
Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)

MEETING MINUTES

Working and Natural Lands Working Group

Forests Sub-Group

Meeting Date: March 24, 2020

Meeting Time: 2:00 — 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: **ZOOM MEETING INFO:**

<https://ctdeep.zoom.us/j/355830146> or Dial +1 646 876 9923 Meeting ID: 355 830 146.

ATTENDENCE

Sub-Group Member	Title	Organization	Present
Eric Hammerling, Chair	Executive Director	Connecticut Forest and Park Association	
Tim Abbott	Regional Conservation and Greenprint Director	Housatonic Valley Association	
Mark Ashton	Director of School Forests	Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies	∅
Patrick Comins	Executive Director	Connecticut Audubon Society	
Thomas Easley	Assistant Dean of Community & Inclusion	Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies	∅
Robert Fahey	Assistant Professor	University of Connecticut, Natural Resources and the Environment	
Edward Faison	Senior Ecologist	Highstead	
Shelley Green (TNC) on behalf of David Gumbart	Director of Land Management	The Nature Conservancy, CT	∅
Lisa Hayden	Landowner Outreach Coordinator	New England Forestry Foundation	
Charles Leigus	General Manager	Supreme Forest Products, Inc.	
Amy Paterson	Executive Director	Connecticut Land Conservation Council	
Herb Virgo	Executive Director	Keney Park Sustainability Project	∅

Associated Staff	Title	Organization	Present
Christopher Martin, Sub-Group Staff Assistant	Director/State Forester	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	
Jaimeson Sinclair, Sub-Group Staff Assistant	Director, DEEP Air Bureau, Engineering Division	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	
Cary Lynch, Staff Lead, WNLWG	Research Analyst, Office of Climate Change Technology & Research	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	

AGENDA & NOTES

I. Welcome and Announcements (5 minutes)

*Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, CFP*A

Introductions: 2:02PM Chair starts the first fully Zoom participant meeting. Provides guidance to participants regarding sharing comments, use of the chat box and general Zoom protocols. Chair Hammerling introduces and provides brief bios for the two presenters

II. Agenda Items

Equity/air quality, energy use reduction, green infrastructure installation/maintenance, related urban forestry issues (60 minutes)

Equity Issues in Urban Forestry & Green Infrastructure, Colleen Murphy-Dunning, Director Yale F&ES Hixon Center for Urban Ecology, Urban Resources Initiative. PDF of presentation attached to minutes.

Key Points: 1) populations in urban areas are expected to continue to grow in the future, and trees are important for providing a wide variety of benefits to people (New Haven's canopy is around 38%); 2) trees of large stature provide the largest environmental and socioeconomic benefits and are being lost as utilities and municipalities enact right-tree, right-place guidelines in urban areas; 3) Healthy trees within the utility protection zone (UPZ) are being pruned or removed while posing no immediate threat to utility infrastructure. Dead or unhealthy trees outside the UPZ and across the street can pose a greater risk to utility infrastructure and should be a higher priority for pruning or removal. 4) There is significant need to increase urban tree canopy to address increased heat, stormwater, and other issues associated with impervious surfaces.

Q & A

Q: Regarding the conflict with utilities, are there legislative changes that could help balance the need to cut large diameter trees to protect power lines and the need to keep them to address climate impacts?

A: Enormous problem as noted above. Review of trees after major storms such as Super Storm Sandy and Tropical Depression Irene suggested that unhealthy tree failures outside the utility ROW may have been the largest problem for utility infrastructure. Suggested avoiding unnecessary elimination of healthy trees and focusing priority for removal on unhealthy trees that are greater threats to electrical distribution.

Q: Are there significant opportunities for sequestration in urban areas in CT through afforestation?
A: Yes but the challenge is where to plant, costs, and future maintenance obligations.

Q: What is the top recommendation/concern for this group to consider regarding urban tree canopy? A: Addressing equity issues in urban areas. Currently, there is documented inequity of canopy cover (lack of trees) in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Urban Climate Mitigation through Plants and Trees. Alexander J. Felson, RLA PhD, Certified Senior Ecologist & Deputy Executive Director and Director of Design for Resilience, Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation.

Key Points: 1) Heat is a major concern, There exists important social and ecological concern and opportunities from the function of an urban forest. 2) Project siting; consider opportunistic approaches, develop mitigation strategies such as for every tree removed one is planted. Requires expertise and community involvement and buy in, successional strategies as well as a committed maintenance program. There exists great opportunities linked to education.

Q&A:

Q: Many plant species that do well in urban environments are invasive in more natural areas. Can we have Tree of Heaven and Phragmites dominated ecosystems in the former while limiting their impacts on the latter?

A: No one answer. Certain nonnative species make sense. Have to consider the surrounding landscape, the risk of spread/escape into more natural environments? Debatable but very plan, site, and species specific.

Comment: Question was more about how to deal with existing habitats in urban areas that are invasive dominated.

Response: Eradication and replacement not always being the best choice if you want some ecosystem function.

III. Confirm/Update future speakers, invited experts - discussion (15minutes)

Group makes recommendations for future speakers and will submit additional ideas via email. Chris Martin to follow-up and confirm schedule with Chair Hammerling.

IV. Additional Information Needs (15 minutes)

V. Public comments (20 minutes)

Ralph Jones, Hamden Tree Alliance: Asks how Zoom recordings will be made available to the public and how to be shared.

Diane Hoffman, Hamden Tree Alliance: Hopes info will be shared with State Legislators.

Susan Masino, Trinity College Professor: Regarding health benefits of urban trees consider male trees give off a lot of pollen and can impact asthma rates. Urban forest benefits brain health. Consider opportunity for food forests (edible fruit bearing trees) in urban areas, research needed.

VI. Next Steps and Adjourn (5 minutes)

BMP, research, and legislation/funding sub groups to be discussed at April 7 meeting

April 7th meeting at 2:00 p.m. – 6:00p.m. Zoom Meeting, <https://ctdeep.zoom.us/j/701920204>,
Meeting ID: 701 920 204, Dial by your location +1 646 876 9923

Adjournment: Meeting adjourns approximately 3:35PM