



STATE OF CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Please Hold for Release Until April 21, 2021

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CONNECTICUT'S OFFICIAL REPORT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

ASSESSES ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS IN 2020

Link to *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*, the Council's annual report on the environment:
<https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/AR-20-Gold/2020-CEQ-Annual-Report-eBook/Introduction>.

Hartford, April 21, 2021

Connecticut's Council on Environmental Quality (Council) released its assessment of the condition of the State's environment in time for Earth Day (April 22nd, 2021). The report, *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*, was delivered to Governor Lamont, as required by law. It is an unbiased assessment of Connecticut's natural environment, both positive and negative, during the 2020 calendar year.

In its 49th annual report, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was evident. There was a significant increase in the use of electricity in the residential sector, likely due to people working and learning from home. Bus ridership decreased as people worked remotely or sought to avoid confined spaces. Beverage container redemptions decreased too, possibly as a consequence of early misinformation and public trepidation about handling of recyclables. Visitation to parks saw a significant increase, highlighting the necessity for the State to accelerate its acquisition of open space, which is not now on pace to achieve its goal. Interestingly, the need to find outdoor relief from voluntary confinement might be partially responsible for the decrease in productivity of piping plovers whose nests are easily disrupted by people and their pets. Measures that were implemented to reduce the risk of State employee exposure to the COVID-19 virus are reflected in the report. Long Island Sound Trawl Surveys were cancelled as were some in-person inspections for compliance with environmental laws.

Unchanged in the 2020 report is the influence - almost always negative - of a warming climate on the State's ecosystem. Of the report's fifty indicators of environmental conditions, the majority show a close association between their recent trends and the warming of the climate.

“The pandemic is a vivid reminder of the interconnectedness of the natural and human spheres that is ignored at our peril. This report lists key indicators of the direction to which our collective decisions are leading us”, said Keith Ainsworth, acting chair of the Council.

Interrelationships among key indicators is evident in the report. For example, water quality in Long Island Sound may have improved in 2020 due to the combined effect of reduced nitrogen discharges and low precipitation in 2020 that resulted in reduced surface runoff to streams.

“The changes we are experiencing in the natural environment will necessitate bold policies and programs, as well as increased financial and staff resources, to protect and enhance Connecticut’s environment”, stated Peter Hearn, the Council’s executive director.

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The report will be accessible on the Council’s [website](#) on April 21st, in time for Earth Day. There, the values on its charts will appear under the reader’s cursor and the reader can access the many supplemental documents which are hyperlinked within.

About the Council

Established in 1971, the Council on Environmental Quality submits Connecticut’s annual report on the status of the environment to the Governor pursuant to section 22a-12 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Additional responsibilities of the Council include review of construction projects of other state agencies, publication of the twice-monthly *Environmental Monitor*, and investigation of citizens’ complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.

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