State Water Plan Implementation Tracking & Reporting
Recommendations to the Water Planning Council
June 2022

I.   Introduction

The Connecticut State Water Plan (SWP) was prepared under the direction of the Water Planning Council (WPC) to help planners, regulators and lawmakers make decisions about managing the state's water in a manner that is consistent throughout the state with stakeholder-defined principles and available scientific data. The SWP is a broad, over-arching document which includes hundreds of recommendations, including a recommendation to develop a method to monitor and report on implementation of the Plan's recommendations to ensure compliance with the requirements of the statute. Section 22a-352(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) includes seventeen requirements (see Appendix A) and annual reporting to the Legislature is required by CGS Section 22a-352(i).

Mission: An ad-hoc Sub-Workgroup of the SWP Implementation Workgroup (IWG) was created in the summer of 2021 (see Appendix B for membership and meeting dates) and tasked as follows:

> "This topical sub-workgroup will develop a framework and methodology for tracking and annual reporting on [State Water Plan] Implementation. It will not be responsible for the actual tracking and reporting but will make recommendations on who would be. It also will recommend how to solicit broad input on progress on SWP implementation, even if the actions taken are not by the WPC agencies, workgroups, or directly associated entities."

Prior to forming a workgroup, a brainstorming session was held virtually with 25 people in attendance (see Appendix C for summary of session comments). The session solicited ideas around five questions on tracking and reporting on implementation of the SWP:
- What is the purpose of tracking?
- What should be tracked?
- Who is the audience (output)?
- Who would do the tracking (input)?
- What are policy / confidentiality concerns?

II.   General Discussion

A SWP implementation tracking and reporting system has multiple goals. These goals, affirmed by the brainstorming participants, include:

- Documenting progress on implementation of the SWP for the Legislature in accordance with CGS Section 22a-352(i), and for the WPC, its partners and the public;
- Setting the direction for State Water Plan implementation, including highlighting priorities, ensuring efforts stay on track, and establishing goals and timeframes for future action; and
- Advancing the work of the Water Planning Council and all its partners by promoting collaboration toward shared goals.

Tracking progress and measuring success can be more effective if there are clear objectives with metrics and indicators that can be quantified. Due to the breadth of issues and recommendations made in the SWP, there is no consistent way to approach tracking and what constitutes "completeness" with the current version of the SWP. In addition, there is no explicit funding nor dedicated staff to guide and track implementation of the SWP. To develop a meaningful measure of progress will require considerable investment of time and effort and should be flexible enough to adapt to changes in the SWP. It is possible that the need for defined metrics of tracking may ultimately lead to a revision of the SWP, or at a minimum be a key component of a future revision of the plan.

What and how implementation should be tracked depends in part on the audience and what information needs to be conveyed. The audience here covers the full gamut from the WPC members themselves; to the Legislature (as statutorily required); to the interested stakeholders (including the state agencies); to the general public who may be interested or be able to help support implementation. The report needs to be made available in a usable format for the interested party. Ideally, an effective tracking and reporting scheme will aid in generating awareness around the Plan, its implementation, and in allocating resources for future Plan implementation and update efforts.

III. Recommendations for Implementation Tracking and Reporting of the State Water Plan:

The workgroup determined early on that it would not be feasible for it to develop an implementation tracking template for general use, given time constraints and the issues identified above. Additionally, lessons learned from Long Island Sound Study participants suggested tracking would likely need to evolve as resources and experience allowed for greater sophistication in tracking methodology and software. (For example, initial tracking may involve something as simple as an Excel spreadsheet as a more robust system is being developed.) The following recommendations are intended to continue to advance State Water Plan tracking and reporting goals, while allowing the WPC to meet its short-term tracking and reporting needs.

1. **The consensus of this workgroup is that the tracking should be limited to the implementation of the SWP, not "all things water".**
   - Based on the Long Island Sound Study discussion as an example, the sub-workgroup agreed that tracking should be focused on the implementation of the SWP, and not other water related topics that are not covered within the current

version of the plan. In the future, consideration may be given to having a repository for other water-related activities.

2. **A statutorily required annual report is due to the Legislature each year by January 31. Such a report should include, at a minimum, the following:**
   - Updates on each of WPC priorities, which will be reviewed by the WPC each spring.
   - Assessment of progress on each priority.
   - Relationship of the effort to the 17 statutory requirements.
   - Additional information may include the following:
     - Estimate of cost of effort (if appropriate) and a general reference to the source of funding (e.g., federal grant, state bond funds, private investor). This information could initially be provided on a voluntary basis. Cost/benefit is something to help connect to the audience.
     - A metric should be in place to facilitate balancing cost versus needed immediate action on a SWP item.
       - The cost of some SWP items may be justified due to their importance.
       - The priorities identified by the SWP, and their annual review, may inform these decisions.
     - Identification of on-going efforts and an estimated timeframe for completion of discrete efforts.
     - Identification of who is involved.
     - Where the project/effort is located, if appropriate. Location/maps help in connecting to the audience.
       - When possible, this location information should be shared. However, some organizations may or may not wish to share every piece of information.
   - A possible approach to crafting the Legislative Report would be to work backwards from the needed end goal.
     - A backtrack timeline, breaking down tasks and expectations of what a workgroup would ideally need to complete, could be developed (i.e., think of the end product and work backwards on the process to identify milestones that should be achieved).

3. **It is recommended that a review team or sub-workgroup be formed by either the WPCAG or the IWG to prepare a report to the Legislature by January 31, 2023 on 2022 implementation.**

   - The responsibility to continually track the SWP is the obligation of the WPC state agencies and, potentially, any future Water Planning Chief. It is recommended that state agency staff or a future Water Planning Chief serve as chair or co-chair of a sub-group devoted to annual report preparation so that the responsibility

does not fall on a volunteer(s). It is suggested that the group membership include:
- o a representative of each of the 4 WPC agencies (at a minimum).
- o an out-of-stream representative.
- o an in-stream representative.
- o additional interested parties as appropriate.
- The group may develop a temporary reporting structure, such as a narrative summary or simple spreadsheet.
- The group should develop a template for reporting that is clear and precise and can be consistent year to year.
- The group would ideally assess:
  - o If something should be included.
  - o What metric it fits under.
  - o How much progress has been made (degree of completeness).
  - o Recommendations for improvements to tracking system.
  - o Recommendations for updates to SWP.
  - o IF a review team is not a viable option; the question of what, how, and who reviews tracking updates needs to be addressed.
- Consideration should be given to making this a standing "review team" to carry through on the WPC's yearly obligation to report to the Legislature.

4. **An electronic template reporting form should be developed for state agencies and stakeholders to contribute to the annual report. This may be a task of the Tracking Sub-group described above or may be a separate ad hoc sub-group formed explicitly for this purpose. The form should be available on the WPC SWP website for easy access.**

- The form should ask for information that would be relevant for reporting out, including project name, description or project, location, key sponsors, cost, funding source (generalized), accomplishments, and progress assessment.
- This could be "called for" on a regular basis – monthly or quarterly to solicit input. May be important to initially have the call be more frequent (e.g., monthly) and then reduce the frequency once organizations are comfortable with the submittal process. A regular call for participation in October could facilitate inclusion of the information in the annual report.
- The group should determine which electronic platform will best fulfill the reporting obligation.
- Various stakeholders should be solicited for input. This can include, but not be limited to:
  - o WPC and State agencies
  - o WPC Workgroup members and attendees
  - o COGs, WUCCs
  - o Municipalities

- o Conservation Districts
- o Water Companies
- o NGOs
- The form should include a standardized measure of progress on projects such as:
  - o None
  - o Initiated
  - o Significant progress
  - o Complete
  - o Ongoing effort

  These stages should include dates.
- Future efforts will need to identify how to handle information that may be considered sensitive (ex. Location of water supply sources or funding sources for non-profits).

5. **A workplan should be developed to create and transition to a permanent tracking system. This may be done by the interim tracking sub-group discussed above, a consultant, or separate ad-hoc workgroup.**

- The future workgroup should consider how the SWP can be revised to better track progress on implementation.
  - o For example, future revisions of the SWP could re-frame objectives with measurable metrics and indicators for each objective.
- Tracked items should be consistently and easily available to the public.
- A cloud-based platform could be used to store documentation, as an example, annual report pdf link. Ongoing meeting notices and minutes is a future need.

6. **The Executive Summary of the SWP should be reviewed (by the WPC or possibly delegated to the workgroup for review) with a focus on what is going to happen in the plan to forecast applicable tracking.**
- This would include a review of the goals of the water plan, what the plan contains and does not contain. Such a review would assess the context of the plan within the framework of the above recommendations to ensure a permanent tracking system is being built to accurately capture implementation efforts.
- Throughout the review, it would be practical to gather concepts of how to improve future tracking needs for a potential revision to the SWP.

IV.   High Level General Takeaways:

Based on the six identified recommendations from the SWP Implementation Tracking and Reporting workgroup, the following items serve as a high-level summarized takeaway of the groups concluding thoughts:

- ➢ Tracking should be limited to the implementation of the SWP, not "all things water," meaning the focus is entirely on tracking only items in the current version of the SWP.
- ➢ It is recommended that an interim review team or sub-workgroup be formed by either the WPCAG or the IWG to prepare a report to the Legislature by January 31, 2023, on 2022 implementation.
- ➢ A possible separate workgroup may be needed to address the data, format, and electronic reporting needs to best capture the routine updates of multiple organizations. An electronic template for reporting should be developed for state agencies and stakeholders to contribute to the annual report.
- ➢ A workplan should be developed to create and transition to a permanent tracking system. This may be done by the interim tracking sub-group discussed above, a consultant, or separate ad-hoc workgroup.
- ➢ The Executive Summary of the SWP should be reviewed (by the WPC or possibly delegated to the workgroup for review) with a focus on what is going to happen in the plan to forecast applicable tracking.

Appendix A Requirements of the State Water Plan, included in the Executive Summary of the State Water Plan, dated January 2018

Requirements of the State Water Plan:
1. Identify the quantities/qualities of water available
2. Identify present/projected demands for water
3. Recommend utilization of water resources to balance public water supply, economic development, recreation and ecological health
4. Recommend steps to increase the climate resiliency of existing water resources and infrastructure
5. Recommend technology and infrastructure upgrades, interconnections and/or major engineering works
6. Recommend land use and other measures to ensure the desired water quality/abundance and promote development in concert with available water resources
7. Take into account desired ecological, recreational, agricultural, industrial and commercial use of water bodies
8. Inform state residents on the importance of water resource stewardship/conservation
9. Establish conservation guidelines/incentives for water conservation with energy efficiency consideration
10. Develop a water reuse policy with incentives for matching the water quality to the use
11. Meet data collection and analysis needs to provide for data driven decisions
12. Account for the ecological, environmental, public health/ safety and economic impact implementation will have on the state
13. Include short and long-range objectives/strategies to communicate and implement the plan
14. Incorporate regional and local plans/programs for water use and management
15. Promote intra-regional solutions and sharing of water resources
16. Develop and recommend strategies to address climate resiliency
17. Identify modifications to laws/regulations necessary in order to implement recommendations

Appendix B Membership in Ad-hoc Sub-workgroup and Meeting Schedule

Membership in ad-hoc sub-workgroup

>Daniel Aubin, Department of Public Health (Co-Chair)
>John Betkoski, Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, DEEP
>Alicea Charamut, Rivers Alliance
>Virginia de Lima, former U.S. Geological Survey
>Corinne Fitting, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (Co-Chair)
>Alexandria Hibbard, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
>Iris Kaminski, Member of the Public
>David Knauf, Town of Darien
>Gannon Long, Operation Fuel
>David Murphy, CIRCA
>Martha Smith, West River Coalition

Process: Six virtual workgroup meetings were held. Members reviewed and discussed the results of the brainstorming session and had a presentation by several staff from the U.S Environmental Protection Agency Office of Long Island Sound on how they developed tracking for the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan.

Appendix C Comments from Brainstorming Session

On Tuesday September 28th, 2021; a public brainstorming session was held virtually to gather insight and direction for the newly approved Implementation Tracking and Reporting sub-workgroup of the State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup.

The following questions were offered for consideration to the group:

- What is the purpose of tracking?
- What should be tracked?
- Who is the audience (output)?
- Who would do the tracking (input)?
- What are policy / confidentiality concerns?
- General thoughts / odds and ends

*The following materials have been either summarized or condensed based on repetition in comment or in comment theme.

What is the purpose of tracking?

- Celebrate & publicize successful efforts
- Create awareness and knowledge of successful Implementation efforts that can be duplicated
- Centralized hub to receive Information about Implementation efforts from various entities (agencies, NPOs, private sector, etc.)
- Avoid duplication of work efforts
- sharing (transparency) to facilitate effective collaboration
- Report to legislature
- Have a timeline / prioritize workload/ Ensure progress is being made on the right items
- Accountability / Transparency / Monitor success of Plan
- Track progress -where are we, where do we need to go / document progress (or need for change)
- Find out If there are any gaps in the plan or if anything Is left out
- To make sure we are staying on track and not veering off course from our goals

What should be tracked?

- Progress on any water-related activities / actions that move the plan forward
- Priority actions / Challenges with Implementation
- Progress on Pathway Forward items in the SWP / Only things in the state water plan
- Would go back to the spreadsheet of plan recommendations that was prepared a few years ago and review actions that have been completed and explain them in a meaningful way.
- There needs to be a set of priorities established and a checklist since this is such a wide-ranging Initiative.
- Others water things Identified by legislature
- Progress on topics assigned to IWG
- other benefits whether indirect results that happened as a result of an action
- Who are the partners and what are they doing? e.g., water utilities, Key stakeholders.
- Actions by other groups (e.g., WUCCs, Implementation groups)
- Economic impact / location and conditions / If actions are Inclusive / just (environmental justice)
- Map layers that reveal locations where various Implementation or regulatory actions (by various agencies or programs or non-profits) were focused
- GC3 recommendations that overlap with SWP recommendations
- Relationship to other plans such as GC3, Green Plan, integrated Water Quality Pian, etc.
- recreational activities, Including fishing and boating

Who is the audience? (output)

- Anyone who drinks water
- Agencies
- General public / Students and researchers
- Legislature
- Water utilities
- Towns and cities / Land use zoning / city planners
- Both instream and out of stream constituents
- Prospective home buyers / developers?
- NCO's
- Other states (as a model for example)
- Inland wetland commissions.
- non-profits. citizen stewardship organizations.as well recreational boaters, and fishing clubs
- Regional development and municipal planning agencies
- Stakeholders

Who would do the tracking (input)?

- Only state agencies / WPC – agencies lead / State government entity
- Owners of tasks with authorization by WPC / Workgroup chairs
- The responsible party of the data / Responsible party should systematically solicit Input
- Needs to be someone's job – not a volunteer
- Water chief / Water Director or hired staff for the SWP
- A committee should be assigned to review applications if they meet some sort of implementation standards
- COG & regional planning organizations / WUCCs should provide input.
- All partners who are working on water projects that advance the SWP
- Anyone should have the opportunity to provide tracking accomplishments
- Separate the Input from the "Who can see?"
- Specific authorized users with specified tasks
- Anyone who believes they have had an event, educational program, project, etc. that aligns with any recommendation from the plan
- Pay Conservation Districts to hire professionals to do the tracking
- Others (such as water companies) who also collect data ought to submit the data- yet that data ought to be distinguished from the data gathered by a uniform tracking system

What are policy / confidentiality concerns?

- False data
- Information needs to be vetted by an accountable entity

- Ensuring accuracy of reports / Funding for accurate and thorough data collection is essential
- General availability of information
- Perhaps surrounding private wells / Potential water supply sources
- Need to develop a process for the agencies to review what is FOIA-able in the report and not public
- A DPH or DEEP staff member should review inputs before they become publicly available
- We should be transparent about all our data, unless it is FOIA EXEMPT
- Certain funding sources
- Lack of data within the urban and high-density suburban areas where conditions change frequently
- Problematic data such as impaired waters could lower real estate values
- What defines a project as complete?
- How action / activity relates to SWP

General Thoughts

- Up-to-date information is important
- Tracking and Reporting should be free and easy to use
- Who verifies? What are criteria?
- Available to non-profits
- Have Editor and/or Viewer only profiles to add, but readable by all
- Tracking through permitting reports
- Notification systems when new stuff is added
- Ensure that progress doesn't always = completion
- Implementation is not as simple as it sounds; "implementation" means nothing to most readers – be more specific when discussing this effort
- Find a way to use all the (public)data that state agencies use. Some data collected but then never utilized
- Something that is optimistic
- Shouldn't be bureaucratic/political report – water is important to everyone.
- Interactive maps