

PRIORITIES FOR LEGISLATION IN 2021 TO IMPROVE CONNECTICUT'S ENVIRONMENT

PROTECT AGRICULTURAL LAND AND CORE FORESTS

- **Expand the forest and farmland protections of Public Act 17-218* to include any renewable energy project within the Siting Council's jurisdiction.**

Solar projects less than 2 MW and greater than 65 MW are now excluded. One MW of solar panels can occupy five acres or more and have a significant impact on the forests and farmlands the law was intended to protect. *Codified within [CGS 16-50k\(a\)](#).

- **Clarify definition of "materially affect" in Public Act 17-218 with regard to converting agricultural land to energy facilities.**

Clarification is needed on whether the intent is to protect "prime farmland", or the agricultural enterprise on which it is located.

Read the Council's special report, [Energy Sprawl in Connecticut](#), for more information about the conversion of farmland and forests to solar energy facilities (February 2017).

IMPROVE THE EFFICACY OF CONNECTICUT'S BOTTLE BILL

- **Increase the deposit fee from 5 cents to at least 10 cents.**

The experience of other states is that this will increase Connecticut's redemptions by at least 50%.

- **Expand the types of beverage containers eligible for deposit/redemption.**

It is estimated that over 120 million potential deposit beverage containers are thrown away annually.

- **Increase the handling fee, as appropriate.**

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection should assess the true cost of "handling" redeemed containers and recommend appropriate changes.

- **Develop recycled content requirements.**

This will be needed to boost the market for recyclable materials.

Read the Council's special report, [Low Deposit, Low Return](#), for more information about Connecticut's beverage container redemption program (October 2020).

PREVENT RELEASES OF HOME HEATING OIL

- **Require safety features on heating oil storage systems and periodic inspection of heating oil tanks and supply lines, as is done in neighboring states, to prevent releases.**

- **Create a central database for dealers and government officials to report faulty equipment.**

This would ensure that unsafe heating systems are addressed before fuel is dispensed.

- **Allocate additional funding to Connecticut's energy assistance finance programs for replacement of unsafe fuel storage tanks.**

Read the Council's special report, [Fuel for Thought](#), for more information about how to reduce the incidence and severity of accidental releases of home heating oil (December 2019).

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) is a nine-member board that was created in 1971. Council members donate their time and expertise. It is independent of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (except for purely administrative functions).

The Council works with state agencies, non-governmental organizations, legislators, and the public to fulfill its legislatively assigned responsibilities to:

1. assess the condition of Connecticut's environment and report its findings annually to the Governor, and recommend actions to improve state environmental programs;
2. advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed construction projects;
3. investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws;
4. publish the Environmental Monitor (the official website for state project information under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act and for notices of proposed sale/transfer of state-owned lands);
5. review Environmental Impact Evaluations that state agencies develop for major projects;
6. review telecommunications and energy proposals to the Siting Council; and
7. advise on environmental issues, as directed by the Legislature and Governor.