



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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Link to Full Report: <https://www.ct.gov/ceq/AnnualReport>

Connecticut's Council on Environmental Quality Releases 2018 Annual Environmental Quality Report

Regional Climate Trends Could Undo Decades of Environmental Progress in Connecticut

HARTFORD – May 29, 2019

Today the Council on Environmental Quality delivered the Annual Report to the Governor in accordance with [CGS 22a-12](#), as it has annually since its creation in 1971.

The Council reports that the trend of the last decade, and decades prior, has been a slow improvement in most measures of Connecticut's environment. In 2018, some crucial indicators of air quality and water quality did not sustain that historical trend.

Discharges of nitrogen from sewer treatment plants to the Long Island Sound increased, as did levels of dissolved nitrogen in the Sound. The state's residents breathed unhealthy air on three more days in 2018 than they did in 2017.

"A pause, or a change in direction, during a single year does not constitute a new trend" said Susan Merrow, Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). "It does merit attention however, especially for the measures of air quality and water quality. Those categories are likely to worsen as Connecticut's climate warms. In most cases, warming temperatures and amplified rainfall will hinder Connecticut's mission to improve air and water quality."

For every indicator that is affected by climate change (which is most of them), the Report includes a link to a section of *Climate Notes* with more information that explains the relationship. It points out that the causes of the warming climate are predominantly from beyond the State's border. Inside the State, the consequences of increasing regional and global temperatures will be more precipitation, shoreline flooding, exceedances in ground level ozone pollution, hypoxia in Long Island Sound, displacement of local biota, and intrusions by invasive plants and insects. Chair Merrow said "creating resiliency in the face of

these changes is imperative. Some resiliency is possible by accelerating the rate of land preservation". The Report's charts illustrate how far the state is from accomplishing its established goals for preservation of open space and of farmland.

The Annual Report includes a summary graphic for every environmental indicator comparing the indicator's value to the last report, its average for the previous ten years, and its trend relative to its long-term goal (if available).

A new addition in 2018 is a map of the expansion of the range of the emerald ash borer, which has increased in Connecticut from its first detection in four towns in 2012 to 134 towns today. The loss of ash trees in a forest stand reduces vital habitat and allows other undesirable invasive plants to fill the gap created.

The report points out a threat to environmental regulation that arose in 2018 as a challenge to the concept that the water of state is a "public trust". That led to the Council publishing *Connecticut Residents and the [Public Trust](#) in Air, Water, Wildlife and Other Resources*, which explained the importance of the public trust principle as foundational to the State's environmental protection laws.

Merrow concluded "We will continue to consult experts on the environment and climate change. Residents, policymakers, business and government leaders, have come to rely on our reports for succinct and unbiased analyses of Connecticut's environmental data, so we will make sure that all information is accurate and can be relied upon to make informed decisions."

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About the Council

Established in 1971, the Council on Environmental Quality submits Connecticut's annual report on the status of the environment to the Governor pursuant to section 22a-12 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Additional responsibilities of the Council include review of construction projects of other state agencies, publication of the twice-monthly Environmental Monitor, and investigation of citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws. The Council is a nine-member board that is independent of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (except for administrative functions). The chairman and four other members are appointed by the Governor, two members by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and two by the Speaker of the House. All serve without compensation.