

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATION IN 2023 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 solar energy project within the Siting Council's jurisdiction.**

Solar projects less than 2 megawatts (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).

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).

PREVENT RELEASES OF HOME HEATING OIL

- **Require upgrades for older single wall metal tanks, low cost safety features on heating oil storage systems, education and training for delivery drivers, and periodic inspection of heating oil tanks and supply lines**

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).

ENHANCE LAND PRESERVATION EFFORTS

- **Allocate resources so that significantly more acres of farmland can be preserved.**

There is a statewide goal to preserve 130,000 acres of farmland by 2050; however, the Council estimates that only about 48,000 acres of farmland has been preserved through 2021.

- **Allocate resources to enable DEEP and its conservation partners to better track and preserve, through acquisition or easement, priority conservation land.**

There is a statewide goal to preserve 673,210 acres or .21% of all land area in the state by 2024; however, only about 563,000 acres or 84 percent of the total statewide goal has been preserved in fee through 2021.

Read the Council's annual report, [Environmental Quality in Connecticut](#), for more information about land preservation and over 40 other environmental indicators analyzed by the Council (April 2022).

PROTECT CONNECTICUT FROM INVASIVE SPECIES

- **Enhance education and increase resources to combat invasive species.**

Read the Council's special report, ["INVASIVES": PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED and NEWLY ARRIVED](#) for more information about invasive species in Connecticut (Updated April 2022).

REVISE DEEP'S HAZARD TREE POLICY

- **Revise DEEP's Hazard Tree Policy to require more consultation with qualified arborists, expand the locations where the Tree Policy would apply, and require the replanting of trees.**

DEEP's existing Hazard Tree Policy should be revised to address more of the concerns received during the public comment period for the protection of trees on lands of the state that are managed by DEEP. Read the [Council's comments](#) dated July 15, 2022.

ALLOCATE MORE RESOURCES FOR DEEP TO BETTER PROTECT THE STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Given the significant number of recent retirements at DEEP, the Council recommends more staff resources to better protect wetlands, air and water quality, wildlife, forests and parks, and the other critically important natural resources in the state.

REVISE CGS SEC. 7-131N TO PRESERVE AND EXPAND LAND USED AS PARK OR FOR OTHER RECREATIONAL OR OPEN SPACE PURPOSES

The Council recommends clarifying the language of the statute for the comparable replacement of open space/recreational land that is converted to some other use by a municipality, and not only in instances where the municipality employs eminent domain process to convert the park to other uses. The statute was intended to protect parks and open space in municipalities, especially urban areas, by requiring replacement when a park is converted to other uses. At least one Superior Court case has interpreted the statute in an extremely narrow fashion limiting the need for replacement to situations in which a park or open space is taken by a municipality through eminent domain which is an exceedingly rare occurrence. In contrast, municipalities, especially in densely developed areas are often tempted to convert parks into other forms of municipal infrastructure or economic development. By clarifying that the statute applies to any conversion of park space, the statute will maintain at least the net amount of open space within the municipality.

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 Connecticut Siting Council; and
7. advise on environmental issues, as directed by the Legislature and Governor.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Name	Appointed By	Appointed	Term Ends
Keith Ainsworth	Speaker of the House	Mar. '19	Mar. '27
Alicea Charamut	Governor	Dec. '15	Dec. '23
David Kalafa	President Pro Tempore	Apr. '19	Apr. '27
Kip Kolesinskas	Governor	Dec. '15	Dec. '23
Matthew Reiser	Governor	Mar. '16	Mar. '24
Charles Vidich	Speaker of the House	Nov. '16	Nov. '24
William Warzecha	President Pro Tempore	Dec. '21	Dec. '29

To learn more about the Council, please visit portal.ct.gov/ceq. If you have questions or comments regarding the Council and/or its legislative priorities, please contact the Council at paul.aresta@ct.gov or 860-424-4000.