

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CONNECTICUT'S ENVIRONMENT

AGRICULTURAL LAND AND CORE FORESTS

- **Protect agricultural land and core forests by expanding the forest and farmland protections of Public Act 17-218* to include any solar energy project within the jurisdiction of the Connecticut Siting Council. (SEE ATTACHED)**

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](#) (February 2017) and the Council's annual report, [Environmental Quality in Connecticut](#) (May 2023) for more information about the conversion of farmland and forests to solar energy facilities.

LAND PRESERVATION

- **Enhance land preservation efforts by allocating resources so that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and its conservation partners can better track and preserve, through acquisition or easement, priority conservation land;**
- **Refine the Department of Agriculture's (DOA) Farmland Preservation Program and the Community Farms Preservation Program to preserve significantly more acres of farmland; and**
- **Clarify the intent of [Connecticut General Statute Section 7-131n](#) that any conversion of park land owned or in the care of municipalities be maintained as parks or if they must be converted for some other use, that parks be replaced at a greater than one-to-one ratio. (SEE ATTACHED)**

The total area of [land preserved as open space](#) by DEEP is approximately 264,500 acres, even though the state's preservation goal is 320,576 acres by 2023. In addition, the Council estimates that only about [48,000 acres of farmland have been preserved](#) through 2022; there is a statewide goal to preserve 130,000 acres of farmland. In 2022, Connecticut preserved just 652 acres of agricultural land.

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 (May 2023).

WETLANDS

- **Increase staff resources within the Land and Water Resources Division at DEEP designated specifically to assisting municipal wetland officials and commissions. Such assistance should include 1) conducting audits of permits issued by inland wetlands agencies to provide targeted education, 2) expanding the training program for municipal officials, 3) assessing the possibility of using electronic submission of the "Activity Reporting Form" to enhance municipal participation and to increase the efficiency of the reporting process, and 4) helping to ensure compliance with applicable wetlands laws.**

DEEP has insufficient staffing to adequately protect the state's natural resources and improve environmental quality. More resources are needed to monitor and assist Connecticut's municipalities with inland wetlands regulation and ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

Read the Council's annual report, [Environmental Quality in Connecticut](#), for more information about [inland wetlands](#) and over 40 other environmental indicators analyzed by the Council (May 2023).

RIDERSHIP.

- **Enhance ridership of public transportation by serving people with unmet transportation needs and attracting more people that have public transportation access.**

It is estimated that GHG emissions in the transportation sector in 2021 accounted for approximately 40 percent of all GHG emissions in the state. It is calculated that bus ridership in 2022 was approximately 29 percent less than the previous ten-year average.

Read the Council's annual report, [Environmental Quality in Connecticut](#), for more information about [transportation](#) and over 40 other environmental indicators analyzed by the Council (May 2023).

INVASIVE SPECIES

- **Protect Connecticut from invasive species by enhancing education and increasing resources to combat invasive species.**

The adverse impacts of invasives affect all the state's land forms and ecosystems, from its waterways to its natural lands and also its working lands and developed landscapes. The ecological, economic and human health costs of unchecked invasive species can be high.

Read the Council's special report, ["INVASIVES": PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED and NEWLY ARRIVED](#) (Updated April 2022) and the Council's annual report, [Environmental Quality in Connecticut \(May 2023\)](#) for more information about invasive species in Connecticut.

SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

- **Increase the diversion of solid waste (recycling, composting, source reduction, etc.) and the redemption of beverage containers.**

It is estimated that Connecticut's diversion rate was approximately 41 percent in 2022, even though the state's diversion goal is 60 percent by 2024. It is calculated that approximately 29 percent of the state's municipal solid waste was transported out of state in 2022. Increasing the diversion rate should reduce the amount of solid waste that needs to be disposed, thereby reducing pollution and GHG emissions.

Read the Council's annual report, [Environmental Quality in Connecticut](#), for more information about [waste diversion](#) and over 40 other environmental indicators analyzed by the Council (May 2023).

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
Christopher Donnelly	Governor	May '23	May '31
David Kalafa	President Pro Tempore	Apr. '19	Apr. '27
Kip Kolesinskas	Governor	Dec. '15	Dec. '23
Matthew Reiser	Governor	Mar. '16	Mar. '24
Denise Rodosevich	Governor	May '23	May '31
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.