



May 23, 2014

Kathryn Keenan
Hearing Officer, Legal Office
Department of Public Health
410 Capital Avenue, MS#13PHO
P.O. Box 340308
Hartford, CT 06134

Re: Proposed Alteration of Boundaries of the Public Water Supply Management Areas and the Priorities for Initiation of the Water Utility Coordinating Committee Planning Process

Dear Ms. Keenan:

The Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA), a trade association of private, municipal and regional water utilities, appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed alteration of boundaries of the Public Water Supply Management Areas and the priorities for the initiation of the Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) Planning Process.

CWWA fully supports efforts to complete the WUCC planning process which is a critical tool in developing cost-effective solutions to addressing issues relating to water quality and water supply management on a regional basis. In addition, completing the WUCC process to provide for coordinated water supply planning will provide important data and information necessary to the development of a state water plan, which the legislature directed the Water Planning Council to develop by July 1, 2017. It is essential that as any state water plan is developed that we have a clear understanding of the public water supply needs and how those will be met long-term.

We understand the intent is to more closely align the Management Areas with the regional Council of Government (COG) boundaries. Overall, we recognize the benefits of coordinating closely with these regional planning entities who may be in a position to support the development of the plan, assist in addressing considerations related to its implementation and/or the impacts on the region and ensuring consistency with state and local plans.

Size of Proposed Management Areas

Given the limited resources to complete the WUCCs, we believe consolidating the Management Areas can be a useful way to streamline and advance the process. We recognize that in doing so, there can be some challenges due to the size and makeup of the proposed WUCC in some areas. For example, the size of the board overseeing the WUCC could be unwieldy, given the number of participants.

Having good governance procedures and clearly established processes will be essential to ensuring that the WUCCs successfully move forward with coordinated water supply planning. Also, it may be helpful to understand the number of water companies within each proposed WUCC area and determine whether there is any way to structure the board to make the process more manageable.

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Standard Operating Procedures

Ensuring proper governance will benefit from Standard Operating Procedures. It is our understanding that the department has developed such procedures. CWWA believes the procedures should include the following components: 1) Ensure that each WUCC is managed by Co-chairs, balanced between private and municipal/regional members; 2) Provide terms of appointments for officers; and 3) Identify a mechanism for addressing conflicts.

In addition, the WUCC members or the COGs may be in a position to provide administrative support to the WUCCs during the planning process to minimize the burden on the Department or its consultant.

WUCC Boundaries Consistent with the Farmington River Watershed

CWWA supports the position of the Upper CT WUCC regarding the importance of maintaining WUCC boundaries consistent with the Farmington River watershed to keep the Towns of Colebrook, Hartland, Barkhamsted, New Hartford, Harwinton and Burlington in the Upper CT River WUCC. As indicated in its letter to the state Department of Public Health, this revision would 1) maintain alignment with the natural boundary of the Farmington River Watershed; 2) maintain sources of supply for the City of Bristol with the City; and 3) maintain consistency with the Bristol/Burlington Health District. Separating the towns into different management areas will result in difficulties with the long-range planning and management of water supplies in this watershed.

Northeast WUCC

To the extent there are few water providers in the Northeast corner and there are already considerations for long term solutions with partners in the Southeast WUCC, consideration should be given to combining those two areas into a single WUCC in the eastern part of the state. Given that the southeast WUCC already has an approved plan and a well-established group of participants and is actively participating in water supply planning, revising their plan to incorporate the northeast area may be the most expeditious way to have the planning for the northeast completed. This concept should be more fully vetted with the other participants in the Southeast WUCC but warrants consideration.

Separation Between Sources

In some instances, the proposed boundaries cause too many separations between sources (reservoirs, mainly) and service areas, as evidenced by the following examples:

- The Windham Water Works system will be in a different WUCC than its reservoir (Willimantic Reservoir)
- The Aquarion sources in Shelton will be in a different WUCC than the majority of its systems
- The Barkhamsted and Nepaug Reservoirs will be in a different WUCC than the MDC system

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- Some of the Waterbury sources will be in a different WUCC than the Waterbury system

These separations between sources may create tension in addressing water quality and supply issues in the long-term.

Petition Process for Participation in Management Area

To address concerns regarding the proposed boundaries, such as the separation between sources, the state Department of Public Health should create a mechanism authorizing towns/utilities to petition to be placed in another WUCC based on the factors outlined in Section 25-33e(a). A similar process was used in consolidating the regional COGs to provide municipalities with a mechanism to address concerns regarding the COG that the Office of Policy & Management may have designated.

Additional Comment Period

Finally, CWVA requests a thirty-day extension of the comment period to allow some of the communities that are most impacted by the realignment further opportunity to weigh in.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced proposal.

CWVA stands ready to work with the department to successfully complete the WUCC planning process, which is fundamental to assisting water companies in meeting their obligation to provide customers with a safe, ample supply of quality water at a reasonable cost.

Very truly yours,

Elizabeth Gara
Executive Director