

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

January 28, 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/24222>

Video: https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2024-12-17_WPCAG_Video.mp4

Members Present by video or phone:

Bonnie Burr	UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
Alicea Charamut	Fisheries Advisory Council
Len Greene	FirstLight (Electric Power)
Patrick Kearney	New Britain Water Dept.
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Alison McHorney	CT Office of Consumer Counsel
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Martha Smith	New Haven West River Watershed Coalition
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
Lily Engbith	CT Office of Policy & Management
Martin Heft	CT Office of Policy & Management
Ali Hibbard	CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection
Ray Jarema (alt.)	Berlin Water Dept.
Iris Kaminski	
Justine Phillips-Gallucci	CT Office of Policy & Management

Members Absent:

Aaron Budris	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Kathy Czepiel	Save the Sound
Nicole Deziel	Yale School of Public Health
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Sonia Marino	CT Association of Directors of Health
Darryl Newman	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.
Tom Tyler	MDC
Steve Woltornist	Marmon Water Residential Filtration/Water Quality Assoc.

Vacancies:

Recreation

Staff:

1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of draft 12/17/2024 Minutes

A quorum of members was not present, so the group was unable to approve the [draft 12/17/2024 minutes](#).

3. Old Business

a. WPC and work group updates

- WPC meeting
 - WPC membership change
 - 2025 WPC work plan
 - Other

Alicea said the WPC had a brief meeting, approving the annual report with minor changes, and that report has been transmitted to the legislature. Dan Lawrence mentioned the change in WPC leadership.

- Watershed Lands Work Group

Steve Vitko said Kathy Czepiel updated the WPCAG after this group's most recent meeting and the group will meet again March 8 [*Note: it will be 3/14*]. He provided an overview of activities and mentioned the group's interest in having guest speakers at upcoming meetings.

- Outreach & Education Work Group

Denise Savageau said the group met 1/14 and spent a lot of time on its 2025 work plan. The theme for the year is extreme weather and watershed. She noted that World Water Day's theme for the year is *save the glaciers* and she noted the connection to sea level rise. She described the group's plans for considering that. She also outlined the group's interest in US Geological Survey (USGS) gages and added that the group will also be looking at wildfire impacts.

Denise said the group is also planning its usual events in the fall and, this year, they intend to focus on the impacts of flooding and drought on water quality. They would like to engage legislators on topics like these. She mentioned the group's interest in the state's water website and in launching a survey looking at partner roles in the state's water planning efforts. DEEP staff are working on a draft survey the group provided to the WPC and Denise described the group's interest in recognizing work done by volunteers and others.

- Source Water Protection Work Group

Denise said the group has not met yet in 2025 and she noted that there is work to be done before the next work group meeting.

- Nominating Committee

Steve Vitko described the group's most recent meeting and Josh Cansler listed the slate of members who must be reappointed this year. Steve and Josh outlined what the group is doing and mentioned the new vacancy for someone representing recreation interests. Dan Lawrence mentioned the expected sale of his employer, Aquarion, to South Central Regional Water Authority, and noted that he can no longer represent a large investor-owned water company following that sale. There was a discussion of CT Water Co. being the only large investor-owned water company remaining following that, postentially late this year. There also was a discussion of the process for members to name alternates.

- Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis Work Group

Alicea Charamut said she and Dan Lawrence discussed this group with Martin Heft of OPM. DPH is very interested in this topic and a decision was made to have the Water Utility Coordinating Committees take the lead, which should be a more efficient process. Dan said it will be a challenge to have utilities participate in this and that WUCCs can do this. He outlined some of the needs and Jonathan Avery agreed. They discussed the need for WUCCs to meet more frequently and Dan described expectations for WUCCs to consider the number of WUCCs needed and what should be included in WUCC plans.

Dan said rate recovery is an important component. Denise Savageau noted that Aquarion's work with drought and conservation is enabled by its rates being set by the Public Utility Regulatory Authority, which is not the case for regional and municipal water companies, which must justify rates to local and regional representatives. This is an important topic, especially with the coming change regarding Aquarion's ownership. Dan provided some background regarding how Aquarion's increasing focus on conservation in the past ten years has reduced water use.

b. 2025 legislative session

Alicea Charamut mentioned an upcoming legislative press conference regarding the state water plan and mentioned [SB 732](#), *An Act Requiring The State Water Plan To Be Amended To Address Climate Change*, which does not have specific language yet. Denise Savageau provided additional background regarding Sen. Marx's and Rep. Steinberg's interest in the topic. She also described that proposal's relationship with the much broader Governor's Bill [SB 9](#), *An Act Concerning The Environment, Climate And Sustainable Municipal And State Planning*. She added that the bills could be merged or the water plan bill could proceed on its own if SB 9 does not advance, noting that a comparable bill died in 2024.

Martin Heft mentioned the similar [SB 314](#), *An Act Concerning Civil Preparedness For Climate Change Trends, The Use Of Town Aid Road Program Funds For Climate Resiliency And Revisions To The State Water Plan*. He also said he has been in contact with Rep. Steinberg on behalf of the WPC to provide background material from the WPC. Iris Kaminsky mentioned [SB 884](#), *An Act Concerning The Maximum Allowable Concentration For 1,4-Dioxane In Household Cleaning And Personal Care Products And Cosmetics*, noting its relevance to although it is not directly related to water.

Alicea Charamut said she has previously mentioned the community septic system regulations being developed by DPH and said regulations are expected to go to the [Regulation Review Committee](#) this session. There is an expectation that the regulations will not include nitrogen standards and she mentioned the apparently related [HB 6566](#), *An Act Revising Nitrogen Runoff Reduction Requirements Concerning Residential Developments*. She said we should not be reducing standards at this time of increasing runoff and this should be a concern across the board for all of us. She also pointed out that the bill was introduced by the majority leader and is likely to move forward.

Alicea also expressed concern about [HB 6249](#), *An Act Limiting Appeals Under The Connecticut Environmental Protection Act*, and some bills that would remove guardrails limiting the scope of hydropower facilities classified as Class 1 renewable energy sources, noting the impacts on rivers. Alicea also mentioned bills that would restrict the use of neonicotinoid pesticides.

Denise Savageau mentioned [HB 5002](#), *An Act Concerning Housing And The Needs Of Homeless Persons*, which does not include specific language but said the intent is to roll back environmental regulations, particularly inland wetland restrictions. She noted that water supplies in cities depend on regulations protecting source water areas typically in small towns. Dan Lawrence noted the challenges of protecting such areas. Denise noted that environmental concerns are exploited by *not in my back yard* (NIMBY) interests trying to exclude other people. We can build safe, sustainable housing without impacting public water supplies. Alicea mentioned [HB 6830](#), *An Act Concerning Training For Members And Employees Of Inland Wetlands Agencies*, which has been raised by the [Planning & Development Committee](#).

c. Other old business

- Website changes

Ali Hibbard described the few updates made by agency staff the previous week

- WUCC update

There was no further update following the earlier discussion of [Water Utility Coordinating Committees](#) (WUCCs).

- Interagency Drought Work Group

Becca Dahl said the state remains in the state remains in [Stage 2 drought](#) and the [Interagency Drought Work Group](#) (IDW) will meet again next week.

4. New Business

- Thoughts on 2025 outlook for the WPCAG and review of State Water Plan

Alicea said she and Dan decided that it would be helpful to provide some background regarding the current state water plan because many members of this group were not involved in its development. Alicea showed the [state water website](#) and clicked on the [State Water Plan](#) link. She pointed out the length of the plan and encouraged everyone to look at Section 5, which provides the plan recommendations and recommended pathways. She encouraged everyone to look at Sec. 5 and to also consider the data and other information in other sections. We will need to re-prioritize.

Dan Lawrence recommended people review the 17-page executive summary linked on the water plan page and noted the water related issues recently dealt with in CT. There was a discussion of the survey used in the WPCAG's prioritization exercise back in 2017-18. Ali Hibbard will review files that former DEEP supervisor Corinne Fitting left when she retired. Alicea said the group did not consider the pathways at that time and should now.

There was further discussion of that previous prioritization exercise and how to proceed now. The group also discussed water plan presentations. Denise Savageau described the public presentation developed at the time of plan approval, but said that did not include the level of detail needed by members of this group. Ali Hibbard put links to two YouTube videos in the chat:

[Presentation at Fairfield University on water planning](#)

[Video prepared by WPC in 2017](#)

There was a discussion of determining which work recommended in the plan has been completed, which is complicated by many recommendations having multiple steps. Denise Savageau mentioned checklists compiled by the former Implementation Work Group that was absorbed into this group and said she will check her files.

Alicea Charamut showed the [State Water Plan Prioritization List](#) that is linked on the water plan page. There was a discussion of the surveys of WPC and WPCAG members that were considered during the original prioritization and how to proceed now. Kim Czapla mentioned work in 2023 to identify gaps and opportunities in water plan implementation and that might be a good starting point (see Appendix C on pp 13-14 of the [WPC's 2023 Annual Report](#)). Denise Savageau put a [document in the chat](#) listing reasons for updating the water plan and provided an overview.

Dan Lawrence asked if a subgroup should be formed to begin working on this. Alicea noted that her time is limited during the legislative session, but someone else might be interested in taking the lead to compile information about what is proposed in the current plan, what has been done, and if the available information is sufficient. There was a discussion of doing that by updating the 2023 matrix mentioned by Kim Czapla, but people should first read Sec. 5 of the plan, as previously described, and also review that 2023 matrix. Dan Lawrence asked people interested in participating in the mentioned subgroup to contact Alicea and him.

5. Public Comment

There was no further public comment.

6. Upcoming Meetings

Alicea Charamut noted that this group's next meeting will be 2/18/2024.

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

Denise Savageau expressed concern about WPC meetings being moved to Teams, which is not as user-friendly as Zoom for public-facing meetings. Martin Heft said people are not encountering problems with the agency's use of Teams for other public-facing meetings and there was further discussion of Teams vs Zoom.

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM