
**Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)
Working and Natural Lands Working Group
Rivers Sub-Working Group Breakout Session
Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: September 29, 2020

Meeting Time: 5:30 pm – 6:40 pm

Meeting Location: Zoom

ATTENDANCE

Working Group Member	Title	Organization	Present
Alicea Charamut	Executive Director	Rivers Alliance of Connecticut	X
Eileen Fielding	Director	Sharon Audubon (National Audubon Society)	X
Shelley Green	Director of Conservation	The Nature Conservancy	X

Associated Staff	Title	Organization	Present
Peter Arrestad	Director	CT DEEP, Bureau of Natural Resources - Fisheries Division	X
Susan Peterson	Environmental Analyst 3	CT DEEP, Bureau of Water Planning and Land Reuse - Water Planning & Management Division, Watersheds	X

Members of Public	Affiliation/Organization	
Rob Bell	CT DOT, Bureau of Policy and Planning; GC3 Infrastructure and Land Use Adaptation Working Group	
David Blatt	CT DEEP Bureau of Water Planning and Land Reuse, Land and Water Resource Division, Land and Water Planning	
Lynne Bonnett	New Haven Bioregional Committee; New Haven Green Fund	
Bill Cavers		
Patrick Comins	Connecticut Audubon Society (Note - Only present briefly because was put in wrong break-out session)	
Carlos Esguerra	CT DEEP Bureau of Water Planning and Land Reuse, Water Planning & Management Division, Municipal Wastewater	
Kathy Fay	Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven	
Bill Hyatt	(retired) CT DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources	
Mike Jastremski	Housatonic Valley Association	

Lindsay Larson	Housatonic Valley Association	
Diane Lauricella		
Mary Rickel Pelletier	Park Watershed	
Kelsey Sudol	Lake Waramaug Task Force; Northwest Conservation District	
Steven Walleth	CT DPH	
Allison Baranovic	UConn (student)	

Breakout Session NOTES

Facilitated by Alicea Charamut, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

Charamut (Chair, Rivers SWG and Session Moderator) welcomed everyone. She invited attendees to introduce themselves.

Charamut then opened the floor for questions and comments on the Rivers SWG presentation and draft recommendations. Attendees provided the following feedback:

- (Hyatt) The 2011 report identifies cold-water streams and tidal wetlands (and related ecosystem functions) as most vulnerable, and critical to connectivity, habitat and corridors for aquatic and terrestrial organisms. Under the ecosystem services approach, does the protection of riparian of areas have same emphasis as in previous plans? Feels they should still remain a high priority.

Response (Charamut) – Some things have been grouped together. Probably can do better job calling out cold-water organisms. However, may mean degradation of other streams. Can discuss more going forward.

- (Hyatt) Do not mean to detract from other waters. Need a watershed approach.
- (Rickel Pelletier) It is important that work be done within urban communities. Is there some way to point out that (upstream) suburban communities have been allowed to have permitted discharges that affect downstream (communities)? Should these (upstream) entities be required to help pay to correct issues? By the time these waters reach downstream urban communities, the water quality is already impaired. Also, concerned about land development issues in urban areas. Many towns are more concerned about developing their tax base.

Response (Charamut) - Some of these concerns are addressed in the stormwater section and with regard to update of manuals. However, it would be helpful if could provide more specific examples of these concerns.

- (Lauricella) With regard to green infrastructure (GI) and zoning applications, would like to see GI required and become an “opt out” rather than “opt in” only option. Would like all Planning & Zoning commissions to have something in their applications that asks applicants what GI measures did they use or try to use to address non-point source run-off and stormwater concerns. Also, while updating the Stormwater Manual is a good idea, we need to train our Public Works departments so that they feel comfortable using GI. Need to consider things within watershed context and address impervious surfaces.

Response (Charamut) – The biggest barrier in CT is 169 towns, each making their own decisions. Many towns do not fall under the MS4 general permit. Each town also has its own Inland Wetland commission.

- (Cavers) Does any of the work done touch on septic systems and related laws? Has heard NY State has much better laws and funding.

Response (Charamut) – Funding deficiency on wastewater are mentioned in the draft recommendations. The work NY is doing is a good tip. Yes, there is inconsistency, depending on how robust local oversight is through health depts., etc. Improving residential septic can be

- (Fay) It is frustrating when cities are trying to do something and are told they need enabling legislation ... and, then, when it's a statewide (requirement), it's "everyone for themselves". Good points about focusing on watershed or regional approach (such as through COGs) to help coordinate.
- (Rickel Pelletier) CRCOG have not been a friend to water quality or GI or urban communities. Having come from an area with county government, it seemed as though they were more interested in transportation planning and money.

Response (Charamut) – Believes previous speaker was suggesting that things should be managed on a watershed level. Big discussion about this in the State Water Plan.

- (Rickel Pelletier) Is GC3 going to recommend watershed pilot projects, so that can see the benefits of advancing recommendations instead of just using a scattershot approach? Implementation projects really move things forward.

Response (Charamut) – CT DEEP's Integrated Water Resource Management approach is looking at things on a watershed basis.

- (Esguerra) With regard to the question about funding deficiencies for wastewater infrastructure ... Through the Clean Water Fund, CT DEEP is already working with municipalities to make wastewater systems more resilient. This includes pump stations. It is important to also look at collection systems. However, they don't always get priority funding. Aren't able to fund every project, so CT DEEP doesn't have oversight on every project.
- (Bonnett) West River Watershed Coalition got permission to do the first watershed plan on wastewater collection. There is an issue with drinking water ... The Southwest Regional Water Authority has pursued water conservation but to the point that it is selling less water. Basing water use on volume and payment is erroneous. Need to address registered diversions. Need better watershed planning and communication. Education is key to promoting better management. New Haven looked at stormwater authority as just another tax. Need to work on this.

Response (Charamut) – The work that the Thames Basin Partnership is doing on stormwater utilities is a good model. What New London is doing also seems to be working. In every legislative session, there are always bills trying to undermine (MS4) stormwater permit. That is the only consistent statewide permit that is trying to improve water quality. So, are pushing for stormwater utilities because some are calling the stormwater permit an unfunded mandate.

- (Fay) It would be good if not seen as an "either/or" situation. If got enabling legislation, it would take the burden off of those who are trying to promote things and remove the politics. Worries if would stretch funding too thin ...
- (Rickel Pelletier) Maybe should be putting a price tag on how hard it is to restore, provide education about and revitalize damaged waters - and present a menu of options of how to pay for things - rather than suggest just one way to pay for things? Sometimes money doesn't seem to be used in a way that makes it go the farthest. Put a price tag on how much it costs ... and how are upstream users going to chip in?

- (Sudol) Good point made about rehabilitation ... and appreciates lake recommendations. However, there are no specific recommendations on how to pay for in-lake improvements. Need money to do this because many people use lakes, and in-lake management is expensive. Once waterbodies go bad, it takes a lot more money to rehabilitate them.
- (Rickel Pelletier) Planning & Zoning commissions think they are doing the right thing by approving housing developments, etc. However, need to put price tag on what losing in terms of natural resources.
- (Fay) This is not inconsistent with what others GC3 Working Groups are doing - for example, identifying the public health impacts of not doing something ...
- (Bonnett) Combined sewer overflows issue has been a big “driver” in New Haven.
- (Fay and Charamut) Asked Bell about the work that CT DOT is doing on road crossings, culvert replacements, right-sizing, etc. It seems to be difficult to break into the transportation piece. Wondered about decision-making process and if thinking about climate change with regard to some of these things?
- (Bell) Sees CT DOT’s work in three different ways ... There is the old infrastructure that was built 30 to 50, or even a 100 years ago. We would not do things the same way today. Having worked previously at MA DEP and CT DEEP, and having just joined CT DOT recently, was surprised at how early environmental protection gets looked at in the process with new projects. CT DOT works with CT DEEP and ACOE, etc. So, designs now actually enhance the environment, compared to what was built previously. Future challenges are big and complex. For example, how to incorporate future climate protections into the work we do now? Work on these things is being done across country but it is a significant challenge.

Response (Charamut) – Apologies ... The real challenge is with town roads.

- (Jastremski) Has personal experience looking at road crossing for about a decade. A large subset of these are problematic. The Housatonic Valley Association is working with UConn. A lot more is being done now but up against a ubiquitous problem, including rural municipalities that do not have money to replace infrastructure. There is a lot of work to do there.
- (Fay) West River Watershed Association is keeping an eye on Route 15 tunnel plans and potential effects on the West River and its tributaries.
- (Bell) Recommends going to subcommittee for review and to extent possible, develop categories for priorities. Might help committees to think about priority categories, especially as relate to Climate Change issues.

Response (Charamut) – Working within template provided by CT DEEP. However, if there is different way to provide information that is better, then willing to do it.

- (Rickel Pelletier) Thinks have done a great job in the format. However, the format is fundamentally a series of “silos”, including within WNLWG. Would it be worthwhile to say that will get comprehensive benefits if look at things in an interdisciplinary way? Getting co-benefits is what we need and we work better in a team. Ask the Governor to look beyond the typical “silos”.

Response (Charamut) - Agrees with (earlier comments on) rivers crossings infrastructure. Does

hope there will be resolution, cross pollination and conflict resolution.

- (Jastremski) Any discussion about synthesis or staying in silos?

Response (Charamut) – Has not heard how this is going to be handled.

- (Fay) A GC3 Mitigation and Cross Sector Working Group was created.
- (Jastremski) With road crossing issues, there are opportunities to “feed many birds w/ one scone”.
- (Rickel Pelletier) – Is there anything you would like to ask us to do?

Response (Charamut) – Please submit comments in writing. This is still a draft. Need additional input and want to get different perspectives. We need plenty of voices to make sure our rivers do remain resilient. It seems that the “almighty dollar” and monied interests often wins out. We need to ensure that we are able to manage our natural resources in way that they are resilient, can adapt and be available in future.

- (Jastremski) Getting to “action” makes sense.
- (Fay) If wait until everything is done, then we won’t make progress.

NOTE: All Agendas and minutes and working group reports can be found [here](#)

Chat Record

17:34:10 From Patrick Comins : I am in the wrong room

17:34:14 From Patrick Comins : I was supposed to be in forests

17:40:45 From pete Aarrestad : and you can use this chat.

17:49:26 From pete Aarrestad to Carlos Esguerra(Privately) : do you have any insights to Mary's questions/concerns?

17:50:16 From Carlos Esguerra : i do not.

17:50:37 From pete Aarrestad to Susan Peterson(Privately) : do you have any insights to Mary's questions/concerns?

I sent to Carlos also.

17:51:24 From Patricia Taylor : <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Permits-and-Licenses/Water-Discharge-Permits-and-General-Permits>

17:51:24 From lynne bonnett : Mary brings up an important point; we need watershed based planning to promote Low impact development, and protect downstream sources. I'm not sure that a state level storm water authority can accomplish this because of home rule. Watershed based planning could require all municipalities that share the watershed to regulate diversions and storm water source controls. We don't currently have the structure to do watershed planning vs GOG, municipal or state regulatory entities. Rather than push for storm water authority lets support education for city planners, zoning boards given by UCONN Clear, for example.

17:51:57 From Susan Peterson to pete Aarrestad(Privately) : Not something can answer quickly ...

17:54:55 From Patricia Taylor : Here is a list of permits that have been issued in Connecticut - <https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/connecticut-final-individual-npdes-permits>

17:57:08 From Mary Pelletier : Diane brings up an important point. There is also a need to educate members of the Planning & Zoning /Inland Wetlands Commissions.

17:58:03 From Kelsey Sudol : I believe Lake George has done some interesting research and work with septic systems

17:59:29 From Shelley Green : Suffolk County, NY has made extraordinary gains in wastewater/septic regulation and funding and participatory governance.

18:00:06 From Kathy Fay : Good to know, Mary

18:01:36 From Shelley Green : I need to sign off. Good to talk with fellow river conservationists across CT!

18:01:56 From Steven Wallett : Hi Bill, The Public Health and Safety working group has proposed several recommendations on subsurface sewage disposal. Also, DPH has a subsurface sewage group that oversee the local health activities.

18:02:23 From Steven Wallett : PH&S forum is October 7 4-6pm

18:03:10 From lynne bonnett : I presented it to Brian Thompson in writing as part of the EJ feedback to have watershed based management of water quality to manage upstream development, diversions and maintenance of the health of the watershed.

18:05:40 From Kathy Fay : A few years back Dave Dickson Mike Dietz and company from UConn's NEMO/Clear did a study of the MR4 regs adopted by the various West River Watershed Municipalities

18:07:03 From William Cavers : Thanks Re PH&S, Steve.

18:07:36 From Diane Lauricella : Sorry have to go to another Zoom meeting. Thanks, good discussion and a great group of stewards!

18:09:11 From Bill Hyatt : Regarding the suggestion of an example watershed for a comprehensive pilot: Suggest taking a look at the case study in the 2011 Climate Preparedness plan (Tankerhoosen/Hockanum watershed) as something that could be built out into a larger more comprehensive example.

18:09:32 From Eileen Fielding : Thanks Bill!

18:09:33 From Patricia Taylor : An Excel spreadsheet of Permitted Industrial Users that Discharge to POTWs in Connecticut may be found at <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Water-Regulating-and-Discharges/Industrial-Wastewater/Industrial-Wastewater#Related%20Information>

18:12:15 From Kathy Fay : Just want to point out that a great deal of New Haven's successes re stormwater go back to Lynne Bonnett's efforts at organizing all parties to work together toward a common goal.

18:12:19 From Mary Pelletier : Park Watershed agrees with Lynn's points, education is key. However there is no \$\$ for education.

18:14:24 From David Blatt : The MS4 example shows that education is not sufficient, binding legal requirements and financial incentives are necessary. No reason there couldn't be a watershed-wide stormwater utilities. Yes, it's more taxes!

18:15:32 From Eileen Fielding : Sorry, need to jump off-- thanks everyone for all your info and ideas! Huge thanks Alicea for moderating!

18:18:46 From Steven Wallett : The 2020 R3 recommendation titled "Fund and enhance stormwater management programs" discusses drinking water and control of application of road salt. Please consider adding CT DPH and CT DOT to the list of implementation entities. Thank you.

18:18:50 From William Cavers : Need to leave. Thanks Alicea and everybody.

18:29:34 From Steven Wallett : thank you very much. great job! need to leave.

18:30:06 From Mary Pelletier : thanks for your good work!

18:32:32 From Steven Wallett : DARK WATERS - VIRTUAL TOWN HALL DISCUSSION

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Tuesday, September 29

Dark Waters — Inspired by the true story of Attorney Rob Bilott (played by Mark Ruffalo) who takes a stand against Dupont to protect public health against Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).

Dr. Vasiliou and the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the Yale School of Public Health present a Virtual Town Hall on PFAS in our communities.

18:32:56 From Kathy Fay : It looks consistent with other groups' formats to me.

18:33:01 From Steven Wallett : late notice but I think this is open to the public

18:34:25 From Patricia Taylor : I strongly agree with what Mary Pelletier is saying.

18:36:07 From Mary Pelletier : We need to do more than hope. We need to ask, recommend, and insist on comprehensive planning.

18:36:08 From Kathy Fay : In Mitigation a Cross Sector group was created to deal with breaking out of silos

18:36:44 From Kelsey Sudol : I agree - the timescales and formats are consistent. And there is a lot of overlap but hopefully that will mean emphasis on the overlap.

18:37:00 From Kathy Fay : Mary P is right on!

18:37:37 From Patricia Taylor : A graphic showing overlaps and co-benefits of the various topic areas may be helpful in the final report.

18:37:46 From Patricia Taylor : *overlaps

18:38:36 From David Blatt : Must log off, thanks all!

18:39:50 From lynne bonnett : Cross sector had a lot of challenges between energy and nonenergy sections. It was so diverse that it was hard to address individual concerns around waste management, for example.

18:41:27 From Mary Pelletier : awesome, + thanks for your leadership in this process!

18:41:32 From lynne bonnett : thx for your hard work.

18:41:58 From Kelsey Sudol : Thank you Alicea! well said

18:42:08 From Mary Pelletier : we understand + agree

GC3 WNLWG RIVERS SUB-WORKING GROUP
18:42:30 From Lindsay Larson (HVA) : Thanks Alicea!
18:42:31 From Kathy Fay : Great Job Alicea!

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