

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

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LEAD MULTI-STATE COLLABORATION FOR CARBON PRICING

Scientific consensus and disasters around the world are increasing the evidence every year that climate change is the largest threat to humanity, save nuclear war. Without leadership from the United States, the world will not ward off the climate catastrophes that will unfold along our coastline and across the globe. The likelihood of continuing inaction in Washington render it imperative that states such as Connecticut take the lead in even bolder steps than they have taken to date.

Many economists and policy experts agree: the fastest, least expensive, and most predictable way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a market-oriented approach, imposing a charge for processes which create emissions – putting a “price on carbon” to account for its real societal costs. This concept must be, and will be most effective if, pursued on a regional multi-state basis.

A similar approach has yielded impressive benefits in the nine-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). RGGI, which applies only to large electric power producers, has reduced emissions and had positive economic impacts: \$1.4 billion in net economic benefits for member states between 2015 and 2017; an estimated \$220 million in consumer energy bill savings through energy efficiency reinvestment.

Diverse backing for carbon pricing is evidenced by support from 39 Fortune 500 companies and endorsement by national conservative business groups like the Partnership for Responsible Growth and the Niskanen Center. Over 1,300 companies currently impose an internal carbon price on operations. Some forty countries and more than twenty cities, states and provinces already use carbon pricing mechanisms, with more seeking to implement them in the future.

Much of the regional collaborative activities to date regarding carbon pricing have been among state legislators with limited success, though Northeastern Governors have been driving discussions on transportation/efficiency innovation. The Lamont Administration could jump start regional efforts by building consensus among area governors on core carbon emissions reduction principles and a consensus framework for implementing a carbon charge plan. However, any carbon pricing initiative must recognize the potential impacts on vulnerable populations, as well as on the competitive position of CT firms, and be designed to mitigate potentially adverse impacts. Discussions and negotiations regarding specific program features such as: “revenue neutral” vs. revenue positive,”; cost containment provisions; potential recipients of proceeds generated (consumers, businesses, low-income households, energy efficiency initiatives), stipulated \$/ton of CO₂ charge and schedule of increases, and potential carve-outs will provide an opportunity to craft the most effective program.

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Governor Lamont take the lead in pursuing a regional multi-state collaborative for a carbon charge program that would incentivize consumers and businesses to transition to carbon neutral/reduction practices without unduly burdening vulnerable populations or compromising the competitiveness of CT industry.

ENACT LEGISLATION TO ENABLE A MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE FUNDING OPTION

If the State of Connecticut is to make any meaningful progress in reaching its statutory goal of protecting 21% of the state's land area, it will need to expand the opportunities for revenue to fund land acquisition and stewardship efforts. Enabling municipalities to establish a buyers' conveyance fee program would provide a sustainable source of revenue for local conservation and stewardship efforts that would not impact the municipal mill rate or require additional bonding.

The Municipal Open Space Funding Option is proposed legislation that would allow, but not require, certain towns and cities to establish a dedicated fund to acquire, preserve, and steward open space (including water resources) and farmland at the municipal level by enacting a conveyance fee of up to 1% paid by buyers of real property over \$150,000 in value. This added source of funding would enable communities to fulfill match requirements for state or federal grant programs; cover the costly expenses associated with acquiring land (appraisals, surveys, environmental assessments, etc.); repay existing or future municipal bonds used for conservation purposes; and help cover the costs of stewardship of their town's open space properties, water resources and farmland.

The proposed bill will only extend to municipalities that ask to be included. Moreover, those municipalities included in the enabling legislation are not obligated in any way to establish the program; it merely gives them the right to consider the funding option if they so choose.

Nearby states (MA, NY, RI, PA, WV) have allowed some municipalities to enact a buyers' conveyance fee, with the income dedicated to conserving and caring for local natural areas. These programs have proven remarkably successful, resulting in the protection of thousands of acres of open space, forests, meadows and farms.

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Governor Lamont propose the enactment of enabling legislation to allow (but not require) certain municipalities to establish funding to acquire, preserve, and steward open space (including water resources) and farmland in their community by including a conveyance fee of up to 1% paid by buyers of real property over \$150,000 in value.

REDUCE WASTE BY DIVERTING FOOD/ORGANIC WASTE FOR LOCAL COMPOSTING

Food waste and organics make up a growing percentage of the total solid waste generated in state. Increasing food waste diversion and local composting programs can help generate revenue through costs avoided by municipalities, reduce waste and create other opportunities, including energy generation through anaerobic digestion. Additionally, expansion of composting, anaerobic digestion, and food waste diversion can be achieved through existing DEEP permitting process and may not require legislation. Job growth is expected to be similar to other niche recycling opportunities, as organics are converting from a waste into usable commodities such as energy and compost or soil amendments and placed back into the stream of commerce. Diversion of food waste and organics will require significant buy-in from the private sector on scaling & logistics, however many businesses are already making this shift as part of their existing sustainability goals.

This effort can be a stimulus for private partnerships and jobs creation, as each municipality will need to develop a system of implementation. Combined with the fact that Connecticut's infrastructure for waste management and recycling is aging and in need of an overhaul, new additions offer the opportunity for expanded use types.

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Connecticut must invest in the modernization of existing infrastructure (including changes at facilities to increase the recovery of recyclable materials), and support business opportunities for intermediate processors and end-users. Success will depend on leveraging private investment using entities such as the Connecticut Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) and the Connecticut Green Bank.

Part of this will include the critically necessary work pursuant to an RFP issued in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 22a-268g, for DEEP to select a developer to work with MIRA to repair and improve the Hartford Resources Recovery Facility (RRF). Several months after the December 2017 selection, inconsistencies remain between MIRA and the developer on how the project will be financed and overseen. Meanwhile, the facility has continued to decline and is currently shut down because of catastrophic mechanical failures, requiring that nearly one third of the state's municipal solid waste find other destinations, frequently at a higher cost. State leadership is needed to require that MIRA follow through on long-overdue repairs and improvements to the facility.

CURB NITROGEN POLLUTION IN LONG ISLAND SOUND NEARSHORE WATERS

Nitrogen pollution from human activities entering our rivers, harbors, and Long Island Sound fuels the growth of harmful algae, causing serious water quality problems that threaten community well-being and our coastal economy. Connecticut has made impressive progress in the past two decades in reducing nitrogen from sewage treatment plants, and this has improved water quality in the open waters of western Long Island Sound, where the area and duration of low oxygen dead-zones has diminished.

This improvement is critical, but research and monitoring by TNC, UConn, EPA, and other scientists indicates that nitrogen pollution from fertilizers and septic systems entering the Sound's harbors, bays and rivers must also be addressed. As water temperatures increase, problems are compounding. In September 2018, a harmful algae bloom known as rust tide – toxic to finfish and shellfish – was reported in Darien Harbor. In Little Narragansett Bay off Stonington's coast, seagrass – a critical habitat for marine life - has declined more than 43 percent in the last decade. At the same time, blooms of *Cladophora* algae, which forms a sort of mat that decays and suffocates marine life, have escalated.

Research shows conventional onsite septic systems are a significant source of nitrogen pollution in many of the state's nearshore waters. While effective at treating pathogens, conventional onsite systems are only capable of reducing nitrogen by about 35 percent. Every coastal state from Maine to Maryland – except for Connecticut – has a program to permit the use of and regulate the use of alternative treatment (AT) onsite wastewater systems in critical areas. These systems should not be used to allow new development in sensitive zones; but with proper oversight and management, they can replace inadequate systems and reduce up to 85 percent of nitrogen before it enters groundwater. Connecticut passed legislation authorizing the Department of Public Health (DPH) to regulate residential AT systems; however, the funding necessary to establish a permitting and management program has never been appropriated.

The EPA's Long Island Sound Study (LISS) received significant annual federal budget increases in FY17 and FY18 to implement protection and restoration of the Sound. Funding from LISS or other federal programs could be secured to support establishment and staffing of an effective onsite AT wastewater program to address community pollution problems. A relatively small authorization from state bond programs could augment federal funding.

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Governor Lamont address pollution in targeted nearshore waters of the state by directing DEEP and DPH to collaborate in the development of a program to regulate residential Alternative Treatment Onsite Wastewater Systems, within appropriate siting restrictions, and work with partners to pursue federal and other funds for implementation of the statutorily authorized program

IMPROVE PERMIT, GRANT/CONTRACT, AND PROCUREMENT EFFICIENCY

One issue that cuts across all of the Environmental Policy Committee's working groups is that DEEP is under-resourced with inadequate funding and personnel to achieve its broad, critical mission. As of November 1st, DEEP has 857 full-time staff and an agency budget of \$163 million. This is a decrease of 29% from just 10 years ago (though DEEP's mission has broadened over that same period), and DEEP expects to lose another 40% of its staff over the next four years.

The ability of DEEP staff to review and process permits, administer grants/contracts, and provide a high level of customer service is severely limited by its inadequate administrative staff. This must be addressed if DEEP is to be an effective environmental leader for Connecticut.

DEEP has undertaken LEAN efforts to streamline internal and inter-agency processes over the past several years, however several administrative processes continue to frustrate both staff and DEEP's "clients." The grant contracting process continues to be painfully long, and the processes to get various permits continue to get "eye rolls" from the industries and consultants contracted to manage them. These inefficiencies waste state resources, make business more expensive in Connecticut, and must be improved. It is important to add that sometimes long waits for permits or contracts are the result of incomplete applications, sloppy work by contractors, or slowness by other state or municipal partners, but it is still unacceptable.

State contract grantees and various permit applicants report that they "never know what the status is of their approval/rejection" and wind up wasting their time and state employee time trying to track down where their paperwork may be. We believe that permit applicants would gladly pay to either have a contract liaison embedded at DEEP to follow-up on applications and provide feedback to applicants, or providing an online "permit status" that would allow permittees to see the progress of their permits over time would be highly valued by permittees and grant recipients alike. There are also some steps such as sending contracts to the Attorney General's office to "approve them as to form" are needlessly long, expensive for Connecticut taxpayers, and are largely unnecessary.

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Governor Lamont and the DEEP Commissioner prioritize the removal of obstacles to conducting efficient permit reviews, contract administration, and procurement. There must be additional investments in DEEP's staff capacity, but at the same time, DEEP should also be utilizing public-private partnerships, contractual relationships that fill-in gaps, and finding additional efficiencies to operate effectively with fewer staff.

PASS STATE WATER PLAN

The advantages of CT's first **State Water Plan** include:

- Over a year of effort and a million dollars-worth of in-depth work by expert stakeholders
- Detailed, centralized information on the state's water resources
- Development of priorities for our state's water, some of which include maintaining CT's highest quality drinking water, protection of watershed lands, increased conservation, updated drought planning, safe levels of water for our streams and rivers, and improved scientific data collection
- Creation of a platform for making informed decisions which balance "in-stream needs" for the environment with "out-of-stream needs" for humans and the economy, and provides only guidance, not statutory mandates

The comprehensive State Water Plan was mandated in 2016 by the legislature, recognizing that our water resources are increasingly threatened by periodic droughts and competing uses. Out of state corporate interests are eyeing Connecticut's water supplies to meet new demands. The plan is the culmination of a million-dollar, multi-year process of diligent work by stakeholders, committees, agencies, legislators, and the public. The Plan includes good faith compromise language by all parties and was unanimously approved by the Water Planning Council (WPC). The Plan is not a regulatory document and is a springboard for future decision-making using the multitude of information, research, and existing state policy outlined in the Plan.

The plan was delivered to the legislature for approval in 2018. After a multi-committee public hearing process, the plan was blocked by a loose coalition of utilities and businesses, and the legislature failed to call the plan for a vote. Opponents of the plan objected to language referring to **water as a public trust resource**—though it has been regarded as such since 1971 under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act. Many members of the public requested this fact be acknowledged in the plan (as evidenced by more than 6,000 comments), and the language was unanimously approved by the WPC.

Gov. Dannel Malloy came out strongly in support of water protection and signed an executive order on June 13 directing the WPC to move forward on the plan as written and deliver it to the legislature for the 2019 session without change or deletion, including references to the public trust. While this was an important step forward, the opposition continues to block the plan for reasons that are not in the public's best interest. **The plan is intended to be a guiding document to lay the foundation for policies that will restore the essential oversight and accountability that is missing in the way our state water is currently controlled.**

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Governor Lamont challenge the General Assembly to pass the State Water Plan "as is."

EXPAND PUBLIC EDUCATION (RECYCLECT) AND ELIMINATE SINGLE USE PLASTICS

RecycleCT is a successful public education campaign that informs CT residents about “What’s IN, What’s OUT” of the curbside recycling bin, how to properly recycle plastic film and prevent contamination, and provides information about electronics recycling and other specialized programs. By expanding RecycleCT, the new administration can help better educate the public about good recycling habits, reduce waste and promote a shift in public behavior, allowing the state to continue progress on meeting its 60% by 2024 MSW reduction goal. Importantly, educating the public about issues surrounding contaminated material, modernizing the bottle bill, expanding Save Money And Reduce Trash (SMART) pricing systems for trash and several other important programs depend on robust public education.

In addition to increasing education through RecycleCT, the administration can promote source reduction and reduce municipal solid waste and recycling budgets by eliminating wasteful and environmentally harmful single use plastics, including plastic checkout bags, straws, tableware, drink cups, Styrofoam food service containers and packaging peanuts. This eliminates a major source of cheap plastics which carry significant financial costs to taxpayers, in addition to devastating impacts on our marine environment. It also eliminates a significant source of Styrofoam waste, which cannot be recycled. By adding a surcharge on paper bags, the state can cut down on the volume of paper entering the waste stream, while generating millions in revenue each year (revenue from the paper bag charge can be directed towards supporting existing programs, including public education efforts).

A growing number of territories in the U.S. have begun to address plastic pollution issues by passing legislation to reduce plastic bag pollution, including the States of California and each of the County Governments of Hawaii (in addition to at least 4 municipalities in CT). Plastic bags represent a significant hazard to marine environments and threaten our wildlife (studies indicate that at least 267 marine species are affected by pollution from single-use plastic bags). Additionally, single-use plastic bags routinely clog recycling infrastructure, which can force a single Municipal Recovery Facility (MRF) to shut down operations for 10 hours/week (520 hours annually) or longer. With a staff of four, delays related to problems with plastic bags can create more than 2,080 wasted man hours per year *for a single MRF*¹. This contributes significantly to inflated municipal solid waste budgets and wasteful taxpayer spending.

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Governor Lamont lead an ambitious effort to ramp up recycling in Connecticut by expanding the existing “RecycleCT” program. By coupling a ban on plastic checkout bags with increased public education about proper plastics recycling, the state can significantly reduce system inefficiencies and increase recycling capacity at the municipal level.

¹ Materials Innovation & Recycling Authority, Rocky Hill, CT.

PROMOTE CT'S OUTDOOR RECREATION/PRODUCE STATEWIDE TRAILS MAP

Outdoor recreation in Connecticut generates \$9 billion in revenues/year and directly supports 69,000 jobs (more than the aerospace/defense industry). One of the primary drivers of outdoor recreation is Connecticut's state parks and forests which every year attract 9 million visitors, generate over \$1 billion in revenues, and support 9,000 private sector jobs. The economic significance of recreational boating in Connecticut is \$1.3 billion annually. The boating industry alone in Connecticut is comprised of 537 businesses and supports 7,313 jobs.

One of the best ways that the public experiences the outdoors is on over 2,000 miles of recreational trails statewide that cross state, municipal, and private lands. To support this trails network, the bond commission allocated \$3 million to DEEP in 2018 to give grants to municipalities and nonprofits to build, repair, and improve recreational trails statewide. DEEP received requests for funding for over \$12 million.

Much of Connecticut's outdoor infrastructure of trails, state and municipal parks and forests, wildlife management areas, and other conservation lands already exists. But those properties need to be maintained, and the state needs to do a better job of informing the public where these resources are located.

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

- 1) \$3-5 million/year should be continued through bonding to the Recreational Trails & Greenways Program at DEEP to provide matching grants to municipalities, non-profits, and water companies to improve recreational trails;
- 2) DEEP should work to re-enter the federal Recreational Trails Program (Connecticut is the only state in the nation not participating) to further leverage its state bond funds;
- 3) Connecticut should do a better job marketing the existence of the Passport to Parks, which provides free access to state parks for all Connecticut residents paid for by a \$10 DMV registration fee paid every year. This is a major benefit for living in Connecticut and should be touted in basic signage at state park entry gates and elsewhere; and
- 4) DEEP should support continued efforts by Regional Councils of Government to stitch together a statewide recreational trails map for the public and visitors to better promote our extensive recreational assets. The Northwest Hills CoG has been a leader in producing a model effort for an online, interactive map of Litchfield County's recreational trails.

ESTABLISH A PUBLIC/PRIVATE CONSERVATION INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Strong, vibrant land trusts (the private side of public-private partnerships) can play leadership roles advancing state priorities for a high quality of life and robust local economies. Using the well-established New York State Conservation Partnership Program as a model, we recommend the establishment of a pilot public-private partnership program to offer competitive matching grants to qualified Connecticut land trusts to advance land conservation, economic development, farmland protection, community conservation, recreation and tourism.

The State of Connecticut's goal to preserve 21-percent of the state's land area or 673,210 acres by 2023 includes the recommendation that 10-percent be acquired by the State and 11-percent by "others" (land trusts, towns, and water authorities). However, based upon an estimate of the number of acres conserved (approximately 504,829 as of April 2017), the State will fall far short of the 21-percent goal unless it invests in programs that accelerate the pace of land conservation.

Connecticut is ranked third in the country behind California and Massachusetts as having the highest number of land trusts. Land trusts protect farms, cultural features, greenways, trails, natural habitats, endangered species, local and regional parks, scenic vistas and other areas of importance to their communities. According to the Land Trust Alliance (the Alliance), Connecticut's 137+/- land trusts have protected over 190,000 acres of land for conservation. Studies commissioned by the Alliance found that stronger, more professional land trusts save more land. ²

"The New York State Conservation Partnership Program is a public-private partnership between the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Land Trust Alliance that invests in New York land trusts. Since the program's inception in 2002, the Conservation Partnership Program has awarded more than 820 grants totaling \$17.2 million [in state funding] to more than 80 different land trust organizations across the state. The state's investment has leveraged more than \$19 million in additional funding from local communities and private donors. The funds have helped create employment and advancement opportunities in the conservation field and helped local communities permanently conserve more than 29,680 acres of farmland, wildlife habitat, recreation areas and urban open space."

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Governor Lamont establish a pilot Connecticut Public-Private Conservation Investment Partnership Program to provide financial and technical support to the Connecticut's land trusts to advance land conservation, economic development, farmland protection, community conservation and recreation and tourism across the state. Using the well-established New York Partnership Program as a model, the state would partner with a private non-profit organization to offer competitive matching grants to qualified Connecticut land trusts for organizational capacity building (including accreditation), collaborations, stewardship/resource management, and conservation transaction support.

² Source: Land Trust Alliance, Studies by Peter Szabo, Bloomington Management Advisors

STORM & SEA LEVEL RISE RESILIENCE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS) encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) standards. Depending on a municipality's level of participation, flood insurance premiums for policyholders in the town can be reduced by 10-15%, and higher. Besides reducing insurance costs, CRS projects enhance public safety, reduce damages to infrastructure, avoid economic disruption and losses, reduce human suffering, and protect the environment.

Unfortunately, the paperwork and bureaucracy involved with enrolling in the program is quite burdensome, and beyond the capacity of many towns. Some towns are even implementing activities which would gain CRS points and insurance discounts for residents, but do not have the expertise to enroll in the program. Where the State has been able to provide staff assistance or grants, towns have been more successful registering, but such assistance has been limited, so currently only 11 towns are enrolled.

The DEEP's NFIP Coordinator, who is paid with FEMA funds, has many critical responsibilities and so has very limited time to help towns navigate FEMA's paperwork. This year, the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments used a grant from the Office of Policy and Management to hire a consultant team to assist two communities interested in joining or improving standing in the NFIP Community Rating System (CRS). These efforts are crucial, but too limited and sporadic.

At the same time, fewer Connecticut homes are insuring for flooding. According to FEMA, in January 2014, there were 42,644 flood insurance policies in Connecticut; as of this July, there were only 37,743. Since flood insurance is not required unless you have a mortgage, homeowners may choose and do appear to be choosing to drop those policies, especially as premiums rise. This decline in insured properties would likely put an additional burden on the State after a significant storm event.

The Environment Policy Committee recommends that:

Governor Lamont propose the following:

- An appropriation for ½ FTE to match FEMA funding for a staff person to assist the NFIP Coordinator in working with municipalities to enroll in the CRS program.
- To make municipal requests, for grants to assist them in CRS activities, eligible for funding under such programs or additional ones as the State's Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) for staff or consultant support in enrolling in the program; and under the Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP) for funding to implement CRS activities.

Environment Committee Members & Working Groups

Committee Co-Chairs

Eric Hammerling | *Executive Director* | Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Frogard Ryan | *State Director* | The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut

Committee Members

Amy Paterson | *Executive Director* | Connecticut Land Conservation Council

Ann Gadwah | *Political Chair and Executive Committee Member* | Sierra Club

B. Holt Thrasher | *Co-Founder and CEO* | Synovia Capital

Bill Finch | *Executive Director* | Discovery Museum & Planetarium

Christina Smith | *Executive Director* | Groundwork Bridgeport

Karen Mehra | *Environmental Activist*

Kathleen Segerson | *Professor of Economics* | UCONN

Lori Brown | *Executive Director* | CT League of Conservation Voters

Lou Burch | *Connecticut Programs Director* | Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Matthew McKenzie | *Associate Professor of History* | UCONN and *Connecticut Obligatory Delegate* | New England Fisheries Management Council

Steve Coan | *President and CEO* | Mystic Aquarium

Ted Kennedy Jr. | *Senator* | Connecticut State Senate

Supporting Staff

David Sutherland | *Director of Government Relations* | The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut

Working Groups

Invest in DEEP: Steve Coan, Eric Hammerling

Reduce Waste/Increase Recycling: Lou Burch, Ted Kennedy, Jr., Christina Smith, B. Holt Thrasher

Support Local Economies and Preserve Open Space: Karen Mehra, Amy Paterson

Protect Clean Air, Water & Soil: Lori Brown, Ann Gadwah, Kathy Segerson

Sea Level Rise/Long Island Sound Resiliency: Matthew McKenzie, David Sutherland

Connecticut Transition Policy Committee
Innovative and Cross-Cutting Policy Ideas Meeting, December 10, 2018

Proposal: Take the lead in pursuing a regional collaborative for a carbon charge program which would incentivize consumers and businesses to transition to carbon neutral/reduction practices; and determine the feasibility of an internal carbon charge program for state and municipal buildings.

Description: Connecticut will not reach our ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals unless we can convince businesses and consumers to change behaviors. Many economists and policy experts agree: the fastest, least expensive and most predictable way to reduce emissions is a market-oriented approach, imposing a charge for processes which create emissions – putting a “price on carbon” to account for its real societal costs. This concept must be, and will be most effective if, pursued on a regional multi-state basis. This approach has yielded impressive benefits in the nine-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). RGGI, which applies only to large electric power producers, has reduced emissions and had positive economic impacts: \$1.4 billion in net economic benefits for member states between 2015 and 2017; an estimated \$220 million in consumer energy bill savings through energy efficiency reinvestment (Analysis Group), and has set the stage for regional coordination. Diverse backing for carbon pricing is evidenced by support by 39 Fortune 500 companies; more than 100 businesses who signed a letter of support in Massachusetts, and endorsement by national conservative business groups like the Partnership for Responsible Growth and the Niskanen Center (Ceres report). Over 1,300 companies currently impose an internal carbon price on operations. Some forty countries and more than twenty cities, states and provinces already use carbon pricing mechanisms, with more seeking to implement them in the future. Much of the regional collaborative activities to date regarding carbon pricing have been among state legislators with limited success, though Northeastern Governors have been driving discussions on transportation/efficiency innovation. The Lamont Administration can potentially jump start regional efforts by building consensus among area governors on core carbon emissions reduction principles and a consensus framework for implementing a carbon charge plan. Discussions and negotiations regarding specific program features such as: “revenue neutral” vs. revenue positive,”; cost containment provisions; potential recipients of proceeds generated (consumers, businesses, low-income households, energy efficiency initiatives), stipulated \$/ton of CO₂ charge and schedule of increases, and potential carve-outs will provide an opportunity to craft the most effective program. The administration should also explore the feasibility of an internal carbon charge program for State and municipal-owned buildings and equipment, perhaps modeled on the successful program at Yale University, which would encourage energy efficiency practices and technology investments in state buildings, focused on reducing emissions and, ultimately, energy costs.

Presenters: David Sutherland and Frogard Ryan – Member and Co-Chair of Environment Policy Team; Bryan Garcia and Lonnie Reed – Co-Chairs of Energy Policy Team

Cross-Cutting Areas Covered: Environment, Energy

Connecticut Transition Policy Committee
Innovative and Cross-Cutting Policy Ideas Meeting, December 10, 2018

Proposal: *Investing in Connecticut's Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure & Healthy Lifestyles*

Description

Connecticut's "quality of life" is a primary reason why people and businesses settle here. Protecting and investing in Connecticut's quality of life is urgent and fits well with the Lamont-Bysiewicz Administration's goals of attracting jobs and fostering economic growth. And yet, Connecticut currently has the lowest ranking for "quality of life" in New England, according to the most recent *U.S. News & World Report*.

Quality of life provides several economic benefits to Connecticut. For example, outdoor recreation in Connecticut generates \$9 billion in revenues/year and directly supports 69,000 jobs (more than the aerospace/defense industry). Connecticut's state parks and forests attract 9 million visitors, generate over \$1 billion in revenues, and support 9,000 private sector jobs every year. Recreational boating in Connecticut generates \$1.3 billion annually and includes 537 businesses supporting 7,313 jobs.

The national CDC and the DHHS have encouraged communities to implement policies and environmental changes that promote healthier lifestyles and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Parks and connecting people to outdoor recreation can play a crucial role in this strategy.

More walkable and bike-friendly communities (that are less dependent upon automobiles) benefit public health especially when supported by public education and online resources. Nationally, 50 percent of trips taken in cars can be accomplished with short bicycle rides and walking. However, the National Household Travel Survey indicates that less than 1 percent of daily trips are made by bicycling and less than 11 percent by walking. There is a great opportunity to promote more active, healthy lifestyles via marketing, programs, partnerships and investments in infrastructure that connect communities to places for recreation. Active transportation to places for recreation improves our health, economy, environment, and transportation accessibility for the benefit of all.

Fortunately, a plan - Connecticut's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for 2017-2022 - already exists to make Connecticut a recognized leader in outdoor recreation. This plan includes strategies to: increase technological innovations for customer service; communicate recreation facilities' conditions to potential users to better inform visitor expectations; implement a wide range of public outreach and communication tools; increase accessibility to outdoor recreation facilities for people with disabilities; and to identify, increase, and promote the availability of public transportation to and from outdoor recreation facilities.

Presenter(s): Eric Hammerling, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Cross-Cutting Areas Covered: Arts/Culture/Tourism, Digital Strategy, Education, Environment, Healthcare, Transportation

ADDITIONAL ISSUES DISCUSSED BY THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The following pages are a compilation of additional issues considered by the following Working Groups:

- Invest in DEEP
- Reduce Waste/Increase Recycling
- Support Local Economies and Preserve Open Space
- Protect Clean Air, Water & Soil
- Sea Level Rise/Long Island Sound Resiliency

**This section does not include issues that are written-up on previous pages or in the summary memo.

Invest in DEEP

Support Management of Municipal Roadside Forests

Provide funding for municipalities to manage the roadside forest both for health and compatibility with electrical infrastructure. The State Vegetation Management Task Force Report of 2012 recommended using 1.5% of electric utilities vegetation management funding for municipalities to remove hazardous trees, prune for tree health, and plant roadside trees with an eye to “right tree, right place.” These funds could also support communities with assessments/inventories of their urban forests and developing implementation plans to preserve and enhance them.

Engage Young Minds through the Outdoors

Utilize DEEP’s Nature Centers and Parks/Forests/Wildlife Management Areas (a.k.a. outdoor classrooms) for engaging young people and the public in the outdoors. Build upon the work of the “No Child Left Inside” program and utilizing programs like Project Learning Tree.

Manage State Forests and be a Resource for Forest Landowners and Municipalities

Invest in the Forestry Division to ensure service and state lands forestry, fire, forest practices act enforcement, and other critical skill sets are not lost when retirements occur (more than half of the division is currently eligible for retirement). With climate change-induced droughts, invasive pests, and other forest health challenges, this division will be critical to manage forest lands and advise the state on forest fire avoidance/recovery, wildlife habitat management, carbon sequestration, etc.

Understand and Utilize Forests for Carbon Sequestration

Negative greenhouse gas emissions can be increased rapidly and efficiently by purposefully growing forest ecosystems. Research shows that big trees and older forests store a lot of carbon, and, most importantly, sequester more carbon each year than younger forests. Benefits would include mitigating climate change, protecting biodiversity, preventing flooding, and improving public health.

Invest in State Park Infrastructure

Continue bonding investments in State Parks infrastructure and accessibility projects as a priority.

Reduce Waste/Increase Recycling

Modernize the Container Deposit Law (Bigger, Better Bottle Bill)

Modernizing the container recycling program would help increase recycling rates and save municipalities money, create private sector jobs and improve the quality of recovered materials and the environment. This would require a portion of the unclaimed deposits (escheats) being diverted from the General Fund and re-dedicated towards program implementation & administration. Additionally, such a transition would necessitate expansion to include a wider range of beverage containers (incl. wine, liquor and other non-carbonated beverages), and an increase in the deposit amount on each container category. In order to better facilitate the administration, reporting and enforcement of the program, a more inclusive system with a central system operator (i.e., cooperative or stewardship model) is needed. Successful models include ME, OR and British Columbia, Canada.

Expand Extended Producer Responsibility for Consumer Packaging

The cost of materials management is becoming unsustainable for municipalities and businesses. Yet we cannot back away from responsible end-of-life management, even as costs increase. Additional revenue is needed to offset these costs to municipalities and business. Producer-funded product stewardship systems for consumer packaging and printed paper (which make up nearly the entirety of the curbside recycling stream) would provide much needed revenue to sustain and grow the existing private-sector recycling industry, from collection, to processing, to end-users.

Connecticut should pursue coordinated steps with neighboring states to develop a consistent regional approach for product stewardship for other types of consumer packaging. This will help reduce MSW and recycling costs to taxpayers while encouraging industry to optimize manufacturing & product design. Connecticut could advance legislation in 2019 that would trigger a multi-state planning process when other states pass similar laws. Such legislation should seek to support and grow the materials management economy on a regional basis.

Modernize the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA)'s Hartford Facility

Pursuant to an RFP issued in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 22a-268g, DEEP selected a developer to work with MIRA to repair and improve the Hartford Resource Recovery Facility. Several months after the December 2017 selection, inconsistencies remain between MIRA and the developer on how the project will be financed and overseen. Meanwhile, the facility has continued to decline and is currently shut down because of catastrophic mechanical failures, requiring that nearly one third of the state's MSW find other destinations, frequently at a higher cost. State leadership is needed to require that MIRA follow through on long-overdue repairs and improvements to the facility.

Expand SMART (Save Money And Reduce Trash)

The CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) promotes the SMART pricing system (also referred to as Pay As You Throw), which has already been implemented in municipalities in Connecticut and a growing number of communities nationally. This "unit-based pricing" approach matches the volume of waste generated to a fixed pricing scheme, so costs are equitably borne by consumers

(residents pay based on how much or little waste they actually generate). This strategy can save municipalities money and increase recycling, but may also carry challenges. Transition to such a program without ample public education may result in a “wishful recycling” effect where residents throw non-recyclable items in the curbside recycling bin in order to avoid costs. Expanding SMART would require an expansion of existing public education opportunities, as well as increased investments for carting & other recycling infrastructure. Additionally, private haulers may oppose a statewide mandate due to potential loss of revenue.

Invest in Infrastructure Improvements

Connecticut’s infrastructure for waste management and recycling is aging and in need of an overhaul. Facility outages cause costly interruptions in the regional system and increased (and costly) reliance on out-of-state landfills. To accomplish this, Connecticut must invest in the modernization of existing infrastructure (including changes at facilities to increase the recovery of recyclable materials), and support business opportunities for intermediate processors and end-users. Success will depend on leveraging private investment using entities such as MIRA and the CT Green Bank.

Support Local Economies and Preserve Open Space

The role of land and land conservation plays a critical role in a host of aspects associated with healthy vibrant communities in Connecticut, whether rural or urban. Land ensures clean drinking water, healthy local food, places for people to recreate, and can have a critical role in carbon mitigation based on what we protect and how we manage it to maximize carbon sequestration. Intact, healthy landscapes play an even more significant role in mitigating climate change than we thought even a few years ago, and can help us reach the goals of the Paris Climate Accord (see the landmark 2017 [PNAS Natural Climate Solutions paper](#) and a follow up paper in *Science Advances* published this month that focuses on [Natural Climate Solutions for the United States](#)). All of which can make CT an attractive place to live and work.

Commitment to Protect the Level of Funding and Integrity of the Community Investment Act

Enacted in 2005 (Public Act 05-228), the Community Investment Act established what has become Connecticut’s primary source of dedicated funding to conserve open space, protect farmland, preserve historic properties and supplement affordable housing programs. Each sector represents a critical component of our statewide quality of life and economy. The program has been an extraordinary success. To date, the CIA has reinvested over \$152 million in 1,400+ projects in every community across the state.

Since its inception, the CIA has performed as designed, making timely and much needed investments in projects that enhance community character and quality of life, while strengthening our state and local economy with responsible planning, job creation and leveraging millions of dollars in private matching funds and consequent investment and spending. CIA funds accrue from a \$40 recording fee collected on every real-estate transaction in the state. This fee income is then distributed by formula to town clerks and the state agencies administering the qualified programs.

Reform OSWA and other land conservation program grant processes to make them more user-friendly and efficient

Grant processes and state contracting policies across agencies are neither coordinated nor consistent, thereby undermining efficiencies and causing project delays. In the case of the Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Program (OSWA), administrative delays may cause landowners to abandon the conservation transaction, resulting in the loss of the land, investments, and the public's desire to work on land conservation transactions with local land trusts, towns and the state. Identification and implementation of ways to increase efficiencies including the establishment of a uniform contract review process will decrease administrative costs and increase the pace of land conservation transactions.

Improve reporting on "obligated" CIA funds

Coordination between DEEP and OPM on the reporting of CIA funds would help to provide legislators with a more accurate understanding of how the funds are committed to a variety of real estate projects, preservation contracts, grants, and ongoing investments.

Invest in the Public Use Benefits Land Registry

Look to states with an established statewide Cadastral parcel database which stores information about public and private land ownership. To date, insufficient resources dedicated to this statutorily mandated mapping project. Recommend hiring a GIS staff person dedicated to the project to coordinate with towns, COGS, and land trusts to upload the registry and establish a uniform cadastral database to use moving forward.

Establish a Program to Address Invasive Species

Invasive species are one of the largest environmental problems facing Connecticut, and investments to remove invasive species and protect native populations of aquatic and terrestrial vegetation and wildlife have been inadequate to non-existent. We have a model in Connecticut in CGS 22a-27r which establishes a dedicated non-lapsing fund. Despite budget constraints, this can provide local source of funding through enabling a buyers' conveyance fee program. Other suggestions include using funding from bottle bill escheats to hire an administrator and set up a grant program; increasing current boat registration fee by \$1-2.00 to fund CGS 22a-27r. A \$2 increase could net ~ \$200,000/year based upon info we have from 2015/16.

Establish Ecosystems Services Incentive Program

Quantifying ecosystem services as "natural capital" creates innovative financial incentives for conservation. Nearly \$1 billion changed hands in global ecosystem markets in the last decade. USFWS, NRCS, and other agencies have explored through MOUS how establishing viable markets for the exchange of habitat values would result in net conservation benefits for protected or at-risk species.

Protect Clean Air, Water & Soil

CLEAN AIR

- *Take the lead in pursuing a regional collaborative which recognizes the health, environmental and economic impacts of carbon pollution through a carbon charge program which incentivizes consumers and businesses to transition to carbon neutral/reduction practices.
- *work with the AG to oppose the US EPA rollbacks of the Clean Power Plan and the CAFE "Clean Car" standards.
- *Direct PURA to prioritize VW settlement funding to switch from diesel polluting school buses to electric school buses, especially in underserved communities that suffer disproportionate impacts of pollution and children suffer high asthma rates. Dedicate the next round of RFPs entirely to electric vehicles and allow no more VW funding for diesel upgrades.
- *Reiterate Administration's strong support for participation in the US Climate Alliance in the wake of US withdrawal from the Paris Agreements.
- *Reiterate 100% clean energy pledge to reduce CT's greenhouse gas emissions.

WATER MANAGEMENT

- *Support passage of State Water Plan that reinforces definition of water as a "public trust resource." Actively work to ensure adoption without changes that weaken existing provisions. The plan is the starting point to develop policies that support holistic management of our state's increasingly imperiled asset.
- *Place a moratorium on sale or merger of CT Water companies to out of state for-profit companies until the issue can be examined and a state policy developed in the public's best interest.
- *Reform the Water Planning Council membership and authority as an ongoing cabinet level entity charged with oversight of water plan implementation. The Council should identify and resolve areas where there is lack of clarity between overlapping responsibilities of DPH, DEEP and water utilities. The Council should assist the state in determining who has control and decision-making authority.
- *Look at online reporting currently used in other agencies (such as DPH) that could be replicated at DEEP to monitor permitted water usage, making the data searchable for the public and easier to identify problems.

CLEAN WATER.

- *Stand by DEEP in its work with Hartford, Norwich, New Haven, and Bridgeport to eliminate discharge of raw sewage into state waters, including compliance with existing consent orders. Clean Water Fund bonding should remain at least at current levels to assist municipalities with upgrades to sewage treatment plants.
- *Support programs to reach homeowners, landowner and farmers with information on non-toxic, sustainable land use management techniques. Incorporate "RiverSmart" program into Sustainable CT. (www.beriversmart.org)
- *Look at online reporting currently used in other agencies (such as DPH) to establish online reporting at DEEP of Alternative Sewage Treatment Systems, making the data searchable for the public and easier to identify problems.

*Establish into law the existing DEEP model legislation on vegetation buffers to reduce runoff into waterways. This legislation has included research and considered current buffer practices in Massachusetts.

*Consult DEEP Bureau of Land Management and Re-Use and business leaders to identify and remove legal obstacles to cleanup of industrial brownfields along CT's waterways that continue to contaminate our rivers and Long Island Sound.

PESTICIDES/HERBICIDES

*Follow recommendations in CEQ report on pesticides and require that application and permitting fees collected by the DEEP Pesticide Program be retained by the program to support monitoring, enforcement, and permitting duties of the Agency (currently not being done).

*Support ban of neonicotinoids, currently a restricted chemical that threatens public health and is devastating CT's pollinators critical to agriculture in our state.

*Support outreach to homeowners, landowners and farmers with information on non-toxic, sustainable land use management techniques.

*Enforce new 2016 CT law requiring creation and/or protection of pollinator habitat and proper labeling of certain pesticides to ensure it is being implemented and monitored. Law specifies that model pollinator habitat must be created along highways and utility rights-of-way (powerlines).

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/ACT/pa/2016PA-00017-R00SB-00231-PA.htm>

*Require pollinator habitat to be a condition of siting (or expanding) and managing major new developments, such as new large energy infrastructure.

*DOT roadside spraying of pesticides and herbicides must be modified to protect waterbodies and pollinator habitat.

*Look at online reporting currently used in other agencies (such as DPH) to establish online reporting of pesticide usage at DEEP, making the data searchable and more transparent for the public and for identifying problems.

Sea Level Rise/Long Island Sound Resiliency

*Maintain bonding for removal of obsolete and hazardous dams on key tributaries to Long Island Sound and feeder rivers, to eliminate risks of catastrophic failures and to improve habitats for migratory fish.

*Expand Shore up CT program to fund living shorelines, voluntary buyouts and building elevation in flood zones

*Establish interagency group to develop a state-wide resilience plan. This should build on the current federally-funded plans being developed for New Haven and Fairfield Counties.

*Require State and local building codes to adopt new standards to address rising sea levels

*Expand access to digital planning/modelling/and decision-making tools to aid municipalities in their resiliency planning.