

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

December 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes

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

An audio recording (16 MB) is available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/WPCAG_2020/2020-12-15_WPCAG_Audio.mp3

A video recording (371 MB) is available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/WPCAG_2020/2020-12-15_WPCAG_Video.mp4

Members Present by video or phone:

Aaron Budris	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Karen Burnaska	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
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug Task Force
Patrick Kearney	Manchester Water & Sewer
Fred Klein	CT Power and Energy Society
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance
Jeff Pugliese	Middlesex Chamber of Commerce
Denise Savageau	CT Association of Conservation Districts
Tom Tyler	MDC
Lori Vitagliano (alt.)	South Central CT Regional Water Authority
Brenda Watson	Operation Fuel

Other Participants:

Jonathan Avery	Hazardville Water Co./Jewett City Water Co.
Len DeJong	Kleinfelder
Corinne Fitting	DEEP
Alexandra Hibbard	DEEP
Iris Kaminski	
Sarah Ridyard	CT Water Co.
Martha Smith (alt.)	Rivers Alliance
Gail Surface	PURA
Bruce Wittchen	OPM

Members Absent:

Eric Hammerling	CT Forest and Park Association
David Knauf	Darien Health Department
Joan Nichols	CT Farm Bureau Assoc.

1. Call to Order

Alicea Charamut called the meeting to order at 1:31 and asked everyone to introduce themselves and identify the organization they represent. Fred Klein noted that while he is a member of the Connecticut Power & Energy Society, because CPES is not an

advocacy group, he does not officially represent that group. He is, however, knowledgeable in energy and water issues and brings that perspective to the WPCAG.

2. Approval of draft [11/17/2020 Minutes](#)

Alicea asked if there are any comments regarding the draft minutes and Bruce Wittchen said Fred Klein contacted him about an error in the minutes. He provided a brief explanation and said he will correct it and recommended the group approve the minutes as amended. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the 11/17/2020 meeting as amended and the motion was approved unanimously, with Pat Kearney abstaining because he had not attended the meeting.

3. Approval of [2021 Meeting Schedule](#)

Alicea Charamut pointed out that the May meeting will be the 4th Tuesday of that month to avoid a major Jewish holiday. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the proposed schedule and the motion passed unanimously, with Fred Klein abstaining because he had not reviewed the proposed schedule

4. Water Planning Council Update

a. Implementation Work Group (IWG)

Virginia de Lima said Mary Ann Dickinson of the [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#) (AWE) reported at last week's IWG meeting that they are moving forward with work for the upcoming rates workshop and rates modeling for the two water companies that volunteered. Virginia added that AWE has also analyzed the potential water savings with different conservation practices. She noted that the IWG discussed assumptions underlying that work and AWE will describe those in an appendix to the report. Virginia said the AWE also will produce a one-page overview that can be provided to legislators and others.

Virginia said the drought topical group is writing the final report on its review of state actions during the 2016-17 drought and has put off further discussion of municipal drought ordinances and on the desire for more data. Virginia also mentioned the private well water quality group, which she said is considering a requirement to test water for a broader range of potential contaminants.

Virginia said the outreach group did a well-received presentation to the [Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions](#) (CACIWC). She also said the IWG is waiting for the go-ahead from the WPC to begin a 4th topical group and welcomed suggestions for additional groups. The WPC's previous prioritization of [state water plan](#) topics should be viewed as a guide, not a straightjacket. She noted possible connections to the upcoming report of the [Governor's Council on Climate Change](#) (GC3) as being another source.

Virginia said the group should consider how the work of the various work groups will be tracked. She also described Lori Mathieu's recommendation that a group be formed to consider highly stressed basins and suggested that such work begin when water diversions data are available.

- b. Other WPC/State Water Plan matters

There were no other WPC/State Water Plan matters.

5. Old Business

- a. [Water Utility Coordinating Committee](#) (WUCC) update

Dan Lawrence said there has not been much activity since the last WPCAG meeting, but WUCCs are scheduling for 2021.

- b. [Interagency Drought Work Group](#) update

Bruce Wittchen provided an overview of the group's discussions and decision at its recent meeting, which led to New London County being at Stage 2 and all other counties being at Stage 1. Alicea Charamut said she joined the meeting and she highlighted the group's discussion of how the drought plan criteria are problematic when coming out of drought. She also mentioned the group's discussion of how rolling back drought stages now allows them to be ramped back up for media coverage in the spring if conditions warrant it.

Fred Klein said the state has retained Stage 1 where conditions do not warrant it and Alicea said there is concern about the possibility of a 2-year drought. Bruce described the response of a Litchfield County monitoring well that has been recovering since early October but remains below normal. We are coming to the time of year when that and many wells stop rising due to ground freezing or precipitation accumulating as snow, so that well could be well below normal in spring. He also mentioned the continuing water use restrictions and low reservoirs of some Fairfield County water systems.

Dan Lawrence said Aquarion uses different thresholds for evaluating recovery coming out of drought. Alicea Charamut said DPH is concerned about reservoir levels and Dan said much more water reaches reservoirs after leaves fall. Reservoirs are recovering and increased precipitation is also helping. Margaret Miner said organizations have been raising the alarm about limited data. The state does not know how much high-quality ground water is available for future. Alicea said there was some discussion of data limitations at the interagency meeting.

- c. Nominating Committee: 2021 member slate

Josh Cansler said there is one vacancy – the position Mike Emmons is leaving – and Karen Burnaska added that the group is considering alternatives for the agricultural representative. Mike Emmons said the CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc. is looking for a new representative, but Christian Joseph will continue as the alternate and will fill in until the position is filled.

6. WPCAG Work Groups

- a. Watershed Lands Work Group

Karen Burnaska said the work group's recent meeting was recorded and included presentations by DPH's Lori Mathieu and the CT Siting Council's (CSC's) Melanie Bachman. The work group will meet again in January.

Karen noted that Lori Mathieu said we need a state-wide plan for water prioritization. She said the work group discussed the many interactions with different government entities involved in project siting and of a need for consistent messaging to local land use commissions. They would like input from the WPC in response to the group's draft report.

Margaret Miner said questions were raised about the cumulative effects of projects and of the possibility of regional reviews. She noted that cumulative effects on ground water are not known and added that the inclusion of energy oversight at DEEP was expected to result in a coordinated approach for matters requiring consideration of energy and environmental issues. We don't have that.

Margaret said Melanie Bachman mentioned exempt projects, with the Candlewood project being well-known, but where are they and how can that problem be solved? Karen Burnaska said they are lucky to have many WPCAG members involved in that work group and they would like to take comments from WPCAG members for inclusion in the draft report, which would be submitted to the WPCAG in January. She asked for comments by Friday and asked if that schedule is acceptable.

Alicea Charamut asked if there are any concerns and Fred Klein said he will try to get the draft reviewed by industry representatives. He also asked what is meant by "exempt". Margaret said those are projects selected through regional requests for proposals, such as Candlewood Mountain. Alicea said it is exempt because it preceded [PA 17-218](#). Fred said the project is not exempt from CSC review and requires DEEP permits; Margaret outlined some of the concerns.

Fred Klein asked Alicea to explain PA 17-218 to the group and she provided a brief overview. There was further discussion of the project review process and whether agencies just provide comments or are expected to confirm details. Margaret Miner said the process is unclear at CSC and mentioned differences in permitting, noting there is an emphasis on storm water.

Fred shared the recently added [Appendix I](#) of DEEP's [construction storm water general permit](#) and Karen read from her work group meeting notes. Alicea shared language from PA 17-218, codified in [CGS 16-50k](#), establishing that the criteria for review is that a project will not "materially affect" land's status as prime farmland or core forest. Karen said her meeting notes, the work group meeting recording, and Melanie Bachman's presentation will be circulated.

Margaret Miner said "materially affect" can be strict or not. Denise Savageau said we lack clarity regarding categories of watershed land. She said the draft report is focused on a particular land use and we should look more broadly at source water protection. Lots of people are working on [non-point source](#) (NPS) pollution, but the focus is on impaired waters. Many don't understand source water protection needs and she mentioned CACIWC doing training for DEEP staff. She suggested a work group be formed to look at this. Alicea Charamut asked Denise to write a proposal for a work group and Denise said she will.

7. New Business

a. WPCAG “retirement” of Mike Emmons

Alicea thanked Mike for his service to the WPCAG and noted the benefits of members bringing different perspectives to the group. Josh Cansler echoed Alicea’s comments and pointed out that Mike did a lot while with the group. Mike noted the passion of WPCAG members and said there is a steep learning curve for new members and thanked everyone for their patience.

8. Public Comment

Iris Kaminski said she supports Denise Savageau’s regarding water pollution prevention and described some of her concerns. She said the state should commit to reduce pollutants, noting that legislation will focus on a single pesticide when there are many others. Everything is connected.

Mike Emmons said he had worked on Long Island early in his career and mentioned the problems encountered because of potato farmers’ use of the pesticide Temik ([Aldicarb](#)). It is a remarkably stable compound and poisoned a number of wells. Pesticides must be used properly and this is still a problem today.

Brenda Watson asked about the potential for legislation and Alicea noted that there frequently are bills regarding specific compounds and provided a brief overview of DEEP’s regulatory process. She also mentioned the [Council on Environmental Quality’s \(CEQ’s\) 2017 report on pesticides enforcement](#) and some specific concerns. Brenda noted potential health & safety impacts.

9. Next Meeting Date

Alicea read the dates of upcoming meetings: the WPCAG will meet 1/19/2021, the WPC will meet 1/5, and the IWG will meet 1/12.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM