
Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)

MEETING MINUTES

Working and Natural Lands Working Group

Forests Sub-Group

Meeting Date: May 07, 2020

Meeting Time: 1:00 — 3:30 p.m.

Meeting Location: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ctdeep.zoom.us/j/99900594476>




Meeting ID: 999 0059 4476

Dial from your location

1-646-876-9923

ATTENDANCE

Sub-Group Member	Title	Organization	Present
Eric Hammerling, Chair	Executive Director	Connecticut Forest and Park Association	
Tim Abbott	Regional Conservation and Greenprint Director	Housatonic Valley Association	
Mark Ashton	Director of School Forests	Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies	
Patrick Comins	Executive Director	Connecticut Audubon Society	
Thomas Easley	Assistant Dean of Community & Inclusion	Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies	
Robert Fahey	Assistant Professor	University of Connecticut, Natural Resources and the Environment	
Edward Faison	Senior Ecologist	Highstead	
David Gumbart	Director of Land Management	The Nature Conservancy, CT	
Lisa Hayden	Landowner Outreach Coordinator	New England Forestry Foundation	
Charles Leigus	General Manager	Supreme Forest Products, Inc.	
Amy Paterson	Executive Director	Connecticut Land Conservation Council	
Herb Virgo	Executive Director	Keney Park Sustainability Project	∅

Associated Staff	Title	Organization	Present
Christopher Martin, Sub-Group Staff Assistant	Director/State Forester	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	
Jaimeson Sinclair, Sub-Group Staff Assistant	Director, DEEP Air Bureau, Engineering Division	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	
Cary Lynch, Staff Lead, WNLWG	Research Analyst, Office of Climate Change Technology & Research	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	

AGENDA & NOTES

Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, CFPA

Welcome and Introductions: Chair Hammerling welcomes all to the 7th meeting of the Forests Sub-Group of the Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GC3). **(5 minutes)**

The Chair then provides a summary of the Forests Sub-Group’s progress to date since it was formed at the end of January;

- Reviewed recommendations of CT’s 2011 Climate Adaptation Plan;
- Discussed changes in scientific understanding since 2011;
- Looked at models to use as Baselines for Carbon storage/Climate mitigation;
- Received information on equity, green infrastructure, air quality, and related urban forestry issues;
- Investigated various forest management approaches to achieve increased carbon storage and sequestration; and
- Learned about protecting vulnerable human and natural communities.

Chair Hammerling then expressed appreciation and gave thanks to the Forests Sub-Group members for their involvement, and encouraged them to keep up their energy and enthusiasm as the Sub-Group gets closer to developing a draft report and recommendations for the GC3 hopefully in June.

The Chair then introduces the topics for the meeting to help the Sub-Group develop recommendations; 1) Developing Forest Protection goals for Connecticut related to Climate Change and 2) Implementing related Funding Mechanisms.

Chair Hammerling reminds all participants how they may catch-up on any of the topics that have been covered over the past 6 meetings by visiting the CFPA website at [The Room Where it Happens for Forests and Climate | Connecticut Forest & Park Association](#) or DEEP’s web pages related to the GC3 and Forests Sub-Group - [Subcommittee and working groups](#). The Chair acknowledges the tremendous support of DEEP staff facilitating the meetings, conducts a member roll call, and reviews the meeting logistics and agenda including proper Zoom etiquette, using the “Chat” or “Raise Hand” features of Zoom, and keeping individual audio on mute.

Up to 51 participants on Zoom.

**I. Forest protection goals (acreage protected from conversion).
Funding and Financing recs. (120 minutes)**

The following presenters each gave a ~20-minute presentation followed by a ~10 minute question and answer period:

1. Laura Marx, TNC-MA and Chris Williams, Clark University: "Avoided deforestation in New England and New York/US Climate Alliance Grant Update"
2. Bradford Gentry, Weyerhaeuser Professor in Forest Management and Policy, Yale University: "Funding and Financing Forests"
3. Spencer Meyer, Highstead Senior Conservationist: "Investing in our Forests – Come for the Climate, Stay for the Health, Water, Air, Tourism, Jobs, Biodiversity..."
4. Shelley Green, TNC-CT: "Resilient and Connected Landscapes"

II. Public comments (20 minutes)

Ralph Jones, Hamden Alliance for Trees. First, thank you for persevering in this work. Our environmental challenges are no less urgent now than before we had heard of Covid or pandemic.

I know the attention of a "Forests Sub-Group" must be toward those areas where there are a lot of trees and very few people, but I urge you to keep in mind our urban and suburban forests. I don't think any of the other groups comes as close to responsibility for our urban environments. Urban/suburban trees are so important to the people who live in them and to our global ecology. And, they occupy a significant portion of our state. In particular, I urge you to keep Colleen Murphy-Dunning's presentation to you on 24 March. Perhaps you remember her slides showing two downtown New Haven streets -- one bare and another shaded by beautiful hundred-year-old established trees. She makes the crucial point that the presence of large trees is highly correlated with the environmental, economic, medical and aesthetic well-being of our neighborhoods. Well-being accompanies many forms of savings. We simply must find ways to protect our sylvan heritage.

She also made the point that our electric utilities are major actors when it comes to removing large urban trees. She questioned "right tree, right place" as a policy because it often leaves damaged or diseased trees across the street while removing healthy, large, desirable trees because they are growing close to wires.

I would also point to our Connecticut DOT as another significant actor in tree removal.

I hope you and the whole of the GC3 will work to protect our great heritage of urban and suburban trees. As Spenser Meyer just said, "let's not make things worse." As many of you have said in various contexts, we can protect what we already have. That's often the least expensive road.

Susan Masino. Emphasizes cardio and metabolic issues are important along with mental health. COVID related personal stressors are affecting lives more now increasing the importance of local woods, smaller areas like riparian corridors act as threads connecting larger landscapes. Commended the speakers and Sub-Group for a great integration of topics

Margaret Miner, Roxbury CT. Topics Structure: The dominant topic has been the role of trees and forests in carbon sequestration. This is almost certainly the correct focus. Reduction of atmospheric carbon is on target for the high-level goal of reduction of greenhouse gases. But sequestration is such a complex issue that dealing with it adequately leaves little time to analyze and report on the vital role of forests in the protection state waters, air quality, and normal air temperature.

Everyone participating in this sub-group is aware of all these forest functions. But the structure of the topics tends to be carbon sequestration first, and then everything else (natural water, water supply, health, recreation, wildlife, flooding, drought, and so on.) To add to the difficulty of appropriately allocating time and space, water matters are also addressed in GC3 groups on rivers, wetlands, and energy.

Recommend that discussion of water be broken out in a separate report. In our era of climate change, the world (and the people of Connecticut) will suffer first and the most from loss of clean, healthy waters.

The Forests sub-group has made clear that the most efficient, comprehensive, and cost-effective means of reducing atmospheric carbon gases is the carbon uptake and sequestration performed by plants, especially trees and forests. The response of the environmental community has been to study what forests and trees we need to conserve. The rest is left to fend for itself.

We should approach forestry from a different direction. *The burden should NOT be on the stewards of natural resources to identify which forest areas need to be conserved. It should be on the one who wants to cut the trees and forest explain and justify the need to remove a valuable organism that is essential to protecting the planet.* This approach will lead eventually to certain changes in jobs and construction; but we are going in that direction anyway. The state and region could allay the pain of change somewhat by setting goals for sequestration as well as emissions and rewarding progress toward those goals. Several interesting means of doing this were presented at the Forestry meetings. Some programs are already underway.

Beware of any tree removal practice that is defended on grounds of being “sustainable.” The group raised this concern, and I hope the concerns will be highlighted. *All formulas for sustainability need to be double-checked, both in models and in the field.*

The presentation on May 7th made it vividly clear that the forests on northwest Connecticut are part of a regional environmental system that is important to much of the New England and New York northeast region, even running into Canada. At the same time, this region has a high rate of deforestation. *Recommend that that more be done to educate people as to the great value of this forest resource (even in affecting climate).* We can be proud. We should be worried.

Presenters covered numerous ways to access funding for forest protection. I did not hear mention of a *tax on luxury goods, which might be acceptable in this state.* (Personally, I would like to see a tax on huge lawns.)

The valuable ecological functions of our forests and trees on the northwest of the state depend on connectivity. The whole is dependent on its weakest links, and these are often hyperlocal -- a stream or stand of trees in one's backyard. But conservation of these vital links is largely left to town volunteers on wetlands and planning commissions, who rarely have the means to identify and protect these key

areas. *Recommend a program to identify critical hyperlocal links vital to the health of our local and regional forest environment.* Headwaters should be included.

Many participants urged tying forest preservation to the causes of health, recreation, and environmental justice. Our state parks (if open) and land trust preserves have been attracting hordes of people in the past two months. The attraction of the woods is obvious. But I see that year-round people come in large numbers to events in the country. No one has a church picnic at a mall. *The lesson: seek non-traditional partners.*

Austin Dziki, Yale Student. Wants to know when recommendations are going to be drafted for Governor's Climate Change Council. What is the group supposed to be addressing? What are the specific goals, how are they going to be made actionable? Has there been any guidance from GC3 leadership? Chair Hammerling references the provided table of context and summarizes the process.

Kimberly Bradley, Project Specialist, Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). There is a need to conserve our forests lands in a healthy condition as they are impacted by insects & disease. The Forests Sub-Group should consider how we manage these forest lands to keep them healthy when considering climate adaptation and climate stressors

Randy Anway. Very informative, thanks presenters. Need enhanced communications to the public as well as educate the public. Forests and climate interactions are complex with many interactions. I'm architect that works with engineers. What role can these professions play.

Amber Garrard, Senior Manager, YALE Office of Sustainability. When talking about forests in the context of state planning and the resiliency of our broader community, I'd like to request that the committee consider the economic and social impacts that your recommendations have for all of those interacting with Connecticut's forests, including the individuals who work hard to maintain healthy, sustainable forests. As we try to make this process equitable and just, I hope that an effort has been made to reach out and include those who rely on managing our forests for their livelihoods: the foresters, loggers, truckers, mill workers, and others who support the wood products industry. Just as TNC pointed out that connectivity and complexity is important for resilience, I would argue the same principles apply to community resiliency. These jobs ensure a strong wood products industry in our state and help to support a broader ecosystem of locally made and produced wood products for our region. Just as we value carbon sequestration and other ecosystems services that our forests provide, we should also be mindful of the jobs they create and inclusive of the perspectives of those whose livelihoods are reliant upon them.

III. Next Steps and Adjourn

(5 minutes)

Chair Hammerling informs Sub-Group members they can expect a doodle poll for an administrative meeting on the elements and actions necessary to complete the Sub-Group's Draft Report to the GC3 including the need to coordinate with other Working and Natural Lands Working Group Sub-Groups and other Committees/Working Groups. Important task ahead is to complete the ranking and urgency ratings spreadsheet.

NEXT MEETING

Meeting Date: May 21, 2020

Meeting Time: 6:00 — 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: VIRTUAL

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ctdeep.zoom.us/j/94103016176>

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Meeting Adjourns 3:33PM