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**Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)  
EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE WORKING  
GROUP-WORKING AND NATURAL LANDS WORKING  
GROUP, Rivers, Wetlands and Agricultural & Working  
Lands Sub-groups, Minutes**

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**Meeting Date: August 20, 2020  
Meeting Time: 5:30 to  
7:30 pm Meeting  
Location: [Zoom./  
98385210818](https://zoom.us/j/98385210818)**

**ATTENDANCE**

<b>Working Group Member</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Present</b>
Leslie Kane	Managing Director	Audubon Connecticut	Y
Denise Savageau	Director	Greenwich Conservation Commission, retired	Y
Lynne Bonnett		West River Watershed Coalition, New Haven bioregional Group, Greater New Haven Green Fund, President of New Haven Energy Task Force	Y
Alicea Charamut	Executive Director	Rivers Alliance of CT	Y
Leslie Kane	Managing Director	Audubon CT	Y
Holly Lalime	Property Agent	Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Program	Y
Rebecca French	Director	CT DEEP: Office of Climate Planning	Y
Peter Aarrestad		CT DEEP Fisheries Division	Y
Chris Donnelly	Urban Forester		Y
Eric Hammerling		Connecticut Forest & Park Association	Y

## EEI Presentations

Susan Peterson	Watershed Manager	CT DEEP BWPLR Watershed Management Program	Y
Kathy Fay		New Haven Environmental Advisory Council; West River Watershed Coalition, River Advocates of South Central CT, New Haven	Y
Steven Wallett	Environmental Sanitarian	DPH Drinking Water Section	Y
Marissa Naclerio	Intern	UConn Office of Sustainability	Y
Laura Cahn	Chairwoman	New Haven Environmental Advisory Council	Y
Lisa Hayden	Outreach Manager	New England Forestry Foundation	Y
Marianne Engelman-Lado	Professor	Yale School of Public Health, Yale School of the Environment, VT Law School	Y
Lee Cruz	Community Outreach Director	Community Foundation for a Greater New Haven	Y
Mark Mitchell	Professor	George Mason University	Y
Lilian Ruiz	Executive Director	Council on Soil and Water Conservation	Y
Kayleigh Royston	Legislative Liaison	CT Department of Agriculture	Y
Randy Anway	Architect	AIA CT	Y
Leticia Colon de Mejias	Executive Director	Energy Efficiencies Solutions	Y
James Albis	Senior Advisor to the Commissioner	CT DEEP	Y
Diane Hoffman		Hamden Alliance for Trees	Y
Diane Lauricella	Principal	EIG	Y
Kip Kolesinskas	Land Use and Conservation Specialist	UConn	Y

EEI Presentations

Mary-Beth Hart		CT DEEP: Land and Water Resources Division	Y
Paul Elconin	Director of Land Conservation	Weantinoge Land Trust	Y
Ray Hinchcliffe		Ecosmart	Y
Susan Masino	Co-chair	Science & Technology WG	Y

Associated Staff	Title	Organization	Present
Rick Jacobson	Bureau Chief	DEEP, Natural Resources	Y
Jenny Dickson	Division Director	DEEP, Wildlife	Y
Doris Johnson			Y

## AGENDA & NOTES

### Welcome and Announcements from EEJ Working Group

### Agenda Items: WNL Sub-working Group Presentations

*Note: The Forestry SWG presented at a previous EEJ meeting*

### Rivers Sub-Working Group:

*Alicea Charamut, Chair*

- Predictions from the 2011 report are today's conditions
- Recommendation 2020 R 1. Future Ecosystem Services Value: Create safe, equitable opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds to access and enjoy freshwater resources.
- Various questions about recommendations for CSOs
- Barriers – Dams (hydro vs. obsolete)
- Comment by Alicea that small hydro is incentivized and shouldn't be. And in contrast made reference to Colebrook Dam (West Branch Farmington River) that is a sizable dam that serves a legitimate societal need (built and operated for flood control so it is not a candidate for removal) but due to incentive structure is not financially viable (referred to recent MDC abandonments of hydro operations at this site). In short, need to better align incentives for hydro at larger sized dams (not small low head ones).
- Alicea specifically posed two questions to the EEJ Committee (these were also addressed at various points during the meeting/presentation).

EEI Presentations

1) Should Equity issue be a standalone issue or combined with others? (General agreement that Equity issues should be as a standalone, not just incorporated in with other topics).

2) Question concerning education and whether it should have a local focus (i.e., should educators demonstrate the values and benefits of urban environments to urban audiences/school children or focus on the pristine or rural environments?). (General consensus that local focus is appropriate, including in Urban Areas).

A few comments below address these two questions.

Doris - Thinks a valid perspective re: natural environment in own neighborhood. Used references to Keney Park in Hartford as an example, including the CARE Classes undertaken by the Fisheries Division at Keney Park Pond.

Susan M. - Agrees w/ in some school settings ... alienating to say need to go somewhere else to study environment

Doris – Not focusing local sends a negative message to those in urban neighborhoods ... Can use their own back yard ...

Denise – Need to get urban residents to understand connection w/ reservoirs/water supplies located in other areas (eg. – Hartford ... and Farmington River Reservoirs)

Rick – Daylighting rivers ... Important to understand river services to community of that resource (most focus been on ecological resource and not on the people) ... Appreciates this other perspective

Mary-beth – Education – local vs. field trips - There is values to both ... Good to expose people to different things - not just one or another ...

- CSOs and right-to-know law ... Recent raw sewage releases to Mill River, New Haven ... Notification process beyond basic requirement didn't work so well ... Strong disconnect between those who use waters and CSO releases
- Alicea – Notification actually part of wastewater Treatment Plant Emergency Action Plan. Recognition that communication needs to improve.
- Questions were raised during the Wetland SWG report concerning subsistence fishing.

**Wetlands Sub-Working Group:**

*Leslie Kane, Chair*

Notes from group chat during the presentation:

- Connecticut is getting wetter; rising groundwater levels—more wet basements, failing septic systems, etc.
- Protein sources was mentioned as an ecosystem service of wetlands. It would be interesting to see a summary of how much “recreational” fishing contributes to the food

EEI Presentations  
needs of vulnerable populations.

- There are certain fishing areas in New Haven that always have fisher people catching fish for food; the amount may vary widely by household.
- Lynne Bennett conducted a citizen science project on the number of people fishing and confirmed that people eat what they catch.
- Another ecosystem service mentioned was reduction of disease vectors—this includes mosquitoes.
- A suggestion was made to add a recommendation for limiting unnecessary pesticides. There may be other working groups where this type of recommendation would be a better fit.
- There was a request to include an argument supporting stringent pesticide elimination recommendations as relevant to the protections of fish and other aquatic species.
- Urban EJ communities are not the ones typically overusing pesticides. It is often the non-EJ communities that need to be educated about the consequences of over-use of pesticides. The consumer culture that has commodified lawns is the driver of suburban and institutional use of pesticides.
- The lawn is the real problem. It is generally included in low-impact development and stormwater management recommendations, but perhaps it should be pulled out as a separate recommendation.
- Golf course can also be problematic; they can use large quantities of pesticides.
- Signage is absent from the more frequent, less dramatic CSO events at least in New Haven at the fishing and recreational sites.
- Regarding sewage and the right to know: a possible recommendation is for more stringent oversight of emergency response plans.
- A suggestion was made to consider revisions to the Green Plan to prioritize acquisitions for protection of vulnerable communities.
- Coastal wetlands are the single most vulnerable natural resources in the face of a changing climate and rising sea levels.
- The importance of making the connection between remote water resources (sources) and public water supplies.
- Often protection of wetlands was done because it was the right thing to do for the habitat. The focus was not on what was good for the community, but it probably should have been placed in that context.
- The City Project and similar EJ groups focused on cleaning up the LA river in the exact way described above. It was viewed as an environmental justice issue and the work allowed the community to engage with the river—sense of ownership, sense of place.
- Keeping coastal habitats healthy and resilient is vital to vulnerable communities and achieving our climate mitigation objectives (Rick Jacobson).
- While it is very important to bring natural resource outreach to underserved

EEI Presentations

communities, it is also important to bring kids to new places. Field trips (e.g. visit to a coastal marsh) can inspire kids to realize other things and different careers are possible.

- The floodplain wetlands upstream of cities need better protection and management.

**Agricultural and Working Lands:**

*Holly Lalime, DEEP staff support*

Notes during the presentation:

- Organic weed management practices would yield healthier food and soils.
- Consideration of migrant labor—housing and health care is an important consideration.
  - More information required on the backgrounds and numbers on migrant farmworkers in CT
    - Access to healthcare, affordable housing, livable wages, access to transportation, and access to healthy food is especially key for these farmers
    - How can that support make it into the sustainability recommendations?
- Explore the racial composition of farmers, both in the rural and urban setting
  - 2017 Ag census provides an idea, but an incomplete one
- Promote turning brownfields to greenfields.
- Expand both backyard and commercial no-till farming practices.
- Promote increased use of biodigesters.
  - Digesters and methane recapture options—be sure these don't create incentives to promote expanded industrial agriculture
- The overlap of soils issues within the four Working and Natural Lands Sub-working groups will be addressed.
  - Intersection of education and soil regeneration on private and public property, particularly in urban areas
    - Can that kind of activity be connected with rainwater harvesting?
  - Separation of organics from municipal waste to promote composting in order to create healthy soil and to significantly reduce GHGs
    - New Haven has a lot of lead in the soil and supposedly organic matter helps bind to the metal to improve the soil so people aren't as susceptible to soil poisoning
  - Something in the soil report should mention not removing 18 inches of soil and replacing it with synthetic turf (releases plastics)
- At-risk communities need to understand the connections between soil health and health

- Materials needs to be shared in schools
- CT Food Corps and Ag in the Classroom and Common Ground Highschool's garden initiative are doing this, but education certainly needs to be expanded
- Examples of ideas raised by attendees for consideration:  
[www.vtfarmtoplate.com](http://www.vtfarmtoplate.com)  
[www.arlash.com](http://www.arlash.com)

### **Overarching Comment**

*Rebecca French, DEEP*

- As you think about water quality and protection issues, don't forget that for this report we are looking to frame issues around adapting or becoming more resilient to the impacts of climate change, prioritizing vulnerable communities. There are plenty of adaptation and resilience solutions that also contribute to preserving and enhancing water quality.

**NOTE:** *Slides/presentation will be made available on GC3 web page: [www.ct.gov/deep/gc3](http://www.ct.gov/deep/gc3)*