

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

February 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes

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

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/27930>

Video: https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2025-02-18_WPCAG_Video.mp4

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
Nicole Deziel	Yale School of Public Health
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Patrick Kearney	New Britain Water Dept.
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Sonia Marino	CT Association of Directors of Health
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Martha Smith	New Haven West River Watershed Coalition
Kelsey Sudol	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Steve Vitko	South Central CT Regional Water Authority

Other Participants:

Paul Aresta	CT Council on Environmental Quality
Jonathan Avery	Hazardville and Jewett City Water Co.s
Lauren Bergman	CT Water Co.
Ryan Carboni	CT Council on Environmental Quality
Kim Czapla	CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection
Becca Dahl	CT Office of Policy & Management
Virginia de Lima (alt.)	
Ali Hibbard	CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection
Ray Jarema (alt.)	Berlin Water Dept.
Iris Kaminski	
Aimee Petras (alt.)	Farmington River Watershed Assoc.
Justine Phillips-Gallucci	CT Office of Policy & Management
Marcus Yancoskie	

Members Absent:

Len Greene	FirstLight (Electric Power)
Alison McHorney	CT Office of Consumer Counsel
Darryl Newman	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.
Tom Tyler	MDC
Steve Woltornist	Marmon Water Residential Filtration/Water Quality Assoc.

Vacancies:

Recreation

Staff:

Bruce Wittchen

[CT Office of Policy & Management](#)

1. Call to Order

Co-chair Alicea Charamut asked everyone to introduce themselves and then called the meeting to order at 1:37.

2. Approval of draft 12/17/2024 and 1/28/2025 Minutes

Alicea Charamut said last month's vote to approve the [draft 12/17/2024 minutes](#) had not been valid due to the lack of a quorum, so a motion was made and seconded to approve the draft today. The motion passed unanimously with Martha Smith and Steve Vitko abstaining because they had not attended the meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the [draft 1/28/2025 minutes](#). Steve Vitko said he had misspoken at that meeting and the Watershed Lands Work Group meeting he had said will be 3/8 will actually be 3/14. Bruce Wittchen said he can note that correction and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Old Business**a. WPC and work group updates**

- WPC meeting

Dan Lawrence provided an overview of this month's WPC meeting and of the discussion of the WPCAG's role in updating the state water plan.

- Review of State Water Plan Goals

Alicea Charamut thanked people who have forwarded documents from the previous planning effort. She explained expectations for a prioritization exercise and recommended a group be formed to prepare for it and that the group include WPC agency staff. Virginia de Lima said that was a purpose of the [WPC's 7/12/2023 retreat](#) and said she can provide the charts from that day, but noted that the group might want new ideas.

Dan Lawrence said WPC chair Martin Heft wants the WPC to begin by reconciling water plan goals. Alicea mentioned the Implementation Matrix Chart in Appendix C of the [WPC's 2023 Annual Report](#) and there was a discussion of using Survey Monkey to collect survey responses and of how to address recommendations for which there has been partial progress.

Kim Czapla said the Outreach & Education work group's survey has already been approved and changing some questions in that could accomplish the purposes of both surveys. There was further discussion of the options and Alicea Charamut said a small group is needed to work on this. Dan Lawrence offered to lead the group and it was noted that the WPC agency staff should be involved. Ali Hibbard of DEEP offered to help with that and mentioned that she had drafted the Outreach & Education survey.

- [Outreach & Education Work Group](#)

Denise Savageau said the group is moving forward and showed the group's 2025 work plan. The group's theme for 2025 is the impacts of extreme weather on watersheds and she provided an overview of planned webinars. She also mentioned the group's review of the WPC website and noted interest in holding meetings at the Legislative Office Building (LOB). She posted a [link to a draft](#) of the previously mentioned Outreach & Education survey and mentioned that WPC agencies other than DEEP should also be involved in the group.

There was further discussion of the group's plans and of the rationale for the survey. Denise highlighted that the survey is intended for non-state organizations that are doing work relevant to the water plan whether they know about that connection or not. There was a discussion of this survey targeting groups, not individuals. Denise also mentioned previous meetings' of a water stewards program to encourage groups to do such work. Virginia de Lima recommended encouraging survey recipients to forward it to other organizations that might not have received it.

There was further discussion of the kinds of entities targeted with the survey, including municipalities and local health departments and districts. The intent is for it to be approved by the WPC and for the survey to be active 3/20 – 4/20, aligned with earth day. Kim Czapla showed the first page of the draft survey and there was further discussion of the categories of organizations listed there, including "Other." Ali Hibbard said she will add local health to the list.

Alicea Charamut showed the second page of the survey and Kim Czapla explained the grouping of priorities in Question 5. There was a discussion of how to categorize responses to that question and of potential improvements to the survey, including adding "collects" to the actions listed in Question 6.

There also was a discussion of whether the programs listed in Question 7 would include education programs on those topics and on how to clarify that question. There were no suggestions or questions about Questions 8 – 10. Alicea Charamut asked how an organization would know if it is "directly involved" with the implementation of the plan, as written in Question 11, and Ali Hibbard referred to the wording in the water plan.

Kelsey Sudol suggested as an alternative that the 17 statutory requirements of the water plan be listed, in part as a teaching tool, and asked if the statute should be quoted in phrasing the survey. There was further discussion and Alicea encouraged everyone to try the draft survey and provide feedback. Denise Savageau requested comments by 2/25 and asked that they be sent to her, Kim Czapla, and Ali Hibbard.

- Nominating Committee

Carol Haskins said the group has not met since last month but explained the committee's process and mentioned the outreach to refill the WPCAG's vacancy for a member representing recreation. There was a discussion of both co-chairs being on the same membership cycle but it was pointed out that co-chairs are only appointed for a one-year term. There was a discussion of the process for naming alternates and of the need for them to be included on the WPC and WPCAG distribution lists. Carol added that there should be an onboarding process for new members and alternates.

- Source Water Protection Work Group

Alicea Charamut said the group is aiming for the next meeting to be March 18.

b. 2025 legislative session

Alicea Charamut said a lot is going on at the legislature and Dan Lawrence mentioned [SB 1289](#), *An Act Requiring Notice Of Excavation By A Public Utility To Affected Property Owners* would require water companies to provide two days' notice of excavations to neighbors, which would delay urgent work. Alicea Charamut mentioned [HB 6777](#), *An Act Concerning Water Utility Systems And Water Quality And Treatment Surcharges*, and there was a discussion of it primarily being focused on PFAS and lead contamination. She also mentioned [SB 1307](#), *An Act Establishing A Working Group To Study And Develop Best Practices To Promote Housing Growth And Protect The State's Water Supply*, adding that it was on the Housing Committee agenda that day [Note: also see SB 990, *An Act Establishing A Working Group To Study And Develop Best Practices To Promote Housing Growth And Protect The State's Water Supply*].

Alicea asked fees for new connections to water systems and Dan Lawrence said Aquarion does not charge them. Pat Kearney said a lot of municipal systems do have them to cover their share of the existing infrastructure funded by previous ratepayers. He said it is standard around the US and Dan noted that Aquarion charges such a fee in Massachusetts and provided further background, highlighting that it's very system-specific. Pat said it also depends on the water system's rate of investment in its system.

Alicea said there also is concern that the bill would open water supply watershed lands to denser development. Denise Savageau mentioned the need to protect source waters and also mentioned that many areas are limited to homes private wells or small community systems. She agrees with creating the task force but the right people should be on the task force and they should know about the WPC and WPCAG. Sonia Marino added that local health authorities should also be included, not just DPH, because of their role with private wells, septic systems, and local ground water issues. Denise highlighted the importance of the group including people providing local, regional, and state level perspectives. Alicea Charamut agreed that the group should be broader.

Denise Savageau said the development community is going after environmental regulations claiming that land use laws, not economics, are limiting development, and described how to bring up concerns. Alicea mentioned a recent public hearing by the Housing Committee regarding affordable housing bills and compared this year's bills to others considered in 2024. She mentioned the [HB 6830](#), *An Act Concerning Training For Members And Employees Of Inland Wetlands Agencies*, [HB 6916](#), *An Act Concerning The Use Of Neonicotinoids*, [SB 884](#), *An Act Concerning The Maximum Allowable Concentration For 1,4-Dioxane In Household Cleaning And Personal Care Products And Cosmetics*, and [SB 887](#), *An Act Exempting Certain Cookware From Pfas Requirements*.

Alicea said a hearing is expected for [SB9](#), *An Act Concerning The Environment, Climate And Sustainable Municipal And State Planning, And The Use Of Neonicotinoids And Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides*, and also mentioned [SB 75](#), *An Act Requiring The Expediting Of Permits For The Remediation Of Hydrilla In Lakes Across*

The State. She pointed out her concern about language automatically approving permits if not acted on within 90 days, but agreed that a quicker process is needed. Alicea also explained concerns regarding [HB 6566](#), *An Act Revising Nitrogen Runoff Reduction Requirements Concerning Residential Developments*.

Carol Haskins returned to the previously mentioned bills that would create a housing growth working group and described interesting feedback received in developing her organization's strategic plan. Two people in the development/construction sector spoke of the need for affordable housing and of the barriers resulting from septic system regulations and density or parking requirements. She said people like them are mindful of finding the right balance but she did not notice people like that being included in the working group.

Sonia Marino pointed out the challenges that the combination of climate change, sea level rise, and shoreline development for which developers propose a portion be affordable to avoid regulations. She highlighted few people understand septic systems, especially larger systems, and expressed concern regarding recent changes in jurisdiction increasing the size of systems some people will be expected to review. She pointed out the complexities said many towns lack the capacity to do the reviews. She also pointed out that some already are under order due to nitrogen loading to the Long Island Sound. Some towns will be heavily impacted by the changes. She recommended the perspective of local health departments be included in working groups addressing issues like this and noted that significant changes can appear in a bill without review.

Alicea Charamut pointed out that the most recent jurisdictional change resulted from an amendment to the bill that became [PA 23-207](#), highlighting that the language resulting in that change did not come from the original committee, it was an amendment late in the session. There was a discussion of the difficulties of interceding when that happens.

Denise Savageau said environmental advocates now have to watch the housing committee because of its recent involvement with legislation involving water. She also mentioned as-of-right zoning, which she said avoids a zoning commission review and important environmental issues might be overlooked by local building officials. She said some regional councils of governments (COGs) have been vocal about this.

Denise said she appreciates the intent to prevent local commissions from using special permits to avoid development but we can't throw the baby out with the bathwater. She described efforts to coordinate with organizations and water utilities regarding this concern. Alicea Charamut mentioned [HB 5749](#), *An Act Concerning Advanced Septic Systems With Nitrogen-Removal Features*. She also entered a link to the American Planning Assoc.'s (APA's) [Housing Supply Accelerator](#) and said it has great recommendations. She said environmental laws were not intended to be exclusionary but zoning regulations were. Alicea also mentioned the [recommendations of the Sewerage Subcommittee](#) of the [Commission on CT's Development and Future](#) (CCDF).

Sonia Marino highlighted the need for local health involvement, not only DEEP and DPH, and recommended that specific criteria be provided to enable enforcement. She also noted the extent of changes in septic system oversight. She said local health staff can lack the needed expertise and asked if DPH has the capacity necessary for its expanded role, adding that it would be better to learn on smaller systems.

Kathy Czepiel mentioned [HB 6249](#), *An Act Limiting Appeals Under The Connecticut Environmental Protection Act*, in the meeting chat. Becca Dahl explained the difference between the [Protection Act CEPA](#) referenced in the proposed bill and the [Policy Act CEPA](#) that many people are familiar with.

c. Other old business

- Website changes

There was no update

- WUCC update

There was no update.

- Interagency Drought Work Group

Becca Dahl said the [Interagency Drought Work Group](#) (IDW) met 2/6 and the state remains in [Stage 2 drought](#). She mentioned the group's focus on ground water trends this time of year and said they will meet again March 6.

4. New Business

Virginia de Lima mentioned that the WPC shut down the former Implementation Work Group that had included a member of each WPC agency. She said each agency should be represented at WPCAG meetings now, but only DEEP and OPM are here. Alicea said she will convey that message to the WPC and noted that OPM's role as WPCAG staff is being transferred to PURA due to OPM taking on PURA's former role staffing WPC meetings.

5. Public Comment

There was no further public comment.

6. Upcoming Meetings

Alicea Charamut noted the upcoming meeting dates and added that the Watershed Lands Work Group's next quarterly meeting will be 3/14/2025.

March 4, 2025	Education & Outreach Work Group (9:00)
March 4, 2025	WPC (1:30)
March 6, 2025	Interagency Drought Work Group (1:00)
March 18, 2025	Source Water Protection Work Group (9:00)
March 18, 2025	WPCAG (1:30)

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:17.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM