



Connecticut Department of

**ENERGY &  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION**

**Commissioner Klee's Address at the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters  
Annual Summit  
Hartford, Connecticut  
January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Good morning – it is great to be with this group again. Thank you to members of the General Assembly for joining us, along with our great DEEP staff, as well as all of you advocates on the front lines. It seems like only yesterday the 2017 legislative session ended... Perhaps that is because it only ended in October and the General Assembly is still working to address a \$225M deficit – frankly a difficult budget situation.

There were some wins this past session – with the help of quite a few people in this room Passport to Parks was created – which provides sustainable funding source for our state parks. However, we must always be vigilant to additional sweeps of those funds to pay for other things.

Each year more than 9 million people visit our state parks. Fun fact: that is on par with the number of visitors the two casinos see each year. And with this new program we can expect to see even more visitors.

Connecticut State Parks are an economic driver for our state and the communities they are located in. When people visit our state parks they also visit local restaurants, shops, local farms and even the occasional brewery.

Therefore it is important we continue invest and protect our parks and the new Passport to Parks program helps to provide a consistent funding stream to protect them.

It also allows us to give more to the public that has now invested in our park system: increased lifeguards; shoulder season camping for opening day of fishing and into the fall foliage; longer hours at our museums and nature centers. These are the things our visitors enjoy.

At DEEP we are focused on creating a positive visitor experience with a focus on safety and ensuring our parks are properly maintained: from trash pickup to clean bathrooms, to trail maintenance.

We are expecting 10 percent more visitors as they take advantage of Passport to Parks. We are going to need your helping trying to install the backpacker ethic, pack it in, pack it out, to help us manage waste.

Our state park system also provides great seasonal employment opportunities. Anyone who is interested or knows someone who would be interested in a being a lifeguard or park maintainer please fill out an application.

This year our application is online at [www.jobapscloud.com/ct/](http://www.jobapscloud.com/ct/)

Make no mistake, Passport to Parks was an important victory. But there were also setbacks, which happened when the Governor was “out of the room.” Though we killed it in the Environment Committee, somehow the budget bill included a requirement that certain permit requests submitted to DEEP shall automatically be deemed approved unless otherwise acted upon within 90 days.

I believe this is awful public policy on the part of General Assembly and one I am working to address.

Let me be very clear on this point – I will never put the health or safety of the residents or the environment of this state in jeopardy by this automatic approval. My staff has been spending an inordinate (and wasted) amount of time to interpret this bad law in the least harmful way, and ensure that permits receive an appropriate review.

I wasn't going to talk about our declining budget, our shrinking staff, our loss of 30+ year veterans – because I've been told by folks that I depress the hell out of everyone when I talk about it. Let me just say, however, that this 90-day stupidity is exactly the type of waste of time that I don't have the time, staff, or resources to deal with.

Another misguided step by the General Assembly was sweeping a significant portion of the funding for our award winning Connecticut Green Bank and energy efficiency programs, as well as the sweeps of all of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auction proceeds, which were supposed to be invested in Connecticut's clean energy economy.

These programs have been vital to our efforts at reducing carbon emissions and helping customers lower their energy consumption.

Efficiency is the “first fuel” – and the foundation of our clean energy programs in Connecticut.

The efficiency sector employs tens of thousands of people as HES providers, HVAC installers, and insulation providers right here in Connecticut.

Efficiency and weatherization reduces energy burden on low and moderate income households.

Efficiency helps businesses large and small stay competitive.

And efficiency avoids having us build new (or run old) fossil fuel power plants in the New England grid, when we get credit from ISO New England in their forward capacity auction.

The CT Green Bank – which Bryan Garcia will talk more about right after me – has sparked a clean energy revolution in the state, and created a national and international movement of Green Banks, which were some of the reasons it won the Harvard Kennedy School's innovation in government award in 2017.

The CT Green Bank model of using limited public dollars to attract and leverage 5, 6, or 10 times the amount of private capital is responsible for over \$1Billion invested in CT's clean energy economy.

The CT Green Bank has supported residential solar investments through its SHREC program, and helped foster thousands of solar jobs in the state.

The CT Green Bank has reduced energy costs and deployed clean energy in the commercial, industrial, manufacturing, and non-profit sectors through its remarkable C-PACE program.

The CT Green Bank has also tackled the tough sectors – multi-family, low and moderate income, etc. – to ensure that the clean energy revolution includes ALL of Connecticut.

Despite the legislature's goal of no new taxes, customers will continue being charged for these programs on their utility bills but the money will flow to the General Fund - making this effectively an Energy Tax.

We are working closely with the Green Bank, the Energy Efficiency Board, clean energy companies, and advocates to try to mitigate the damage caused by those sweeps and to secure the future of these vital programs.

Despite the difficulties last session brought – I am hopeful that during this upcoming legislative session legislators will commit themselves to protecting the future – not just on the budgetary side – but taking real action to address climate change.

And, yes, I am commissioner that is actually allowed not only to say the words climate change, and actually do something about it. We are a rare breed; a dozen or so. But our numbers are growing.

Governor Malloy will continue to take a leadership role in the face of the awful combination of federal denial, retreat, inaction, and/or outright assault on our environment perpetrated by the Trump administration.

I want to spend the remainder of my time on why I believe now is the time – in this upcoming legislative session – to prioritize climate change, by both (1) integrating our climate and energy policies; and (2) finding ways to adapt to our already changed climate and make our communities more resilient in the face of projected sea level rise.

All of us should feel an obligation to future generations to take action to address the very real threat of climate change.

In his farewell address President Obama was clear on this point. He's a president I can freely quote without worry that he's saying potty words my seven year old shouldn't hear. President Obama said in part:

*...without bolder action, our children won't have time to debate the existence of climate change; they'll be busy dealing with its effects: environmental disasters, economic disruptions, and waves of climate refugees seeking sanctuary. Now, we can and should argue about the best approach to the problem. But to simply deny the problem not only betrays future generations; it betrays the essential spirit of innovation and practical problem-solving that guided our Founders.*

"Innovation and problem-solving", that is at the core of what truly makes America great. Which makes this past year's assault on science and innovation so disturbing.

It was a particularly odd year to be a scientist. Not only am I a scientist, but I am a son of a scientist – my Dad was a biomedical engineer. I am the grandson of a scientist – a food chemist. I married a scientist – a psychologist. My two boys love science and exploring the natural world.

And I have the honor and privilege of leading an agency with over 600 scientists and engineers.

Our agency scientists, in partnership with our great academic institutions here in Connecticut, have created the 30 year record of changes to temperature, water quality, sea level, and flora and fauna in Long Island Sound.

This time series data shows warmer waters, rising waters, and waters that now more closely resemble Maryland than Maine (blue crab instead of lobster), as cold water species move north, and warmer species move in.

And here in this audience are citizen scientists, who have observed that part of town that now floods every week or every month during high tide, or that new pest in the garden, or the disrupted rhythms of the seasons when some bugs or birds arrive early, some arrive too late, and some don't arrive at all.

The scientific predictions of the likely "new normal" under a warmed climate ALL seemed to happen in dramatic fashion this year. The torrential rains and floods of Houston, the hurricane that devastated (and is still devastating) Puerto Rico, and the fires of California, causing dramatic loss of life, and billions of dollars in damage.

Here in Connecticut, actual scientists at the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA), supported by DEEP and the CT General Assembly, have now localized the national and global projections for sea level rise, to the conditions in Connecticut.

CIRCA has now established that we should expect 50 cm of sea level rise in Long Island Sound by 2050 – almost 1 foot 8 inches (20") by 2050.

I'll let that number sink in... it will have a dramatic impact upon our state, and the considerable amount of infrastructure along our coast. We need strong and smart policies governing the decisions we are making in the coastal zone, which will behave dramatically differently in the next 30 years, with increased frequency of flooding events, and higher flood levels.

President Trump's misguided decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement only increases the probability that of more storms in the future, and that our sea level rise projections will be under-estimates.

Thankfully, Connecticut has stepped up and joined with other states – Republican and Democratic – in forming the United States Climate Alliance, which is committed to upholding the Paris Climate Agreement and taking aggressive action on climate change.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has also announced this plans to rollback of the Clean Power Plan. I traveled to West Virginia, the heart of coal country, where the only public hearing on this matter was held, to testify against its repeal on behalf of the people of Connecticut.

The morning of the first day was what you might expect – the CEO of Murray Energy falsely claiming the Clean Power Plan was killing coal (when it is really low natural gas prices and market forces that have killed coal), with 50 of his employees behind him in their miner jumpsuits and hard hats.

However, after those first few hours something inspiring happened. People from across the nation made the long trip by car, bus, and plane to Charleston, West Virginia, to share their stories of how air pollution from coal fired power plants have impacted their communities, their mothers, sisters, cousins. These were high school and college kids, environmental justice activists, and concerned individuals.

It is easy to get down in the face of constant bad policies coming from Washington; those voices in Charleston were inspiring and uplifting and I was proud to join them.

We need to harness and channel similar inspiring and uplifting voices here in Connecticut to take action to address climate change.

One such inspiring voice came last Friday from the Governor's Council on Climate Change.

That group of state agencies, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and business leaders, through consensus, recommended an economy-wide greenhouse gas emission reduction target of 45 percent below 2001 levels by 2030.

The recommended 45 percent by 2030 mid-term reduction target will place Connecticut on a linear downward trajectory from today's GHG emissions to the 80 percent reduction from 2001 levels by 2050 required by the Global Warming Solutions Act.

45% by 2030 is an ambitious goal that will require significant and dramatic changes to all sectors of our state's economy, and concerted effort by all parts of civil society. To put that goal in context, it is California or New York PLUS level of ambition; they are 40% by 2030. Rhode Island is 45% by 2035.

To successfully meet this goal, we must implement a major transformation of how we generate and utilize energy in a short timeframe. We must commit to modernizing and decarbonizing

our transportation system, vehicles, building stock, heating and cooling systems, and electricity generation system.

There will inevitably be multiple options for achieving GHG reductions. We must prioritize mitigation measures based on their ability to deliver GHG emission reductions in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible. We should focus on implementing proven, scalable strategies.

When evaluating GHG reduction strategies, we must also consider co-benefits such as improved health, economic development, energy security and independence, and quality of life.

The success of our efforts to reduce GHG emissions in Connecticut – and its value to the national and international efforts to limit the increase in global average temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius – requires engagement and action from all levels of government (local, state, regional, and national).

Government action alone cannot achieve the ambitious goal we have set. We must harness innovation, and engage, foster, leverage and support the private sector as it develops and implements solutions that will lead to GHG emission reductions.

The government and private sectors alone also cannot achieve the ambitious goal we have set. Individual citizens, civic organizations, religious groups, non-governmental organizations, and other members of civil society must be engaged, active participants in the transition to a decarbonized economy.

Fairness, equity, justice, and intergenerational costs are crucial elements to consider when confronting climate change.

We must maximize synergies between mitigation and adaptation measures, and avoid trade-offs between the two.

And, we must have regular check-ins to ensure the state is on a clear and consistent path to achieve its GHG goals, and allow for course-correction in the face of unanticipated changes over time.

We know that Connecticut cannot solve the global climate crisis on its own – our emissions are a fraction of a fraction of US or global emissions.

But we also know that Connecticut can implement innovative, thoughtful, progressive mitigation and adaptation policies that dramatically reduce our emissions, grow our economy, and make our communities more resilient.

In doing so, we can continue to light a path for others to follow.

This is our mission – leaving our planet in better shape than we found it – for the sake of our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

Working together I believe we can affect real change this legislative session. I am asking for your support in this endeavor.

Thank you.