

## Water Planning Council Advisory Group

### June 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes

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

An audio recording is available at:

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/WPCAG\\_2020/2020-06-16\\_WPCAG.mp3?sc\\_lang=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/WPCAG_2020/2020-06-16_WPCAG.mp3?sc_lang=en)

#### Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	<a href="#">Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments</a>
Josh Cansler	<a href="#">Southeastern CT Water Authority</a>
Alicea Charamut	<a href="#">Fisheries Advisory Council</a>
Karen Burnaska	<a href="#">CT Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound</a>
Virginia de Lima	<a href="#">USGS CT Water Science Center</a>
Mike Emmons	<a href="#">CT Nursery &amp; Landscape Assoc.</a>
Eric Hammerling	<a href="#">CT Forest and Park Association</a>
Carol Haskins	<a href="#">Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition</a>
John Hudak	<a href="#">South Central CT Regional Water Authority</a>
Patrick Kearney	<a href="#">Manchester Water &amp; Sewer</a>
Fred Klein	<a href="#">CT Power and Energy Society</a>
David Knauf	<a href="#">Darien Health Department</a>
Ingrid Jacobs (Alt.)	<a href="#">Aquarion</a>
Margaret Miner	<a href="#">Rivers Alliance</a>
Jeff Pugliese	<a href="#">Middlesex Chamber of Commerce</a>
Denise Savageau	<a href="#">CT Association of Conservation Districts</a>
Kelsey Sudol (Alt.)	<a href="#">Lake Waramaug Task Force</a>
Tom Tyler	<a href="#">MDC</a>
Brenda Watson	<a href="#">Operation Fuel</a>

#### Other Participantss:

Jonathan Avery	<a href="#">Hazardville Water Co./Jewett City Water Co.</a>
Jack Betkoski	<a href="#">PURA</a>
Corinne Fitting	<a href="#">DEEP</a>
Bruce Wittchen	<a href="#">OPM</a>

#### Members Absent:

Joan Nichols	<a href="#">CT Farm Bureau Assoc.</a>
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#### 1. Call to Order

The WPCAG meeting was called to order at 1:31 and a quorum was established.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [minutes of the May 19, 2020 meeting](#). The motion passed unanimously, with Mike Emmons abstaining because he had not attended the meeting.

#### 3. Water Planning Council Update

a. Implementation Work Group (IWG)

Virginia de Lima provided an overview of the meeting of the IWG immediately prior to this meeting. She said Mary Ann Dickinson of the [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#) (AWE) provided an update on their analysis of CT laws and regulations as described at last month's WPCAG meeting. She noted there had been a discussion of items to focus on and AWE will be surveying to IWG members.

Virginia reminded everyone that the private well work group is wrapping up its work because the [Dept. of Consumer Protection](#) (DCP) has developed a private well database as recommended by the group. She said the drought group reported that it had met twice since the previous IWG meeting and is continuing its post-mortem of the most recent drought.

Virginia said the private well group will morph into a group focused on water quality. Some members will stay engaged and others will be recruited. Also, there is interest in two new groups. One group would focus on marketing and outreach regarding the water plan. The second would focus on interconnections. She said she believes that there is capacity to add the new groups with contributions from new people.

Mike Emmons said he was recently shocked by how low the Salmon River is and asked if there has been any progress regarding drought parameters. Corinne Fitting provided some background regarding the state's interagency drought work group and Virginia de Lima added that the state drought plan was recently updated.

Mike said his industry requires that directions be clear and Denise Savageau said the new plan allows the state to make decisions on a regional basis. She also pointed out that the drought trigger levels used by water companies are specific to each company and will also differ from the state's criteria. Denise provided an overview of Aquarion's approach, which considers a number of additional factors in estimating drought risk. There was further discussion of how drought plans are applied.

Denise Savageau mentioned that individual water companies often are ahead of the state in responding to drought, due to local variations. She added that flattening the curve of water use in one year can help reduce the threat of drought the following year. Virginia de Lima mentioned the ongoing discussion by the drought topical group, which she reported on earlier, Mike Emmons noted that people do not buy plants from nurseries if they might not be able to water them and Alicea Charamut recommended that a discussion of current conditions be included on the next agenda.

b. Other WPC/State Water Plan matters

There was no further discussion.

**4. Old Business**

a. Water Utility Coordinating Committees

Josh Cansler said the Eastern [Water Utility Coordinating Committee](#) (WUCC) met and asked WUCC co-chair Jonathan Avery for an update. Jonathan said the group

had moderate participation and wants to support the work groups discussed earlier and also to collaborate with the other WUCCs. There was a discussion of the Central WUCC, which has lost at least one of its co-chairs, and Ingrid Jacobs said the Western WUCC is scheduling a meeting in July.

b. COVID-19 issues for water-related agencies and other entities

Alicea Charamut asked what CT water companies are experiencing and mentioned people needing financial relief. Jonathan Avery said his companies' focus is on taking care of customers and he noted that there has been very little change in customers not paying their bills. He added that customers can come to the office if wearing a mask. He pointed out that his company does not provide sewer service, which has additional challenges.

John Hudak said Regional Water is not shutting off service and is watching collections. He mentioned that their production was reduced by 3-4 million gallons per day (mgd) during March and April, but demand since mid-May is higher compared to this time last year. Alicea said that is a concern and John said the RWA's reservoir storage is currently well above average.

Jack Betkoski gave a shout out to Lori Mathieu and DPH for their [weekly webinars regarding COVID-19 and water companies](#). He mentioned that the state is doing remote inspections and water companies are working hard. Brenda Watson said [Operation Fuel](#)'s preliminary numbers show that they have assisted 400 households with grants for water bills. She noted that she will be participating on a national panel regarding such support. There was further discussion of rate payer relief.

c. Alliance for Water Efficiency work

Alicea Charamut said Virginia de Lima has already covered this.

**5. WPCAG Work Groups**

a. Watershed Lands Work Group

Alicea said Karen Burnaska and Margaret Miner have been very busy. Karen said they are working on two issues. The first is last year's legislative conveyance of state-owned aquifer protection land in Cheshire, which has been discussed in recent meetings. The second issue is the content of the questionnaire legislators submit when requesting a conveyance.

Margaret provided an overview of her efforts regarding the Cheshire conveyance, which she explained has not advanced to the [State Properties Review Board](#) as of a few weeks ago. She described her lack of success in getting a response from legislative leaders and mentioned that, as an individual, she intends to write an op/ed regarding the situation. She provided further background and said the conveyance should be mitigated or reversed. She added that some agencies have been helpful.

There was a discussion of the situation and Jack Betkoski asked if DEEP has weighed in on it. Margaret said DEEP has not since the discussion at the last WPC meeting. Corinne Fitting asked if Margaret is waiting on anything from DEEP and Margaret said she is not sure if DEEP was specifically asked. Karen Burnaska said maps were requested from DEEP, but there was no request for official comment. Margaret mentioned that DEEP was asked if the [aquifer protection area regulations](#) are adequate and said protecting the aquifer with regulations is not as good as protecting the land. Denise Savageau said Graham Stevens, who is now chief of that bureau of DEEP, was previously involved with the agency's land preservation efforts.

Karen Burnaska described her work with the [questionnaire](#) that legislators use to request such a conveyance and highlighted that she has been unable to obtain an exact copy from the [legislative committee that oversees conveyances](#). She also explained the evolution the [draft supplement](#) discussed in recent meetings. Eric Hammerling said the new questions are good questions, but pointed out some redundancies with other questions about future land use. He added that questions in the draft are useful without being too specific.

Karen Burnaska asked if maps should be provided with a questionnaire or if the verbiage is adequate. Margaret Miner noted that DEEP sometimes must request maps to understand the land to be conveyed. There was a discussion of a mapping example John Hudak had circulated previously and he described the map viewer on [CT ECO's website](#), noting that all but one of the information layers needed to fill out the form (public water supply watersheds), are available on the [CT ECO online map viewer](#). He added that the missing layer can be downloaded from DPH's website and probably could be added to CT ECO's map viewer.

Karen asked Corinne Fitting what the best approach would be for conveying a request. Corinne said maps would be helpful and she will speak with Graham Stevens. Karen asked if DEEP sees the conveyance questionnaires and there was a discussion of DEEP not seeing them early enough. Margaret Miner said DEEP often is unaware of proposed conveyances until the public learns of them and the chance to comment can be curtailed.

There was further discussion of the issues faced by agencies in the conveyance process and what advocacy groups can do. Eric Hammerling said that if there is going to be any possibility of the legislature rescinding the conveyance, advocates need to start working on it now. He noted that the conveyance is not ready for the properties review board and Margaret Miner said there might be a special session in July. She added that the state senator who championed the conveyance is no longer in the legislature.

Margaret Miner reminded the group of the split between her role regarding the specific conveyance and Karen's in proposing changes to the process for the future. Karen said that, if the rest of the group agrees, she will revise the draft to eliminate the redundancies and try to meet with the staff or co-chair of the legislative committee. She asked if the members support that approach and Josh Cansler and Alicea Charamut said there seems to be a consensus to do so.

#### b. Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis

Alicea Charamut said the work group would be able to assist in preparing for the previously discussed AWE workshop next Spring.

c. Utility Merger Analysis Workgroup

Alicea noted that the WPC had not met since the previous WPCAG meeting, so has not yet approved this work group.

**6. New Business**

Alicea Charamut pointed out that conditions are drying and said the state entered the 2016-2017 drought at this time of year. She recommended the group flag this as an issue for the WPCAG to keep an eye on. Mike Emmons said that, in Eastern CT, the period prior to the 2016 drought had also been dry. He said we should act, but not over-act. Someone noted that the MDC is at 99% capacity, with a 660-day supply. Conditions are regional and we should not alarm people.

Alicea Charamut said the focus is on issues at a regional scale and that it is nuanced, but we should be pro-active. There was a suggestion that the state drought website be more granular and accurate regarding impacts at a local level and a discussion of the significance of private wells. John Hudak said the state's drought plan is broader than those of individual water companies. There was a discussion of competing issues and different needs and how to compare different plans. They can never be in complete agreement.

Margaret Miner said two sections of streams notorious for going dry are below MDC's storage. Denise Savageau said the public knows it is dry and said there was frequent dialogue with Aquarion when she worked for Greenwich and said there is not much messaging to the public. Jonathan Avery said his Jewett City company's reservoir is full and the Hazardville company relies on wells. He added that they are receiving requests from farmers seeking water.

a. Return to place-based meetings

Alicea Charamut said the group might begin a hybrid system combining in-person meetings with remote participation but noted that there is more participation now than previously. There was a discussion of preferences.

**7. Public Comment**

Tom Tyler described how the MDC is posting information and keep people updated. He added that MDC employees are coming to work every day to maintain drinking water and waste water service. They take their work seriously.

**8. Next Meeting Date**

Alicea noted that the next WPC meeting will be on 7/7/2020 and the next WPCAG and IWG meetings will be on 7/21/2020.

**9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

*Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM*