

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

October 20, 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_2020/2020-10-20_WPCAG_recording.mp3

NOTE: By mistake, recording did not begin until the beginning of Sec. 3

Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Karen Burnaska	CT Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound
Josh Cansler	Southeastern CT Water Authority
Alicea Charamut	Fisheries Advisory Council
Virginia de Lima	USGS CT Water Science Center
Mike Emmons	CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc.
Carol Haskins	Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition
John Hudak	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Patrick Kearney	Manchester Water & Sewer
Fred Klein	CT Power and Energy Society
David Knauf	Darien Health Department
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts

Other Participants:

Jonathan Avery	Hazardville Water Co./Jewett City Water Co.
Len DeJong	Kleinfelder
Corinne Fitting	DEEP
Alexandra Hibbard	DEEP
Ingrid Jacobs (alt.)	Aquarion
Iris Kaminski	
Gannon Long	Operation Fuel
Mary Pelletier	Park Watershed
Sarah Ridyard	CT Water Co.
Martha Smith (alt.)	Rivers Alliance
Gail Surface	PURA
Kelsey Wentling	CT River Conservancy

Members Absent:

Eric Hammerling	CT Forest and Park Association
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Joan Nichols	CT Farm Bureau Assoc.
Jeff Pugliese	Middlesex Chamber of Commerce
Tom Tyler	MDC
Brenda Watson	Operation Fuel

1. Call to Order

Alicea Charamut called the meeting to order at 1:33 and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [minutes of the 9/15/2020 meeting](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with Josh Cansler abstaining because he had not attended the meeting.

3. Water Planning Council Update

a. Implementation Work Group (IWG)

Virginia de Lima noted the Implementation Work Group (IWG) is the 2nd Tuesday of each month. She said the group has decided that the [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#) (AWE) rates workshop will be done remotely, divided between two days (March 16 and 17). The Regional Water Authority and Portland Water Department have volunteered to be the subjects of the AWA financial analysis. She noted that there was a discussion of adding a consumer representative to the rates workshop panel

Virginia said the group is also looking at a proposal to change water conservation standards for appliances and fixtures. The AWE provided possible changes and group co-chair Dave Radka is compiling a proposal for consideration by the WPC and Dept. of Consumer Protection. She pointed out that the group also discussed infrastructure concerns associated with reduced water consumption.

Virginia also provided an update regarding the drought topical subgroup's review and said they reported their report should be complete by the end of the year. She noted that the state's Interagency Drought Work Group is already doing some of the things that the topical group decided should be done based on the review of the state's response to the previous drought.

Virginia reminded everyone that the private well group concluded its previous work and has shifted its focus to private well water quality, with several new members. That group has met once already and will meet again on 10/26. The topical group focusing on education met on 10/14 and is considering the scope of its work. She added that the WPC is considering a water system regionalization group.

Denise Savageau said no one is focused on the overlap between the [Governor's Council on Climate Change](#) (GC3) and the [state water plan](#). Is that a role for the Implementation Work Group? She noted that Dave Murphy of Milone & MacBroom, who had a role in preparing the water plan, also has a role with the GC3, but how does the water plan influence GC3?

Alicea Charamut said the state should consider the water plan, the [state POCD](#), and the [Green Plan](#). The Governor's [Executive Order 3](#) directs agencies to compare their plans with the GC3's work; that seems backwards. Virginia de Lima said the interests seem to be aligned, but what if they are not? Does GC3 or the water plan take precedence?

Denise Savageau said some of the recommendations coming out of the GC3 process are very specific and noted that many people and organizations involved with water have a very narrow focus. She asked if a work group should consider how what the GC3 issues in January sets the stage for the next work to be done. She believes this piece is missing.

Alicea Charamut said GC3 recommendations must be reconciled with the water plan and with relevant recommendations in other plans. Dan Lawrence agreed and said it is possible that something in one plan will need to be changed to match another. Virginia de Lima said there should be a process for reconciling plans and Alicea noted that the water plan will be due for an update in three years. There was a discussion of what is important and how to achieve reform. Denise Savageau said it will be necessary to reinterpret drought triggers because of climate change. There was further discussion of plan implementation and Gannon Long posted the GC3 Executive Order, highlighting the language identifying plans that must be reconciled.

4. Old Business

a. Water Utility Coordinating Committees

Dan Lawrence said a statewide group was organized from the three regional [Water Utility Coordinating Committees](#) (WUCCs) prior to COVID and that group will reconvene Nov. 5. He highlighted that the three WUCCs are working together and there was a discussion of the need to re-confirm the availability of people who had volunteered in February.

b. Interagency Drought Work Group update

Bruce Wittchen provided a quick overview of the current drought status of counties as depicted at: www.portal.ct.gov/water/drought. He pointed out that recent rains have not had a noticeable effect on ground water levels, although stream flows rose temporarily.

Alicea Charamut mentioned dry streams and Martha Smith noted the disconnect between state drought stages and public water system stages. Alicea mentioned that the drought topical group will recommend a checklist be included when issuing state drought declarations.

Mary Pelletier asked how much the GC3 work is considering drought and Alicea said the rivers committee had addressed what is included in the state water plan. Iris Kaminski said a question that came up in drought topical subgroup discussions is whether the models are out of date.

Fred Klein asked if the improved stream flows have affected reservoir levels and John Hudak said there has been only minimal improvement. It has held the line on further declines. His system's reservoirs generally refill during November – May and this is when the amount of precipitation can be most critical for subsequent months. There was a discussion of the comparison of current conditions to the lack of rain the winter of 2015-2016 and of long-term problems.

Denise Savageau said the state needs better modeling of variability and there was a discussion of the safe yield of water systems being based on worst-case drought. John Hudak said that the 1960s drought is most often used to model safe yield. He added that this is still considered the worst drought of the last 100 years with regard to precipitation, but there also is a need to consider higher rates of evaporation in a warming climate.

Alicea Charamut said she sat in on the Interagency Drought Group's meeting and the group's approach was very systematic and orderly, leaving room for professional judgment. She added that they formed a smaller action group tasked with making things happen.

c. Nominating Committee

There was a discussion of WPCAG alternate member Melissa Schlag passing away and that Katherine Fielder of Save the Sound will serve as Karen Burnaska's alternate. Alicea Charamut noted that Melissa was still young and will be missed. There was a request to redistribute the member slate and Bruce Wittchen said the [link in the agenda](#) goes to the previous version. Josh Cansler noted that the WPC tabled the slate until its next meeting.

5. WPCAG Work Groups

a. Watershed Lands Work Group

Karen Burnaska said the group's latest meeting was well attended and featured a presentation on solar facility siting by Peter Hearn of the [CT Council on Environmental Quality](#) (CEQ). She mentioned that the location information forms the [CT Siting Council](#) provides to CEQ do not mention if proposed facility sites are in an Aquifer Protection Area or public supply watershed.

Karen also mentioned that a solar facility developer who attended the meeting said the state should identify preferred sites for facilities, as is done in VT. She added that there also were discussions of issues regarding forest lands and the public process in regards to receiving and reviewing information. The group will schedule another meeting. John Hudak was asked for an update about the proposed Gaylord Mountain Rd solar project on the Lake Whitney watershed land in Hamden. He provided a brief overview, noting that the Regional Water is now an intervenor and that evidentiary and public hearings are scheduled for 11/17/2020. [Case filings](#) can be found on CSC's website.

Fred Klein said he appreciates energy industry representatives being able to participate in the work group's discussion. He said solar energy displaces the use of fossil fuels for power production and those facilities' need for cooling water. He acknowledged interest in alternative siting approaches for solar and provided a brief overview of limitations regarding solar installations on rooftops, parking lots, and landfills. He added that the CSC considers the environmental concerns for ground-mount solar.

Denise Savageau said the GC3 is looking at this issue and said there is a need for balance because there is no such thing as a free lunch. She said [CEQ's report on solar](#)

[facility siting](#) said DEEP considers only the direct cost of power production, not the indirect costs, which steers projects to agricultural and forest lands. The result is a loss of ecosystem services and resiliency. She also noted environmental justice implications, saying there is little solar activity in urban areas. This is in the GC3 report.

Denise said it is an oversight by the CSC to not require information regarding locations proposed in public drinking water source areas. She said the WPC should weigh in on this and added that DEEP sits on the CSC and should not allow this. Fred Klein said energy requests for proposals are just one step in the process and facility developers still go through DEEP and SCS review. Denise said the CSC's process for declaratory rulings does not ask about source water impacts and said the right information must be made part of that process.

Alicea Charamut recommended hashing this out in the watershed lands work group. Karen Burnaska noted that a [recording of the work group's recent meeting](#) with Peter Hearn of CEQ will be made available. Mary Pelletier said we need accurate assessments of ecosystem services and there was further discussion of that and other issues regarding solar facility siting. Karen Burnaska mentioned that OPM's Eric Lindquist circulates work group information by email and Alicea Charamut said people who are interested should ask Eric to add them to the distribution list.

b. Conservation Pricing and Rate Recovery Analysis

There was no update.

c. Utility Merger Analysis Workgroup

Alicea Charamut said there is no update and that she needs to meet with PURA's Jack Betkoski to discuss expectations. The group will likely get started at the beginning of the year.

6. New Business

a. Other

Virginia de Lima noted that the WPCAG makes recommendations to the Implementation Work Group (IWG) and said the IWG wants to receive recommendations from the group as a whole, not from individual members. She said she would like to see consensus reports, especially if there are contrary opinions. John Hudak asked if the WPCAG can also report individual opinions from members and Virginia said consensus is preferred but other opinions can be included. There was a discussion of the desired process and Virginia will circulate the most recently completed report.

Alicea Charamut mentioned ongoing issues regarding the water website and there was a discussion of the need for improvement. Alicea also mentioned that Saturday is [World Fish Migration Day](#). She noted that it was delayed by COVID.

7. Public Comment

Alicea Charamut said the subject of stream flow was raised at the most recent WPC meeting and she showed a photo of the dry Copper Mine Brook streambed. She said it looks even worse than during the last drought. She said it is legal to dry up streams and she added that there are reports of businesses filling tanker trucks from stream. She said there is a hole in our process and there should be a cut-off.

Denise Savageau said information about last week's workshop on Protecting Drinking Water Sources in CT, including a [recording of the webinar](http://www.ctcouncilonsoilandwater.org/home/events/), is available at <http://www.ctcouncilonsoilandwater.org/home/events/>.

Mary Pelletier mentioned recent news reports regarding an eastern CT dairy that has been trucking in water and noted the large amount of water used by such an operation.

8. Next Meeting Date

Alicea said the next WPCAG meeting will be on 11/17; the next WPC meet will be 11/3, and the next IWG meeting will be 11/10.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:09 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM