

**Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)  
Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Working Group**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting Date: October 28, 2022**

**Meeting Time: 10:00 – 11:00 AM**

**Zoom Recording: [Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Working Group Recording](#)**

**ATTENDANCE:** GC3 Working Group Members in bold

Name:
Alanis Allen
<b>Francia Alvarez</b>
<b>Mark Ashton</b>
Ashley Benitez
Amy Blaymore-Paterson
<b>Lori Brown</b>
<b>Mary Buchanan, <i>Equity and Environmental Justice Liaison</i></b>
<b>Juliet Cain</b>
<b>Chris Donnelly</b>
<b>Robert Fahey</b>
<b>Amanda Fargo-Johnson</b>
Rebecca French
<b>Huijie Gan</b>
Rosa Goldman
<b>Eric Hammerling</b>
<b>Lisa Hayden</b>
<b>Bryan Hurlburt, <i>Co-Chair</i></b>
<b>Jim Hyde</b>
<b>David Irvin</b>
Susanna Keriö
<b>Christopher Martin, <i>Co-Chair</i></b>
Adam Matlock
JoAnn Messina
Huan Ngo
<b>Joan Nichols</b>
<b>Hannah Reichle</b>
<b>Kayleigh Royston</b>
<b>Lilian Ruiz</b>
<b>Latha Swamy, <i>Equity and Environmental Justice Liaison</i></b>
<b>Andrea Urbano</b>
Karen Weeks
Leigh Whittinghill

**AGENDA & NOTES**

**Welcome:** Alanis Allen, DEEP Liaison

### Ground Rules:

- Meeting is recorded and a link will be posted
- Announcement that the chat is public record, but may be used for questions and comments by working group members
- Working group members are asked to post their names and affiliation in the chat
- Reminder that the discussion portion is reserved for working group members
- Announcement that non-working group members should mute and turn video off until public comment

### **Welcome and Introduction of Co-chairs:** Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Chris Martin, DEEP Designee for Deputy Commissioner Mason Trumble

- Commissioner Hurlburt appreciates the time and participation of working group members
- Introduces Rebecca French, Director of the Office of Climate Planning, and notes she will lead the conversation on EEJ
- Chris reiterates his appreciation for working group members and notes the importance of their input on the GC3 process

### **Presentation, Climate Smart Agriculture Grant Program Review:** Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner

- Two buckets of funding:
  - Climate Smart Farming: \$7 million in unexpended balanced
  - Farm Restoration and Climate Resiliency Plan:
    - \$20,000 or 50% of the project cost share for private land
    - Application is currently open (runs through Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>)
    - Webinar on Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> to answer questions and walk through the grant program and application process
    - Questions can be directed to Lance Shannon or Simon Levesque
    - Grants can be directed at several topic areas:
      - Technical assistance
      - Training programs
      - Projects related to conservation practices
      - Create tools to reduce barriers to accessing assistance for conservation practices on farms
      - Establish equipment-sharing programs
      - Other activities that will increase the number of farmers implementing climate-smart agriculture and farming practices
    - No match requirement and admin and indirect costs are allowable
  - Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry: \$7 million in bond funds
    - Conducted an outreach period
    - Initiated an open comment period over two weeks
      - Half of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied
      - Some concern that the program was too broad
      - Suggestion to use funds as loan guarantees

- Commissioner Hurlburt feels this is outside the scope of what the Department of Agriculture can and should do
  - Feedback will be included in project descriptions
  - New, beginning, and underserved populations are priority areas
  - Will expand practices beyond the NRCS definition
  - Applications are opening on Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>
    - Webinars will be provided to answer questions
    - First webinar is scheduled for Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>
- Questions:
  - Lilian Ruiz: Is there an online portal or application?
    - Yes, and it will be released when guidance is finalized
  - David Irvin: Are the funding opportunities available to public landowners?
    - Yes, they are open to public and private
  - Jim Hyde: What is the timeline for farmers applying for specific project funds?
    - Commissioner Hurlburt notes that they are looking to fund opportunities where farms and landowners overlap. Currently, they are not looking at individual farmers, though they may qualify for the Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency funding opportunities

**Presentation, Forestry-Related Inflation Reduction Act Opportunities:** Chris Martin, DEEP Designee for Deputy Commissioner Mason Trumble

- Inflation Reduction Act is the largest investment in climate smart activity in US history
- Overall bill is in the billions, which provides transformative opportunities (369 billion over the next 10 years)
  - Expect cross-over with environmental justice funds and will benefit multiple sectors
  - 60 billion available to invest in environmental justice priorities
  - 1.5 billion allocated for urban and community forestry assistance, which is nearly a tenfold increase
  - 20 billion to support climate-smart agriculture practices
    - 5 billion to help support tree planting, as well as other resilient forest initiatives
    - 700 million for Forest Legacy programs, which has been restructured in such a way that it will make New England forests competitive for the first time
- Connecticut has established policies and structures that can be enhanced to facilitate equitable access to incoming funding opportunities
  - Some of this has been informed by the GC3 process
  - CEEJAC has also been instrumental
- Chris says more information will be forthcoming
- Questions:
  - Chris Donnelly: Will these amounts be distributed evenly over the next 10 years?

- Chris says that the majority will be issued in the first 5 years to see results quickly, though the funding will last the entire 10 years.
- Juliet Cain: Some inconsistencies across the government, like PURA and DOT, who are clear cutting and ignoring environmental justice initiatives. How can we coordinate the government better?
  - Chris notes that DEEP is hoping to address clear cutting in the upcoming legislation cycle
- Lilian Ruiz: Notes regional coordination may be key to address the windfall of funding made available through IRA. Encourages the working group to remain aware of regional initiatives and partnerships.
- Francia Alvarez: Submitted photographs that demonstrate how trees are being clear-cut in transportation corridors but notes the necessity for a tree canopy assessment. Also notes that Eversource has no interest in working with the community or Tree Warden
  - Chris notes that we are looking at adding capacity to help distribute funding

**Equity and Environmental Justice Discussion with Working Group Members:** Rebecca French, Director, Office of Climate Planning

- Announces the joint meeting between the working group and the Equity and Environmental Justice working group
  - Part of the meeting will focus on training in the equity lens
  - Presents the four different types of equities that will be included in the training
  - Notes they will discuss application of equity in the climate-smart agriculture and forestry sphere
  - Notes there also be presentations about public participation tenets
  - Co-chairs will present to the EEJ working group about work done during the GC3 process, with commentary about how equity has been included in the conversation
- Rebecca invites working group members to send questions or comments to her prior to the Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> EEJ joint meeting

Questions and Discussion: *For full comments please see the Zoom recording and/or audio transcript*

- Chris Martin: Environmental justice is often talked about in concert with urban centers, but asks if there are specific rural issues that should be included in the conversation?
  - Andrea Urbano: Believes that concerns are not limited to urban areas. Rural landowners are important for climate solutions and should be better included in the conversations around equity.
  - Chris Donnelly: Notes that at the core of this conversation is economic issues. He is concerned about the urban versus rural dichotomy and notes they should not be mutually exclusive. Also notes that history is missing from the

conversation and believes the historical perspective and the history of successes and failures can teach us about equity.

- Latha Swamy: Notes rural environmental issues are important to consider within the environmental justice framework. Also notes that rural does not always equate to white in Connecticut. There are farmers of color, who are low-income, and they are experiencing the compounded injustices in rural areas as well, so environmental justice is not one-dimensional.
- Lisa Hayden: Are there separate funds for forestry and agriculture?
  - Commissioner Hurlburt: No, there is one bucket of funding that will accept forestry and/or agriculture applications
- David Irvin: Can funding be used to encourage private landowners not to sell to developers?
  - Commissioner Hurlburt: Not really the intent of this funding, which is more for application. However, if there are private landowners who are concerned about their land, there are programs to ensure the preservation of their land. We can share more information about individuals can apply to those programs.

**Public Comments:** *For full comments please see the Zoom recording and/or audio transcript*

- Adam Matlock: Is it possible to apply for funding on behalf of private landowners? Adam, as an Executive Director, notes there could be a collaboration between non-profits and private landowners.
  - Commissioner Hurlburt notes that there is no problem with this
- Adam notes there is a lot of organization around clear-cutting. Is there a timeline for communicating with communities about legislation to address clear-cutting?
  - Christ Martin notes that Commissioner Dykes mentioned it briefly at a Forum, so it may be too early to share meaningful news, though community members should be ready to prepare testimony

## **Adjourn and Next Steps**

### **Resources:**

[Meeting Agenda](#)

[Farmland Restoration Group](#)

**Written Public Comments:** *Submitted outside of the working group meeting*

### **Comments as a Member of the GC3 Climate Smart Forests and Agriculture Working Group by Chris Donnelly**

I am writing this as a member of the working group for the GC3 Climate Smart subgroup on Forests and Agriculture. My main expertise, and so my main point of reference, is urban forestry. My comments run a bit long, so I have broken them up into three main areas:

- **Social Inequity and Urban Forest Health**
- **The Importance of Considering Historical Factors**

## · **Concerns About Too Much Money Too Quickly**

I hope my comments are helpful and a positive addition to the discussion. I am trying to include points that I have not heard fully articulated in recent discussions. Some of my comments may be contrary to the trends within these ongoing discussions. However, particularly with the amount of funding due to be invested into urban forestry in the near future, it is imperative that the discussion we have includes a wide range of viewpoints.

### **Social Inequity and Urban Forest Health**

My first comment has to do with social equity within urban forestry efforts. I think it is good that urban forestry is being seen as a tool for social equity. I am concerned, however, that the discussion my shift to where urban forestry comes to be seen as being primarily about social equity. This can happen if the success or failure of urban forestry is measured primarily in social equity terms. If that happens, my fear is that urban forestry will end up being altered in a way detrimental to the practice of urban forestry overall. Please allow me to explain

It is my view that urban forestry is primarily about the health, sustainability and extent of the resource and the benefits can that then be derived from this resource. In other words, it is about urban trees and how well they are doing, along with these trees contribute to society and how well we are using these trees to reach the goals available to us.

Urban trees are beset with an array of challenges and concerns. In addition to public policies related to transportation and electrical infrastructure that encourage the removal of these trees, urban trees must also deal with invasions of newly arriving insects and diseases, the effects of climate change, fluctuating public and private attitudes towards trees, and so on. These are complex problems that are often subtle in their details. Dealing with them requires a deep knowledge of urban trees and their environment. There is so much that we do not know.

One problem in the current approach to social equity and urban forestry is the tendency to reduce urban trees to a single factor – that of percent canopy cover. If the percent of canopy cover is low in a neighborhood that is also considered to be disadvantaged, that is seen as bad and something that should be corrected. If the percent canopy cover in a neighborhood that is not considered to be disadvantaged is high, then it is often assumed that that is what is expected. The tendency is also to consider that second neighborhood as having received its fair share of the benefits of trees and so need not be a priority to receive extensive additional investment.

The problem with this approach is that it ignores the complexity of canopy cover condition, as it tends to overlook several of the concerns basic to urban forestry. Many of these conditions and concerns are independent of the social or economic conditions of individual neighborhoods. In particular, if we are going to keep our management of the urban forest on a solid footing for the next several decades, it is critical that we monitor the health of trees in all neighborhoods and that we be on the lookout for health trends.

Trees in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods are a big piece of the puzzle and have an added importance both because of the environmental challenges and the human need in these neighborhoods. However, they are not the only piece. Failing to keep all urban trees in our sights could lead to missing important clues as to what is happening more broadly, which in turn could lead to the undoing of all of the good work that we have been striving to achieve. For instance, the next invasive species that targets our urban forest might very get established first in a wealthy residential neighborhood, a commercial district or an industrial zone. We would not want to miss out on an early warning because we are not paying attention.

Alongside this comment it should be noted that, speaking generally, some 80% of the urban forest is on private property. This means that the actions of those who own and are responsible for this vast majority of the urban forest are critical to this forest's future. Among those responsible for these trees are new homeowners who are buying property for the first time and so have a role to

play in maintaining the legacy of the urban trees they have purchased along with their home. Also included are the institutional property owners who, through something as routine as a board vote, may be making decisions to maintain or remove large number of trees under their stewardship. One must assume that, in both of these cases, the decision-makers are acting rationally and in good faith. The important thing is to meet them on their own terms. Maintaining an understanding of what that might mean in these many situations is also a part of urban forestry.

Percent canopy cover is important as a marker, but it is way too narrow to be the sole determinant of urban forest policy. We have to be careful that we do not allow our approach to urban forestry to be captured by one lone metric. There is much more to the picture.

### **The Importance of Considering Historical Factors**

The second point I wish to make has to do with the importance of taking a historical perspective. History often explains a lot and can be a route to determining what goals and efforts might lead to the best outcome. Taking historical factors into account will often be needed if we are to make decisions that are well-founded and that will lead to long-term success.

Let me walk through 3 situations in which historical considerations are of some significant relevance to the present day.

**Redlining.** Redlining is a reference to the process used during the New Deal by the Homeowners' Loan Corporation to determine which neighborhoods were good bets for a federal mortgage relief program. Specifically, it refers to the use of red on a map to flag those neighborhoods that were considered to be poor bets. It is widely accepted that the decisions made by the HOLC have had an influence on those neighborhoods that continues up until the present day. Reports indicate that some 75% of those neighborhoods that were redlined – that received HOLC's lowest rating – continue to be low to moderate income neighborhoods today.

It is also gaining wide acceptance that, among the continuing disadvantages in redlined neighborhoods is reduced tree canopy. And, because urban trees provide so many well-documented benefits, including improved human health and quality of life benefits, this diminished tree canopy is a source of real harm to these neighborhoods.

I do not disagree with any of that. The observation I offer is that there are also neighborhoods that do not fit this pattern. Lessons to be learned from these neighborhoods as well. This includes from those 25% of the neighborhoods that are not now considered to be low to moderate income neighborhoods despite having been redlined in the past.

One strong example of a departure from the expected is the Wooster Square neighborhood in New Haven. Using the faulty approach taken in the 1930's, many of the factors upon which redlining was based could be found in the Wooster Square neighborhood back then – a high concentration of recently arrived Italian immigrants, an aging housing stock in deteriorating condition and the lack of a clear separation of this residential neighborhood from the adjacent industrial neighborhoods, along with the dependence of the economic life of Wooster Square on these industrial jobs.

Yet, when one visits the neighborhood today and looks at its urban forest, one can only marvel at its quality and condition. So, what happened? From the historical perspective, we can look at the community action in the 1950's and 60's that coalesced in an effort to fight the building of I-91 through the center of Wooster Square, including its beloved park. This community action led to the subsequent relocation of this highway which, in turn, not only spared Wooster Square Park and the surrounding neighborhood but also allowed the highway to serve as a dividing line separating this residential area from those more industrialized areas nearby.

In turn, this same commitment to community action led to subsequent re-investment of the community into the neighborhood, including investments into the trees in Wooster Square Park. Alongside of this re-investment came the discovery of this neighborhood as desirable place to visit



and in which to live. Eventually, this led to Wooster Square becoming one of the more iconic neighborhoods within the City of New Haven.

There is cautionary aspect to that last observation, however. Often, when a deteriorating neighborhood undergoes some sort of positive transformation, the previous residents find themselves priced out of the neighborhood or no longer welcome. I am not saying that this is the case in Wooster Square, but it has happened in other neighborhoods, elsewhere in New Haven and in other cities throughout the state.

I mention all of this because there is much to be learned from what has worked. Keeping an eye on what has worked can often be a useful counterbalance to solutions that come largely from theories – a historical perspective on the Model Cities program might tell us that. We should keep this historical perspective in mind in all types of neighborhoods.

**The Statutory Basis of Utility Vegetation Management.** A second example of where historical perspective can come into play has to do with the utility management of trees along public roadsides. When the State Vegetation Management Task Force first met in early 2012, one of the major topics of discussion had to do with whom the utilities needed to gain permission from in order to work on roadside trees. Utility representatives largely cited the abutting proper owners as the primary entity they needed to contact, while others on the panel insisted that it was the tree warden who had the major say. To further cloud things, even though State Statutes did require that the utilities receive a permit from the local tree warden before proceeding with their work, many tree wardens seemed unaware that they had this authority or had never made use of it.

The reason for this disconnect appears to be as a result of differing traditions within statutory history. On the one hand, the legal requirement that utilities must gain the permission of adjacent property owners before removing trees goes back until the latter part of the 1800's, when electrical wires were first being strung along public roads. Under a prior program, the state had been subsidizing property owners to plant roadside trees. When the state subsequently gave the utilities the ability to remove roadside trees, it only made sense that this authority be contingent upon the approval of the same property owners that had been encouraged to plant and care for these trees. This requirement regarding the need for the adjacent property owners' permission was codified into law somewhere around 1870 and had remained there, in much the same form, for all of the intervening years.

The Tree Warden Law go back to the earliest years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It appears to have arisen initially, at least in part, from more urban concerns. In the city environs, adjacent property owners, including business proprietors, could not always be relied upon to care for streetside trees, which were increasingly under stress in the crowded cities. This led to the recognition that there needed to be someone at the municipal level to take on this responsibility. Similar needs were recognized in rural areas, especially as applies to public safety and travel on public roads. Soon, the law was made to apply to all municipalities throughout the state.

And so, while the utilities' authority to conduct roadside tree work and the tree wardens' authority over roadside trees appear to have been running along parallel tracks, over the years there does not appear to have been a lot of cross-over. While a separate statute (CGS 22-65) had established the need for the utilities to gain the permission of the tree warden before doing work on town roadside trees, this provision was not placed in either the statute that the utilities tended to rely on (CGS 16-234) or those that the tree wardens treated as most effecting them (especially CGS 23-59). As a result, this requirement appears to have been largely overlooked by both groups.

As a result, one the most significant outcomes of the State Vegetation Management Task Force, completed by a spin-off group following the issuing of the Task Force's report, was a major revision of the statute governing the procedures to be followed by the utilities during their management of roadside trees. CGS 16-234 was re-written to better define what sort of vegetation management the utilities are allowed to perform and also to make clear the intended role of the tree warden in

this process. This bridging of the two traditions has proved highly useful as considerations regarding roadside tree management continue to move forward.

**Transportation and public policies.** Transportation issues and policies such as those of the Federal Highway Administration, which call for the clearing of highway trees several feet distant from the roadway, might make planners and urban planning a field at variance with those who appreciate trees and urban forestry. However, a look back through history shows a different perspective. Public health might also seem to be a field somewhat distant from urban forestry. Let me start by talking first about public health professionals and then urban planners.

When public health professionals describe the modern origin of their profession, they tell the story of Dr. John Snow and his role in staunching a cholera outbreak in London in the 1850's. The story has to do with how Dr. Snow figured out that a source of public drinking water was the proximate cause for a cholera outbreak – this was prior to germs being understood as a cause of diseases. By standing by his unpopular conclusion that a particular water pump was spreading the disease and needed to be shut down, Dr. Snow showed his understanding of the central role environmental conditions can play in public health and the spread of disease.

When urban planners tell the history of their profession, they are likely to cite the same story, but with reference to what has been called the Sanitary Movement in urban planning. This approach espoused, among other things, that the “physical causes of fever in the Metropolis which might be prevented by proper sanitary measures.”<sup>11</sup> The theories of this Movement were prevalent in London during the period when Dr. Snow was reaching his decision regarding the closing of the water pump and so shows the connection between public health considerations and urban planning decisions in those early years. In both versions of the story, these professions are recognizing that environmental quality lies at the root of their respective professions.

However, over the intervening years, both of these professions have tended to move away from this recognition. Public health professionals became more focused on the microbiological aspects of epidemiology. Urban planners, meanwhile, turned their attention more towards transportation issues – how to move large numbers of people and their vehicles rapidly and efficiently – and to the placement of what is now called ‘gray infrastructure’. This includes the roads, pipes, wires and buildings that have become the essential features of our lives today.

Both professions, but urban planners in particular, have been criticized for the outcomes of their past policies. However, as times change, understanding, knowledge and imperatives also tend to change. Perhaps the fiercest critics of past policies are those who are practitioners in the field today. It is they who know best the problems that their predecessors had to deal with and what is implicit in the decisions that they had to make.

As public health professionals and urban planners rediscover aspects of their roots, this provides an opportunity for urban forestry to be of service. The roots of urban forestry, as well, are in a pursuit of environmental quality and in the provision of benefits to people. In this fundamental way, the gap among urban foresters, urban planners and public health officials is really not that large, with urban foresters having much to offer these other professionals as those professionals pursue their goals.

Of course, there is no reason to stop there. The health benefits of trees extend to the mental health benefits as well, with researchers having demonstrated the role well-planned tree plantings can have on even such seemingly unrelated issues as crime or the reduction of mortality associated with stress and an unhealthy lifestyle. This list could easily be continued.

Urban forestry is not, and should never allow itself to be, too narrow field. More than many other fields, the engagement of planners, public health officials, environmental psychologists and public safety professionals, and others, should be and is welcome, as part of a two-way street in which

urban forestry is influenced by these fields and in which urban forestry offers ways to assist back to these other groups.

### **Concerns About Too Much Money Too Quickly**

The third point I would like to bring up relates to concerns I have regarding the vast amounts of money that are expected to be flowing into urban forestry over the next decade. Normally, one's first reaction to such news is "great!" In response to that, let me offer a brief anecdote from early in tenure with DEEP.

In 1998 there was a severe ice storm that heavily impacted northern New England, upstate New York and parts of Quebec. The damage to trees and forests as well as to infrastructure in general was immense. In an effort to mitigate the damage to forests and to help forest landowners and others economically dependent on the forest to recover, the US Forest Service invested large sums of money. This included funding studies as to how to help the forest recover. The Forest Service disbursed much of this funding to state agencies and worked closely with the state on these projects.

Sometime around the time this project was wrapping up, I heard a talk from a forester employed by the State of Maine who had been given the responsibility for handling Maine's portion of this federal funding – I recall it being about ten million dollars. After she gave her overview, she was asked what she had learned during her 3 years of working on this project. She simply said – if you see someone coming towards you with a large basket of money to give you, run!

Besides being startling, I think her point was that so much money suddenly flowing into a system that is not adequately prepared for it can be highly disruptive. The end results may not be what were intended, might be wasteful and might even be harmful. This gave me a lot to ponder at the time.

Economic history is replete with examples in which entities and enterprises have sought to grow quickly and, in the process, either exceeded their resources or moved away from their core mission, with disastrous results to follow. To explain that another way, while many people might suggest that a rising tide floats all boats, it must also be kept in mind that flood waters often cannot be controlled and that, when poorly channelized, they can cause immense damage. We need to guard against that.

In making this observation, I hearken back to what I initially mentioned as the core function of urban forestry. My own opinion is that we need to put the health of the resource in forefront, as we seek to build capacity on a number of fronts simultaneously. If one were to set social equity aside for a moment and ask what the major priorities facing our urban forests today are, particularly as faced by public tree managers, the number of dead and unsafe trees lining our roads and other public spaces is apt to be near the top of the list. This is particularly true along roads and highways in smaller towns and is often the result of insect outbreaks, such as from the spongy moth and the emerald ash borer.

One obvious explanation why we have so many dead trees still standing in the urban forest is the lack of capacity for maintenance of this forest. Beyond that, however, these dead trees need to be considered as an indicator of changing conditions. One main factor in the loss of so many trees is age – the longer a tree lives, the more likely it is to succumb to, something. In addition to the exotic insects already mentioned, other factors causing these trees to die could be environmentally related, including the effects of climate change, changing drainage conditions as we pave and construct our way into the future, loss of growing space around the trees – the list could go on. Many of these impacts have not been studied in detail, with the need for baseline data as important now as ever. Efforts such as the Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (UFIA) program being implemented presently by the US Forest Service in Connecticut remain very important.

Public support for trees is also important, as it is easy to lose something if you do not know you have it or if you don't particularly care whether you have it or not. This extends not just to the presence of trees in general, but also to the recognition of the rich variety of trees we have and how these various trees perform different functions in different ways. At the same time, these different kinds of tree might easily be affected differently by changing circumstances.

The importance of trees on private property deserves to be re-iterated, alongside the equally important need for improved public tree management. This includes the need for greater investments in tree maintenance, updated equipment and overall education and support for those involved with public trees.

Trees and the importance of urban forests in disadvantaged neighborhoods should be prioritized because of the clear need for trees and for the benefits trees provide in those neighborhoods. In fact, all neighborhoods should be looked at carefully and with an eye towards assessing the baseline condition of the urban forest in those neighborhoods, because all neighborhoods contribute to the overall condition of the urban forest. This includes neighborhoods that might be primarily industrial or commercial in nature. This view should also include the understanding that one cannot presume to know what the future holds for any one neighborhood, as an area advantaged today may become disadvantaged in the future, and vice versa. Trees have the potential to live a long time, longer, often, than the economic cycles and shifts in populations that tend to characterize our cities and towns.

It could be said that a tree planted anywhere in the urban forest benefits everyone in the urban forest and so all urban forestry efforts are good. At the same time, once one sets the purpose for a tree to be planted, one almost finds that there are going to be better places than others to plant that tree. As a result, there often exists a balance between getting things done and getting things done for a purpose. For that reason, the exercise of determining what we need to focus our efforts on and explicitly state what it is that we are trying to achieve, is also of great value.

On Page 150 of Connecticut's 2020 Forest Action Plan are eight urban forestry goals, termed as strategies, that I believe are worthy of detailed consideration. These strategies are discussed further on the subsequent pages. The only comment I might make with regards to these strategies is that they should include a more explicit commitment to the role urban forestry can play with respect to social equity. With reference to underserved communities and under-engaged communities, the description could have extended beyond a call for inclusion to a more precise description of the types of service urban forestry can provide to those communities most in need.

With that, I will close my comments. There is a great opportunity in front of the leadership within the State of Connecticut. There is also a great challenge. This leadership effort is needed in order to lay a foundation for the future of the state's urban environment and in order to allow trees and forests to more fully contribute in the way that only these large organisms can. This opportunity is exciting. I wish all good luck and foresight in dealing with the challenges that will be brought about by this opportunity.

Respectfully,

Chris Donnelly  
Durham, CT  
November 2, 2022

[🔗](#) This citation is from the Wikipedia article on "The Sanitary Movement".

### **Chat Record:**

00:23:22 Amanda Fargo-Johnson: Hi Everyone, Amanda Fargo-Johnson here from CT RC&D - CT Farm Energy Program

00:23:24 Eric Hammerling: Hi Everyone, Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association here.

00:23:28 Hannah Reichle: Happy Friday! Hannah Reichle- MetroCOG Regional Planner

00:23:30 Joan Nichols CT Bureau: Joan Nichols Executive Director, CT Farm Bureau  
joann@cfba.org 860-951-2791

00:23:58 Juliet Cain: Hello! Juliet Cain, Pollinator Pathway

00:24:01 Andrea Urbano, CT DEEP Forestry: Good morning all, and thanks for joining.  
Andrea Urbano, CT DEEP Forestry - Private & Municipal Lands Program

00:24:12 Chris Donnelly: Chris Donnelly  
CT Urban Forest Council  
retired DEEP

00:24:16 Rebecca French: Agenda for today: [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-2022-agendas-and-minutes/GC3\\_Climate-Smart-Agriculture-and-Forestry-Agenda-102822.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-2022-agendas-and-minutes/GC3_Climate-Smart-Agriculture-and-Forestry-Agenda-102822.pdf)

00:24:27 Robert Fahey: Bob Fahey - UConn

00:24:47 Lisa Hayden: Hello everyone - Lisa Hayden, New England Forestry Foundation

00:25:52 Leigh Whittinghill (CAES): Good Morning! Leigh Whittinghill- the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

00:26:08 David Irvin: Morning folks, David Irvin here from the Forestry Division, State Lands Management Program.

00:26:47 Lilian Ruiz: Good morning! Lilian Ruiz with the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation.

00:26:58 Susanna Keriö (CAES, CT): Susanna Keriö - Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, focus on urban tree research

00:27:09 Rebecca French: a more detailed agenda is below: Welcome, Introductions  
Chairs (Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt, Dept. of Agriculture and Chris Martin, DEEP designee for Deputy Commissioner Mason Trumble)

5 mins  
Presentation: Climate Smart Agriculture Grant Program Review  
(Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt)  
15 mins  
Presentation: Forestry-Related Inflation Reduction Act opportunities  
(Chris Martin, DEEP designee for Deputy Commissioner Mason Trumble)  
7 mins  
Equity and Environmental Justice Discussion with Working Group Members  
(Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt and Chris Martin)  
20 mins  
Public Comment  
13 mins  
Adjourn and Next Steps

00:30:04 Kayleigh Royston: <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/Farmland-Preservation/Programs/Farmland-Restoration-Grant>

00:32:38 Amanda Fargo-Johnson: CT Farmer Veteran Coalition is also hosting a Farm Transition & Farmland Restoration Grants Workshop with CT DOAG on November 10th at 7pm. More info available here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/farm-transition-farmland-restoration-grants-workshop-tickets-450543938047>

00:37:21 David Irvin: I thought at the very first meeting, this was only available for private landowners, not public. Has this information changed or was that just a suggestion that is not acted upon?

00:37:40 Christopher Martin: Public being municipal

00:37:48 Juliet Cain: Do these comments include those of this working group?

00:37:50 David Irvin: Thanks.

00:43:34 Jim Hyde: What kind of timeline might this look like for farmers applying to programs for specific projects/funds?

00:51:34 Chris Donnelly: I am assuming that these are 10 year totals. Should we expect the funding to be available at an equal level over each of the 10 years?

00:52:13 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: @chris D. I think it depends on the program, but I will let Chris speak to whether he knows the language in the bill.

00:58:30 Chris Donnelly: Well said, Juliet. Thanks.

01:13:56 Latha Swamy: Hi there! Sorry my audio is having issues right now, but happy to offer some reflections on this.

01:15:44 Robert Fahey: Getting back to energy - I think energy resilience is often an issue in rural areas and often related to vegetation-infrastructure conflicts. Also, the transition to solar and other green energy (including new transmission) may be more likely to affect rural areas

01:19:46 Andrea Urbano, CT DEEP Forestry: Good points, Bob. Agreed and thank you. It may also be worth considering the State's promotion of multifamily and affordable housing, and how these development pressures impact woodland owners throughout the state. My hope is we can find a balance in our approach to meeting these State's needs, and perhaps even inform the green infrastructure integration into these developments

01:23:05 Lisa Hayden: Just had a question about the new climate-smart program. In earlier discussions it seemed that there would be a separate Ag & Forestry program, each for \$7 million with different practices a sub-programs - but is it correct that the 2 will be merged at \$14 million in the program for which the application period is approaching?

01:23:11 David Irvin: Use of these funds to help ensure that private landowners do not have to sell their land for development, because that typically pays more than for conservation, would be beneficial to consider, if any of the grants can be used for that. We need to continue to push to keep our forests IN forest, and I think that is the very first priority. This is something that impacts our forests in both the rural and more suburban/urban settings across our state.

01:25:18 Lisa Hayden: Thank you for clarifying!

01:27:14 Amy Blaymore Paterson: Also CT DEEP Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust program for landowners interested in selling land to CT DEEP directly.

01:27:30 JoAnn Messina: Commissioner Dykes at the end of her address Wednesday told me that we should all be going on the recently opened docket at PURA for rate review of Eversource and UI. If the don't have the funds they will have to reduce their ETT budgets.

01:28:12 Amy Blaymore Paterson: Tuesday, November 1 for land trusts  
[www.ctconservation.org](http://www.ctconservation.org)

01:29:47 Amy Blaymore Paterson: Thank you all!