

DRAFT



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY




Recommendations for Legislation 2011

The Council on Environmental Quality reports the condition of Connecticut's air, water, land and life every year in *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*. The Council also is required by [CGS Section 22a-12](#) to recommend legislation "for remedying the deficiencies of existing programs and activities." The following is a draft list of likely recommendations for legislation. Your comments are invited.

November 2010

(Order does not indicate priority.)

PART ONE: Capital Investments in Land and Water

STATUS OF MAJOR RESOURCES (Bar shows progress toward state's goal as of November 2010)		RECOMMENDATIONS
CLEAN RIVERS, A SOUND ALIVE 	<p>Area of Long Island Sound with low oxygen levels expanded from 2004 through 2009, but showed some improvement in 2010.</p> <p>Most rivers do not fully meet water quality targets, and progress is slow.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to provide steady capital for the Clean Water Fund for grants and loans to cities and towns. Average annual need for state GO bonding <u>is estimated</u> to be:</p> <p>\$130 million</p>
FARMLAND 	<p>Preservation doubled in 2009 (to about 1400 acres) over 2008, and is on track to increase by even more acres in 2010. To meet the state's goal, preservation needs to average about 2,000 acres per year.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Preserve 2,000 acres per year.</p> <p>Continued annual need for state bonding is estimated to be:</p> <p>\$10 million</p>
FORESTS, FIELDS AND PARKS  <i>Accurate data unavailable</i>	<p>State acquisition has slowed greatly; goals are in jeopardy.</p> <p>Some towns have been acquiring land without state assistance, but acreage is unknown.</p> <p>There is no complete inventory of preserved lands.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Preserve 11,000 acres per year. This is a combined total for water utilities, nonprofit land trusts, cities, towns and the state.</p> <p>Annual need for state bonding is estimated to be:</p> <p>\$20 million</p> <p>This amount includes state acquisitions and grants to nonprofit land trusts, water utilities, cities and towns and is in addition to funds from the Community Investment Account.</p>

PART TWO: Improvements to State Statutes

CLEANING UP CONTAMINATED COMMUNITIES	<p>Remediation of a contaminated property and provision of a permanent potable water supply can take years, decades or longer.</p> <p>Each capital expense, however small, must be allocated individually by the State Bond Commission.</p> <p>When aquifers and drinking-water wells are found to be contaminated, the provision of temporary and permanent clean water supplies requires action by several agencies.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Consolidate in one agency all drinking water programs that relate to the provision of clean water to people with contaminated wells.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Require the State Bond Commission to allocate state superfund and potable water dollars annually to the DEP and DPH in lump sums to allow for effective response to high-priority cases.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Require the designation of an ombudsman for each remediation project that involves well contamination who can respond to citizens on behalf of all agencies that might be involved, and who shall report progress annually.</p>
PRESERVED LANDS	<p>Previous state estimates of municipal and nonprofit-owned preserved lands are wrong, off by tens of thousands of acres. Data on new acquisitions are not collected.</p> <p>Modern tools exist for assessing natural resources to guide purchases and no-cost acquisitions such as gifts, developer set-asides, corporate tax credits, etc.; these should be employed fully by the state.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Create a voluntary preserved-land reporting system for towns and land trusts.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve Strategy: Enable the DEP to plan open space acquisition based on accurate natural resource and open space inventory data.</p>
PROPERTY TAX RATES FOR PRIVATELY-OWNED OPEN SPACE	<p>In many towns, landowners who manage their lands (of less than 25 acres) for public benefits such as wildlife habitat do not qualify for lower property tax rates under P.A. 490, while other towns offer the "open space" property tax rate even where there is no clear public benefit.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Create a new classification under P.A. 490 (CGS Section 12-107a - 107e) for land that is managed as wildlife habitat pursuant to a plan approved and monitored by a certified forester.</p>
ATVs	<p>All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are driven illegally on trails and undeveloped lands to the detriment of the land, landowners, neighbors and legal users of the land.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Create a universal registration system that makes enforcement easier.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Amend CGS Section 22a-250a (forfeiture of vehicles used in violation of environmental laws) to include violations of Section 52-560a (encroachments on open space lands).</p>

