Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)
WORKING AND NATURAL LANDS WORKING GROUP
RIVERS SUB-WORKING GROUP
MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: May 5, 2020
Meeting Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Meeting Location: via ZOOM

ATTENDENCE

Working Group Member	Title	Organization	Present
Alicea Charamut	Executive Director	Rivers Alliance of Connecticut	Y
Lynn Werner	Executive Director	Housatonic Valley Association	Y
Eileen Fielding	Director	Sharon Audubon (National Audubon Society)	N
Kirt Mayland	Attorney/President	Reservoir Road Holdings & Mayland Energy	Y
Bill Dornbos	Executive Director	Farmington River Watershed Association	N
Andy Fisk (primary) Kelsey Wentling (alternate)	Executive Director River Steward - Connecticut	Connecticut River Conservancy	N N
Jason Vokoun	Professor and Dept. Head	UConn Natural Resources and the Environment	N
Mike Dietz (primary) Mike O'Neill (alternate)	Extension Educator Associate Dean	UConn/Institute of Water Resources UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources	Y N
Laura Wildman	Director	Princeton Hydro - NE Office, Ecological Engineering	Y
Virginia de Lima	Retired	USGS (retired) & CT Water Planning Council	Y
Shelley Green	Director of Conservation	The Nature Conservancy	N
Erik Mas	Environmental Engineer	Fuss and O'Neill	Y

Associated Staff	Title	Organization	Present
Rick Jacobson	Bureau Chief	CT DEEP, Bureau of Natural Resources	N
Peter Aarrestad	Director	CT DEEP, Bureau of Natural Resources - Fisheries Division	Y
Susan Peterson	Environmental Analyst 3	CT DEEP, Bureau of Water Planning and Land Reuse – Water Planning & Management Division	Y
Cary Lynch	Research Analyst	CT DEEP, Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy – Office of Climate Change Technology & Research	Y (ZOOM support)

Members of Public	Affiliation/Organization	
Margaret Miner	Rivers Alliance of Connecticut (consultant)	Y
Mary Rickel Pelletier	Park Watershed	Y
Elsa Loehmann	Mill River Watershed Association (Cheshire, Hamden, New Haven)	Y
Jennifer Duff	Princeton Hydro	Y

AGENDA & NOTES

Welcome and Announcements, and Roll Call
Alicea Charamut, Rivers Alliance

(Peterson asked for short delay to start of meeting due to technical difficulties she was having in setting up electronic format for taking notes for meeting minutes. Peterson apologized for delay.)

Rivers Sub-Working Group (SWG) members roll call

Introductions of members of the public attending.

Charamut provided explanation to members of public about Rivers SWG work. Since there were a small number of members of the public attending today's ZOOM meeting, Charamut said they were welcome to speak up and ask questions or make comments during the course of the meeting, unless things got too busy. Time was also provided at the end of the meeting for public input.

Agenda Items
Facilitated by Alicea Charamut, Rivers Alliance

- **Updates on GC3 work**

  Charamut summarized the Working and Natural Lands Working Group Chairs meeting that took place last Friday (5-1-20). Topics included:

  - 2011Climate Preparedness Plan - Recommendations Spreadsheet – Charamut will be resending spreadsheet to Rivers SWG. She is asking members to fill it out individually to the best of their abilities and send back. Will use the information to do some conflict resolution with regard to our EcoSystem Services teams spreadsheets as well as work that other WGs are doing.

  - Terminology – Discussed lining up terminology (with Table of Contents). Charamut said that the labels aren't as important as the work itself. Things can be moved around and relabeled to fit into the final document when that format is determined.

  - Final Document – Not yet clear how all SWG work will be combined into final document.

  - Environmental Justice (EJ) – Charamut spoke with Edith Pestana (CT DEEP EJ) recently. They have about 50 people on their calls. There will be a meeting at end of May and we will be presenting our work.

  Public Comment:

  (Comment) Rickel Pelletier – Was on call with Environmental Equity. Curious how other voices are being included? Works on urban rivers and would like to be involved in conversation. Was happy to be able to share at Equity but then it seemed to turn into private conversation. Rivers SWG seems to be a bit "closed". Understands this need to some extent but expressed concern.

(Response) Charamut – Thanked Rickel Pelletier for joining call. Explained the meeting notice process has been difficult. Anything that is being discussed (such as in Ecosystem Services teams) will be presented at full meeting. Different WGs have different levels of support and do not have control over CT DEEP process which is "clunky". Trying to do the best we can.

(Comment) Rickel Pelletier - Appreciates effort. Just recently got on (distribution) lists. Outreach for each group varies. Would appreciate not being shut down in other groups.

(Comment) Duff - It looks like there have been some updated meeting notices lately.

(Response) Charamut – Yes, CT DEEP is going to be sending notices out more frequently. Let her know if having issues.

- **Strategies, Actions and Outcomes – Discussion and Team reports**

Charamut noted that some of the Ecosystem Services teams have made progress. She asked for updates from teams that had been able to meet since the last Rivers SWG meeting. Charamut recorded new ideas and information in the individual team spreadsheets during the course of the discussion. (Spreadsheets can be viewed via this link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/15Zgdzd81yezMUj9arZJYRB4Qhe87sRfN/view) Updates and discussion regarding work of the individual teams were as follow:

Provisioning Services

Dietz provided an overview of latest work. Added implementation actions from the 2011 Plan, indicated by double asterisk. (Charamut noted that Dietz was referring to the table on p. 57 of this plan.) They are trying to evaluate these items and determine whether Connecticut has made progress. Also went over hydro dams vs. dam removal pieces discussed at previous Rivers SWG meeting. de Lima did some wordsmithing on this section. Trying to recognize different uses while also acknowledging less functional dams.

Public comment:

(Comment) Miner – There is serious problem re: incentives to build new, small hydro under the State's renewable energy portfolio policy. Thinks policy should reflect use of old dams, rather than building of new dams. There are also questions re: in-stream hydro technologies. State policy needs to be improved or clarified. Recommends NPR "Pulse of Water" documentary. Provides very good overview of water issues. Under current State policy, are we addressing main issues re: hydro power? Will section on hydro address issues coming up in PURA and Siting Council?

(Response) Deitz – Maybe other language could be added? De Lima - Good point, it doesn't address "future".

(Comment) Miner – (Current State policy) incentivizes new small hydros that don't generate that much power. However, that doesn't make good policy sense in terms of rivers. Should look for maximum efficiency of existing hydro power (operations) and get rid of inefficient and other dams.

(Response) Charamut – Changed spreadsheet wording to reflect Miner's suggestions. Asked Wildman if she had been able to get info on other types of instream hydro

technology?

(Response) Wildman – Yes, she has information. (However, having technical difficulties pulling it up right now because of computer issues.) Agrees with Miner's comments.

Charamut said that if anyone has other thoughts or comments to add to the Provisioning Services section to send them to her.

Regulating Services

Aarrestad noted the he added second row of terminology in "yellow" to Regulating Services spreadsheet to try to match what Rick Jacobson (CT DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources) spoke about during recent WNLWG Chairs meeting. Tried to plug (alternative terminology) into existing columns (headings).

Mas summarized teams' latest work. Focused on trying to fill in objectives and use SMART criteria. Noted carbon sequestration may overlap with Forestry SWG. Because he also worked on State Nonpoint Source Management (NPS) Plan a couple years ago, he made sure to include some of the larger objectives. He asked whether there had been an update? Peterson said the plan was updated last year by CT DEEP.

Mas said they also focused on riparian zones and considered MA statewide riparian regulations. He noted there is a long history of trying to adopt riparian zones in CT. Maybe this would be another opportunity to look at it? Werner agreed that MA does a good job and Wildman added that Supporting Services team also discussed this issue. There are also other comprehensive approaches such a Resilient Rivers Corridor program in VT. Werner underscored point, saying broader, more holistic approaches needed.

In terms of stormwater management, the team contemplated more effective stormwater measures needed such as updates to: Stormwater guidance manual; Stormwater General Permits with regard to climate precipitation changes. Mas referenced specific documents that need a "refresh" and also mentioned other external (non-CT) documents that would be helpful.

Charamut noted that James Albis (CT DEEP Commissioner's Office) indicated that the Governor is anxious for recommendations to come out before next legislative session. Some suggestions are "ripe" for consideration.

Mas noted that states surrounding CT are moving forward with stormwater utilities. Dedicated funding is needed in this area.

They also added some details on agricultural practices. Mas noted there is lots of duplication and that these are "high level" recommendations.

In terms of flooding, they provided policy and technical recommendations for protecting and discouraging development in floodplains, etc. Mas said they could use input from others (such as Wildman) on this piece from anyone with interest/expertise.

Wildman asked about "no adverse impacts" piece. She is concerned about the way FEMA has been applying "no adverse impact" because it basically "freezes things in time" and assumes that situation is ideal. However, there may be existing problems that don't get addressed as a

result, such as undersized culverts, etc. Must recognize that some things at that "frozen point in time" need to be fixed. Also, need to try to identify what things are good and/or need to be improved. Must recognize that these are dynamic systems which is why looking at a single, frozen point is problematic. de Lima suggested that perhaps we note that everything needs a periodic review. Werner agreed that this ties in with more holistic view. Wildman warned that don't necessarily a need major review of every (planning) document each time to move forward and accomplish things. Discussed at least putting "flags" or "pins" on problem sites (ie. – through municipal commissions, plans, etc.) Then, problems can be addressed when opportunities arise. This approach would help us to "figure an incremental way out" of problems we have created over the years. Wildman referenced VT and AZ approaches.

(Charamut paused Rivers SWG meeting here for a break and requested Lynch to pause ZOOM recording while on break and start it again after break.)

5 MINUTE BREAK

- **Strategies, Actions and Outcomes – Discussion and Team reports** (cont.)

(After break, Charamut asked Lynch to start recording again. Also asked Lynch if "Chat" comments will be transferred over with the ZOOM recording of meeting. Lynch noted that they would be and are FOIA-able. In the meantime, Charamut said she would copy and flag "Chat" comments and copy appropriate ones into the Ecosystem Services spreadsheets.

Public Comment:

(Comment) Loehmann – With regard to implementation associated with stream crossings and culverts, a reminder about NAACC (North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative) protocols and data. Program seems to be mostly implemented through non-profits. Perhaps an action item could be to provide information to non-profits and also towns re: data, etc.?

Cultural Services

Charamut noted the team did not have a chance to get together since the last meeting. However, she did a little work on this piece herself.

Supporting Services

Wildman said team had met two times. Haven't completed spreadsheet but made good movement, especially at last meeting. Charamut asked about the significance of the green print in spreadsheet. Wildman said individuals on the team brainstormed between meetings and each person used a different color.

Werner said they focused on actions and outcomes and what is achievable, then they tried to organize into broader concepts. They had a lot of similar conversation about stormwater management: infrastructure and up-grading, LID/GI and nature based solutions, enabling municipal commissions to do a better job, etc. Another key piece discussed was under "water purification" with regard to pro-active actions to protect landscapes that can filter water.

Discussed resiliency corridors and using State conservation dollars towards more resilience –

including urban forests, buffer legislation and utilizing MA buffer experience.

Still need to fill out waste treatment section.

With regard to water regulation and flood control, Wildman said they discussed the need to reduce/eliminate grandfathered diversions, especially with regard to low stream flows, etc. Discussed FEMA community rating system and need to educate towns about this and how to roll in recommended BMPs, etc. to improve communities' ratings system and lower insurance costs.

Discussed Sustainable CT recommendations.

Wildman and Werner said that with regard to buffer zones, there are examples and programs to which we can point. Wildman noted the VT River Resiliency Corridors program where the State defines the corridors but local towns get to decide how to implement. Other state program examples include: MA Division of Ecological Restoration; and NY – Conservation Corridors program (associated with significant funding). Would also like to see a position in CT DEEP Dam Safety focused on dam removals. This seems easily justifiable and would reduce State financial burden and provide a resource for private individuals to use.

Replacement of high priority culverts and consistent approach throughout state also discussed. Need to provide information to towns and have them incorporate this information into hazard mitigation plans to be eligible for funding, etc. Peterson suggested adding CT DOT to list because they need long lead time to incorporate changes into plans. Werner wondered how we could include private culverts? If towns have budget, then maybe can start to see improvements over time.

Wildman noted EJ issues associated with these concerns, and the need to understand hazards and socio-economic risks in communities.

Charamut noted that there were some great comments in Chat and she was trying to incorporate them into spreadsheet, so they can become part of the discussion. Werner underscored what Charamut said.

Public comments

(Note – The public comments below are in addition to those offered during discussion of the agenda items above … Several public comments were also offered via the ZOOM Chat function. Chat comments will be included as part of the ZOOM meeting recording.)

Rickel Pelletier – With regard to Equity, referenced case study comment re: North Branch Park. Would like to see improvements that come from having more holistic conversation with stakeholders. Not clear how to bring all stakeholders together. This may be a cultural issue? Other states have made more progress where you can see other urban rivers that have been embraced and transformed. People are not willing to come together and talk. Everyone has their own little corner. Not sure of solutions but it works in other states where everyone comes together. This is a critical issue in our state.

Miner – Has one big overview comment and that is: The best thing we can do for environment (as witnessed over the last months) is stay home - water has improved, wildlife is coming back, etc.

Need to incorporate this into planning. What is going to be effective? Three areas of potential action that are ripe for legislation next year. Stormwater management … Agency action/ guidance/changes without great expenditure of funds can be effective (such as cameras to capture low stream flow). Land use suggestions might have to go to Water Planning Council … Other initiatives such as RiverSmart. Take up other policy issues within next year such as registered diversions and water budget. Believes DEEP is working on a groundwater budget? Shouldn't postpone looking at registered diversion forever and drawdown of groundwater. These are examples of items can advocate for …

Miner – Can (public) send in comment on spreadsheets ? Charamut – Yes, anytime, though she noted that SWG teams still need to go thru prioritization exercise.

Charamut asked if there were any additional comments, noting that our meeting ZOOM time was running out and we have to share (ZOOM) account (with other users).

Miner – Hint: Don't call meeting "closed" … Instead, refer to as "workshop", etc. She doesn't object to what has heard today but does suggest changing terminology.

Charamut – Noted that no one in the group is using the term "closed" in reference to a meeting. Discussed this in (WNLWG) Chairs group. As long as bring work back to full group to discuss, then should be okay.

Next Steps and Adjourn

Charamut - Will send out 2011 Plan spreadsheet with terminology from Jacobson. She noted that she has hesitated to send it out because have not had a chance to discuss it yet.

Charamut will send around Doodle poll for mid-May meeting.

Charamut is trying to schedule presentation(s). (Waiting to hear back from someone.)

Next meetings will be mid-May and then June. May need to schedule more calls since meetings have been shorter than originally planned (due to CV-19 situation and difficulty in ZOOM-ing more than 2 hours at a time.)

Adjourn: ~ 12:00 pm