next WUCC plan to be more data-driven.

- Interagency Drought Work Group

Becca Dahl said the [Interagency Drought Work Group](#) (IDW) met and, based on the [IDW's recommendation](#), the governor has declared a [Stage 2 drought advisory](#) for the entire state. She said the forest fire danger and extremely low precipitation of the past three months were the primary factors and described current agency activities. Dan Lawrence mentioned Aquarion having diversion permits having restrictions that go into effect at Stage 2. He also said there are irrigation contractors who have been called to turn irrigation systems off due to cold weather and back on when warm.

Denise Savageau asked about impacts on private wells and Becca Dahl mentioned news reports of problems with private well and said she has been contacted by one person experiencing a problem with a private well. She also mentioned DPH's system for communicating drought information. There was further discussion of private wells, with Denise Savageau describing her experiences with private wells and drought when she worked for Greenwich.

Sonia Marino said problems tend to occur with dug wells and said she provides [DPH's private well fact sheets](#) when contacted about a private well problem. She also said she has not seen any communication from DPH to health directors about this drought. Becca Dahl said DPH's notice should be forthcoming (see [Circular Letter 2024-34](#), issued that day). Alicea Charamut posted a link to the national [Condition Monitoring Observer Reports on Drought](#) in the chat. Tom Tyler said [Metropolitan District Commission](#) (MDC) storage has dipped below 90%, but the first drought trigger is at 70%. Denise Savageau noted that people in the area of water company reservoirs often rely on private wells.

4. New Business

There was no new business.

5. Public Comment

There were no additional public comments.

6. Upcoming Meetings

Dan Lawrence read the listed dates of upcoming meetings and also noted the previously mentioned meeting tomorrow of the annual report work group.

Nov. 19, 2024	Source Water Protection Work Group (9:00)
Dec. 3, 2024	Outreach & Education Work Group (9:00)
Dec. 3, 2024	WPC (1:30)

Dec. 5, 2024	Interagency Drought Work Group (1:00)
Dec. 13, 2024	Watershed Lands Work Group (9:00)
Dec. 17, 2024	Source Water Protection Work Group (9:00)
Dec. 17, 2024	WPCAG (1:30)
TBD	Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM