

Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)
Public Health & Safety Working Group
MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: September 19, 2022

Meeting Time: 9:15 AM - 10:45 PM

Zoom Recording: [Public Health and Safety Working Group Meeting Recording](#)

ATTENDANCE: GC3 Working Group Members in bold

Name:
Deputy Commissioner Heather Aaron, Co-chair
Alanis Allen, DEEP Liaison
Hannah Beath
Ashley Benitez
Deputy Commissioner Brenda Bergeron, Co-chair
Kendall Bobula
Chris Boyle
Laura Bozzi
Cynthia Costa
Evan Dantos
Meghan Doyle
Mariana Fragomeni
Rebecca French
Christine Hahn-Dunn
Jocelyn Hillard
Alana Kroeber
Sarah Lowe
Lori Mathieu, Co-chair
Katharine Morris
Huan Ngo
Jennifer O'Brien
Yaprak Onat
Martha Page
Michael Pascucilla
Meghan Portfolio
Bonnie Potocki
Anna Shugrue
Yolanda Stinson
Bridget Teevan
Sarah Watson
Joanna Wozniak-Brown
Kim Zigich

AGENDA & NOTES

Welcome and Introductions: *Chairs: Deputy Commissioner Heather Aaron, DPH and Deputy Commissioner Brenda Bergeron, DEMHS*

Ground Rules: *Alanis Allen, DEEP Liaison, Office of Climate Planning*

- Meeting is recorded and a link will be posted
- Announcement that the chat is public record, but may be used for questions and comments by working group members
- Working group members are asked to post their names and affiliation in the chat
- Reminder that the discussion portion is reserved for working group members
- Announcement that non-working group members should mute and turn video off until public comment

Introductions:

Deputy Commissioner Brenda Bergeron, DEMHS

Deputy Commissioner Heather Aaron, DPH

Lori Mathieu, Public Health Branch Chief (Environmental Health and Drinking Water), DPH

Brief Overview of GC3 Working Groups in 2022: *Alanis Allen, DEEP Liaison, Office of Climate Planning*

Opportunities Summary:

- Focus on engagement and implementation
- Building on equity lens model used in 2020 process

Timeline:

- Working groups will be meeting in September and October (at least twice)
- EEJ will review in November
- Working groups will present in December
- Working groups will prepare a presentation in lieu of a report

Overview of 2020 Public Health & Safety Recommendations: *Lori Mathieu, Public Health Branch Chief, DPH*

- GC3 founded through EO-3 in 2019
- Governor's report was published in January 2021 and included 61 total recommendations based on the deliberation of over 40 stakeholders
- GC3 was founded on an equity lens
 - Charge was to use an equity lens when developing all recommendations
- Public Health and Safety working group developed 4 recommendations
 - 1. Develop a coordination framework for public health and safety priorities with a focus on the intersection of health equity and climate impacts**

- a. Included focus on heat-related exposure, food security, and needs of mental health populations in disaster response, among others
 - b. Want to provide more of a focus in 2022 to those that the group could not devote sufficient time to in 2022
- 2. Prepare Connecticut for Vector-Borne Diseases**
- a. An area of particular focus for the 2022 working group
 - b. Vector-Borne Diseases will increase as climate change worsens
 - c. Need to strengthen monitoring and surveillance of vector populations
 - d. Need to focus on prevention and management guidelines
- 3. Prepare Public Water Systems**
- a. Develop guidelines for drought management, including conversation measures and communication guidelines
 - b. Develop a GIS database and framework for continued updates to capture critical facilities
 - c. Improve identification of flood zones and new flood zones in order to protect our drinking water supplies during floods
- 4. Include Vulnerable Populations in Planning**
- a. Need to plan for emergencies with everyone at the table
 - b. COVID-19 restricted the 2020 process and there needs to be a move back to meeting with communities in the GC3 process
 - c. Need to consider language accessibility, particularly in Spanish, in all education, preparedness, response and recovery communication strategies

Questions and Discussion:

- Huan Ngo: After we're done planning with what we know and can anticipate, we should also set up a mechanism to what we don't.
 - Lori notes the chairs would appreciate understanding what the working group thinks is important
 - Suggests reading the materials she has referenced and coming to the next meeting prepared to discuss what important items are left to focus on
- Joanna Wozniak-Brown: Do the chairs anticipate a policy subcommittee before the report to the full GC3?
 - Noted as a good question and one that needs to be discussed among the chairs
- Laura Bozzi: Is there an update on where the 2020 recommendations are in terms of progress?
 - Alanis notes there is a document containing progress details that she will share
 - Lori also shares that she would love to provide more details at the next meeting, as well
 - Lori recommends the Public Health and Safety subcommittee report to help identify gaps and priority areas

Discussion of Subject Area Priority (Heat Island Preparation and Response): *For full comments please see the Zoom recording and/or audio transcript*

Presentation: Extreme Hot Weather Emergency Management Protocol

- Have developed better strategies to get vulnerable populations involved in process development, but there is room to improve
- Notes that CT Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security operated within the CT Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
 - The department has units dedicated to hazard mitigation and resiliency
- State Response Framework:
 - Made up of protocols and standard-operating-procedures
- DEMHS tracks weather as part of their responsibilities, which are then sent out to municipalities
 - Ex. During extreme heat, a report and update is sent out to every town and city in order to facilitate preparedness and response
 - Extreme cold weather protocol was formalized in 2011, but had been in practice for a long time
 - Extreme hot weather protocol was developed in 2021 in response to increasing health-threatening heat waves
- Hot Weather Emergency Protocol:
 - Alerts and information disseminated to towns and cities
 - Utilize specific process to reach diverse communities
 - Cooling center information is collected via WebEOC
 - 211 is notified of potential increase in calls

Update on BRACE Grant: *Lori Mathieu, Public Health Branch Chief, DPH*

- Successfully applied for BRACE Grant
- Hired one person and intend to hire two more staff members in addition to a lead
- Working in collaboration with Deputy Commissioner Aaron and Commissioner Juthani to ensure they are moving in the right direction
 - Working in collaboration with Health Equity Office
 - Utilizing CDC social vulnerability index models and metrics
- Intends to give a lengthier update at the next meeting

Questions and Discussion:

- Martha Page: Do you anticipate that we will get to food security and mental health?
 - Lori suggests we should prioritize these topics
 - Notes that there were very few people in the 2020 working group that had expertise in these areas
 - This year, she suggests identifying whether working group members have this experience and, if not, inviting people in
 - Martha indicates interest in food security work

- Martha notes that she has a network of folks who work in state and regional food planning (part of the effort to get food to folks who needed it during COVID-19, but notes that we need better planning to avoid the crisis in the first place)
 - If GC3 wants to work in this arena, we need to narrow the focus
 - Martha can help identify relevant folks
 - Lori notes that a food emergency preparedness plan would be a good place to focus
- Meghan Doyle: Notes that the free lunch program is instrumental in food security initiatives
 - Federal funding provided higher reimbursement rates for these programs in the past year
 - Notes that Milford still has a high need, though it is often discussed, and highlights that need can be difficult to discern
- Michael Pascucilla: Notes how essential school lunch programs are and how important it is to capture them in these conversations
- Rebecca French: Confirming if the group wants to move forward with heat intervention and noted that some topics are being addressed by other working groups, like flooding and Resilient Infrastructure and Nature-based Solutions
 - Notes that heat is increasingly seen as a public health issue
 - Deputy Commissioner Aaron suggests looking at existing policies with our increased knowledge about heat patterns
- Cynthia Costa: Notes that in the last few years, she has done many inspections that have resulted in increased food waste because restaurants often lack adequate cooling in the face of increased heat
 - Suggests inviting people from restaurant associations
- Yaprak Onat: Notes that there are gaps in the social vulnerability index because heat affects people differently based on several variables. She asks if there are any gaps in the index that we should be aware of to guide the conversation on heat-related stress.
 - Deputy Commissioner Aaron clarifies that the index targets places within the community that have low education, high poverty, low SES
 - But that they wish to meet as many people as possible and to combine useful factors to create an index that can be a warning signal for communities
- Laura Bozzi: Notes there is a lot of funding coming from the federal government regarding heat, weatherization, and other mitigating and resiliency strategies
 - Laura notes that in order to get a good picture of this, Public Health and Safety working group needs to be kept apprised of other groups' focus
- Bonnie Potocki: Works in renewable energy and solar and suggests the working group could create a playbook for coordination between towns and regions during extreme weather events
 - Also wants to propose investigating development of a microgrid
 - Lori also suggests continuous training as an important strategy

Public Comments: *No comments were submitted during the working group meeting. Comments can be submitted via writing at DEEP.Climatechange@ct.gov.*

Adjourn and Next Steps

Resources:

[Opportunities for the Governor's Council on Climate Change in 2022](#)

[Governor's Council on Climate Change Reports](#)

[GC3 Working Group Final Reports](#)

Chat Record:

00:22:46 Martha Page: Martha Page, CT Food System Alliance

00:22:50 Sarah Lowe: Sarah Lowe - Department of Social & Behavioral Sciences, Yale School of Public Health

00:23:02 Mariana Fragomeni: Mariana Fragomeni, Assistant Professor in Landscape Architecture, University of Connecticut

00:23:03 Laura Bozzi: Good morning. Laura Bozzi, Yale Center on Climate Change and Health.

00:23:24 Meghan Doyle: Meghan Doyle. QU Law student and QU Sustainability Fellow.

00:23:26 Jocelyn Hillard, American Red Cross: Good morning, Jocelyn Hillard from American Red Cross, on behalf of Richard Branigan

00:23:28 Heather Aaron: Heather Aaron Deputy Commissioner of the DPH

00:23:32 Lori Mathieu: Good morning everyone. Christine Hahn-Dunn, Epidemiologist with DPH, Environmental Health and Drinking Water Branch

00:23:44 Michael Pascucilla: GM - Michael Pascucilla, East Shore District Health Department

00:24:00 Jennifer O'Brien: Jennifer O'Brien, Community Foundation of ECT

00:24:05 Alana Kroeber: Good morning. Alana Kroeber with United Way of CT/2-1-1 Connecticut.

00:24:09 Joanna Wozniak-Brown: Joanna Wozniak-Brown, CT Office of Policy & Management

00:24:17 Yolanda Stinson: Good morning everyone! Yolanda L Stinson CCEEJ Bridgeport Lead Organizer

00:24:35 Kendall Bobula: Kendall Bobula, Community Preparedness, Strategic Planning and Grant Manager - CT DESPP Division of Emergency and Homeland Security

00:25:06 Brenda Bergeron: Good morning! Brenda Bergeron Deputy Commissioner DESPP/DEMHS

00:25:28 Kim Zigich: Kim Zigich, Attorney, DESPP/DEMHS

00:25:31 Yaprak Onat: Yaprak Onat - Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation - UConn

00:25:46 Anna Shugrue, NECCOG: Anna Shugrue- Regional Planner at Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments

00:30:17 Alanis Allen, CT DEEP: Opportunities for GC3: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-2022-agendas-and-minutes/Opportunities-for-GC3-in-2022-060822.pdf>

00:31:52 Katharine Morris: we see speaker notes

00:31:58 Sarah Watson, CT DEEP Office of Climate Planning (she/her): Link to the GC3 report: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Climate-Change/GC3/Governors-Council-on-Climate-Change>

00:33:15 Alanis Allen, CT DEEP: If you would like to speak during the public comment section of the agenda please message me directly

00:33:26 Sarah Watson, CT DEEP Office of Climate Planning (she/her): Link to the 2020 working group reports: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Climate-Change/GC3/GC3-Working-group-reports>

00:49:39 Huan Ngo: After we're done planning with what we know and can anticipate, we should also set up a mechanism to what we don't, emergent public health problems?

00:50:19 Joanna Wozniak-Brown: Do the chairs anticipate a policy subcommittee before the report to the full GC3?

00:52:54 Laura Bozzi: Is it possible to have an update on current progress on 2020 recommendations? That would help the working group make recommendations for next steps.

00:53:01 Alanis Allen, CT DEEP: Send written comment to DEEP.ClimateChange@ct.gov and we will forward to the chairs.

00:53:10 Joanna Wozniak-Brown: I second Dr. Bozzi's comment.

00:53:19 Laura Bozzi: great thanks

01:10:39 Martha Page: How do you anticipate that we will get ot the food security and mental health issues?

01:10:45 Martha Page: to

01:12:19 Martha Page: I volunteer for the food security work!

01:16:43 Rebecca French: NOAA said August was hottest month on record for Connecticut. 13 days over 90 degrees in August

01:18:29 Laura Bozzi: It would be great if we could look for synergies between our recommendations and those of other working groups - like infrastructure, forestry, and especially mitigation

01:18:43 Mariana Fragomeni: Agreed

01:24:08 Katharine Morris: agreed, and there are many local organizations who could be collaborated with, ex. Grow Hartford

01:25:54 Alanis Allen, CT DEEP: DEEP. ClimateChange@ct.gov for any written comments.

01:30:09 Katharine Morris: I recommend connecting with Shanelle Morris (shanelle@hartfordfood.org) of the Grow Hartford Youth Program for essential community insights and direct impact work on food insecurity and school system intervention

01:30:17 Mariana Fragomeni: Absolutely Rebecca and I echo your comments. We should also take into consideration how acclimatization is effecting what Deputy Commissioner Aaron is pointing out. Our communities are not used to high temperatures, therefore, are more likely to be affected by high temperatures.

01:32:23 Katharine Morris: re: heat and drought, in addition to climate exacerbated heat waves and the disproportionate impact on EJ/vulnerable communities with the urban heat island effect, droughts are often considered forgotten issues (aside from those who are fishers, outdoorsy)

01:32:40 Rebecca French: Apologies for not saying my affiliation before my comment: Director of Climate Planning CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection

01:32:42 Katharine Morris: raising awareness to regular people is important for mitigation

01:33:12 Katharine Morris: -- Katharine Morris, Governor's IJJA Advisor for DEEP

01:34:00 Lori Mathieu: Katherine, can you please define regular people

01:36:33 Katharine Morris: folks who wouldn't be in meetings like this

01:37:06 Katharine Morris: folks who aren't privy to climate science

01:37:19 Lori Mathieu: Katherine, I did not send that question...not certain who did

01:37:22 Katharine Morris: folks who don't have access to outdoor space

01:37:28 Huan Ngo: We need to have improved predictive modelling of rising heat for CT, linking to heat islands and poverty areas. Not based on past and current data, but anticipating climate changing.

01:37:30 Katharine Morris: *Katharine

01:38:25 Lori Mathieu: Yes absolutely. That is the goal of our equity focus. Our SVI work also looks at these populations.

01:40:36 Yaprak Onat: Thank you, that will be great Lori.

01:42:52 Brenda Bergeron: Thank you for this excellent conversation, unfortunately, I have to drop off to travel to another event.

01:43:02 Alanis Allen, CT DEEP: DEEP.Climatechange@ct.gov

01:43:46 Jocelyn Hillard, American Red Cross: Thank you for a thoughtful discussion!

01:46:13 Yaprak Onat: Thank you all

01:46:15 Huan Ngo: Thank you!

01:46:15 Laura Bozzi: Thank you

01:46:19 Mariana Fragomeni: Thank you