
Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)
WORKING AND NATURAL LANDS WORKING GROUP
Notes from Wetlands SWG Breakout Session

Meeting Date: September 29, 2020

Meeting Time: 4:00 pm

Meeting Location:

Teleconference

ATTENDANCE

Working Group Member	Title	Organization	Present
Leslie Kane	Managing Director	Audubon Connecticut	Y
Jamie Vaudrey	Assistant Research Professor	Department of Marine Science, UConn Avery Point	Y
Denise Savageau	Director	Greenwich Conservation Commission, retired	Y

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

AGENDA & NOTES

Welcome and Announcements from WLN Working Group

Agenda Items: WNL Sub-working Group Presentations

See slides and overall program notes for additional details.

Wetlands Sub-Working Group Break-out Session:

Leslie Kane, Chair

Group participants were asked to name their favorite wetland in Connecticut to set the stage for our discussion.

Comments from Break-out Group Participants:

- The recommendations presented are laudable, but there is also a need to change statutes and approach the legislature; where are those recommendations?
The full report does include sections of both statutes and regulations
- Some of the focus should involve providing IWCs training and support; climate change and ecosystem services are not included in why you should protect wetlands at the IWC regulatory level.
- There is a very high threshold for IWCs to determine projects have “significant impact”; it is a huge hurdle at the local level.

It may come back to enhanced education. Soils, flood potential, mitigation and retention of water all are—it is just a different lens that gets to the same goal.

- There is a need to sort out how we support staff, both municipal and state, to do the

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right thing for wetlands and climate change.

Section 3.1 discusses the need to update and develop wetland protection policies—including regulatory programs.

- Concern was expressed about the need to have science to support IWC decisions in court.
- There was a suggestion to increase monitoring of living shorelines to highlight the effectiveness. It may be an area to expand; we can restore them, and we have the space to do so.
- A suggestion was made from sub-working group members to have participants focus any comments they will prepare on the recommendations in the “blue boxes” near the end of the report.
- There was an expressed need to overhaul tidal and inland wetland statutes; one example provided was that all maps need to be adjusted to reflect SLR changes since they were created.
- There is a wide variation in how wetlands and streams are handled in various towns. They are all connected, but are not managed in similar ways. DEEP guidance may be needed to create consistency. FEMA considerations are in P & Z, but not in wetlands—both areas need consideration. FEMA maps need adjustment.
- Were agricultural use/impacts under the “by rights” use language considered? There is a need to clarify what “by rights” uses are in Agriculture and what IWCs can and cannot do/restrict.

This comment will be shared with the Agriculture and Soils Sub-working Group.

- It might be good to consider a cross-over group to cover overlap of all WNL-SWGs.
- Appreciation was expressed for mentioning CIRCA SLR estimates and their importance and for considering places where living shorelines can be considered as enhancing tidal wetland function for resiliency and other ecosystem services.
- Is there a plan to have any sort of specific survey or outreach to invite participation by IWCs? This would increase buy-in and help with education on the importance of considering climate change. The same applies to Planning and Zoning as flood management and zoning issues fall under that level. CACIWC and COGs may be helpful.

We are not quite at the stage for increased review or outreach in terms of review of tidal or inland wetland acts.

- It was noted that an immense amount of information had been presented and inquiries as to when links would be made available.

SWG members directed participants to the GC3 website and provided a quick overview of how to navigate the site to find documents of interest.

Instruction was also provided on how to save the “chat” from the meeting if desired.

- Disappointment was expressed regarding how “ill informed” many IWCs are and how often the decisions they make are directly related to these issues. Emphasis was

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reiterated on the need to better educate municipal staff and volunteer commission members.

- There was a question regarding cost/benefit analyses on how implementing many of the recommendations from GC3 committees would actually save money in the long run.

It was noted that there are working groups looking at some aspects of this, but that it was not a specific part of the Governor's GC3 charge. It will be part of subsequent efforts.

NOTE: Slides/presentation will be made available on GC3 web page: www.ct.gov/deep/gc3