

Council on Environmental Quality

At a Glance

SUSAN D. MERROW, Chair

Karl J. Wagener, Executive Director

Established - 1971

Statutory authority – Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 22a-11

Central office - 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Number of employees – Two

Recurring operating expenses – \$172,776

Organizational structure – Nine-member appointed council

Mission

The Council on Environmental Quality's three main duties are to prepare and submit to the Governor the state's annual report on the status of Connecticut's environment, to advise other state agencies and to receive and investigate citizen complaints. It also has specific responsibilities under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act, or CEPA (Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 22a-1 through 22a-1h), and other statutes. The Council is within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for administrative purposes only. Members of the nine-person Council are appointed by the Governor (5, including the Chair), Speaker of the House (2) and President Pro Tempore of the Senate (2). Members serve without compensation.

Public Service / Improvements / Achievements 2014-2015

The Council submitted *Environmental Quality in Connecticut* – the state's annual report on the condition of its air, water, land and wildlife – to Governor Dannel P. Malloy in March 2015. To help the public make sense of potentially confusing and conflicting technical data on environmental trends, the Council continued its use of easily understood environmental indicators that chart the state's progress clearly. Several improvements in data collection have allowed the Council to publish its report closer to the end of the calendar year covered by the report. Because the report is published online only, the Council is able to publish the report in March (as opposed to May or June as in previous years) and to publish updates if additional data become available. An update was published in April, for example, to incorporate data on 2014 electricity consumption that were not available in March.

The Council developed new indicators in several categories along with improved methods of displaying the data. Examples in this year's report include all-new indicators for bat populations,

solar energy systems, and dissolved nitrogen levels in Long Island Sound. The dissolved nitrogen indicator is significant because for many years the Council's reports have documented improvements in the amount of nitrogen (a pollutant) that were being discharged into Long Island Sound without being able to determine if the actual concentration of nitrogen in the Sound was improving also; now the reader can see that the concentration is in fact improving.

All agencies submit their environmental impact evaluations (EIEs) of proposed projects for the Council's advice. For several years the Council has been encouraging agencies to prepare concise EIEs that are easily read and understood by the public, commending the agencies that do so. Late in 2014, the Council discussed with the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection numerous deficiencies in the 36-year-old CEPA regulations.

The Connecticut Siting Council is required to solicit comments from this Council, which submits comments on proposed projects in cases where the applications do not provide satisfactory information about scenic and ecological resources.

Connecticut residents are encouraged to bring their environmental concerns and complaints to the Council. Beginning in 2014, the Council has reserved time on the agenda of each monthly meeting for a "Citizen Comment Period" during which people can speak to the Council about items not on the agenda. The recent year saw a steady stream of people offering comments, many of which led to detailed investigation by the Council for forthcoming reports. The many complaints investigated in the past year included apparent shortcomings in the regulation of stormwater, mining and waste-treatment facilities, and uses of municipal and state-owned conservation lands.

All reports are published on the Council's website. By encouraging people to read its reports online, the Council has been able to eliminate printing and thereby conserve money and resources. Residents can receive e-mail notices of all new publications, as well as public meetings, by signing up for free e-alerts through the website.

The Council's total expenditures in FY 2014 were within 1.5 percent of FY 2008 expenditures (in nominal dollars not adjusted for inflation).

Twice each month the Council publishes the *Environmental Monitor*, an online publication that replaced the Connecticut Law Journal as the official publication for CEPA notices. All state agencies post their notices that are required by CEPA, as well as notices of proposed land transfers as required by Conn. Gen Statutes Sec. 4b-47, in the *Environmental Monitor*. The *Environmental Monitor* is distributed to all municipal clerks as well as any citizen who subscribes to e-alerts through the website. This electronic publication saves considerable sums by eliminating printing and mailing costs.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The Council is required to submit the annual report to the Governor on the status of Connecticut's environment with recommendations for changes to state environmental laws and programs. Those reports and additional, special reports are available on the Council's website (www.ct.gov/ceq). The Council sends the *Environmental Monitor* twice monthly to all municipal clerks, as required by CEPA. The Council is required to recommend legislation for "identifying

the deficiencies of existing programs and activities;" the Council submitted those recommendations to Governor Dannel P. Malloy in January 2015.