



## **Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC)**

### **Quarterly Meeting Notes**

June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025

05:30 PM – 07:30 PM

Location: 295 Meridian Street, Groton, CT 06340 and Zoom

**Recording Link:** [https://youtu.be/As5qiVokrdI?si=xEjT0Xle\\_spbXLmS](https://youtu.be/As5qiVokrdI?si=xEjT0Xle_spbXLmS)

#### **I. Welcome from Cierra Patrick, CEEJAC Council Member**

- a. Land Acknowledgement led by Michael Kicking Bear Johnson, *Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation*
- b. Welcome from local elected officials: Mayor of City of Groton, Keith Hedrick; Rep. Dan Gaiweski

#### **II. Community Dialogues**

##### **Elanah Sherman, ADA Educator**

Embed the concerns of individuals with disabilities into DEEP and Environmental Justice policies and practices. States that individuals with disabilities should be present in decision-making and policies. Notes that public announcements for events should increase accessibility including translators, accessibility of physical location, etc.

Response from Dr. Mitchell: Notes that the EJ community is aware of the continued efforts for disabled individuals to participate in EJ and will continue to implement recommendation and accommodations for these populations.

##### **Wasaka**

Asks regarding the policies of DEEP regarding environmental justice and how this is approached in the state

Response from Dr. Mitchell: EJ policy is continuing to be expanded through DEEP and the state. Comments were made regarding the posting and

meetings that are required within EJ policy, and future practices that will be expanded and established.

**Amy Peddie, Friends of Bates Woods**

Concerns of Bateswood Park where garbage facilities (abandoned landfill) are upon watersheds, claiming the city has placed high amounts of construction debris in the middle of this park. Believes that proposal to expand solar capabilities within this park is not a good idea for New London as it is an urban forest and other locations are more optimal.

Response from Dr. Mitchell: Expressed that this information is new knowledge to the committee- encouraged to talk to land subcommittee

**Michelle Maitland, City of Groton**

Expresses interest into expanding CEQ environmental monitoring alert to be expanded into social media to increase public.

- Native representative stated that both the state and federal government needs to have better communication regarding these events and to expand the public comment time past 30 days.

Response from Dr. Mitchell: Although it is public notice, often times, it is not seen, so expanding into new communication forms is a plausible idea.

**Rep. Susan Johnson, House District 49: Windham**

Talked about sustainable energy and practices, particularly geothermal energy and recycling. Ethanol emissions were stated as a concern, particularly in Hartford, and recycling practices could be utilized to mitigate these pollutants.

Response from Dr. Mitchell: Will continue to investigate these recommendations, particularly geothermal.

**Sydney Vukicevich, New London Trees**

Advocate for tree warding for the town of New London. However, the town does not meet arborical standards due to lack of Tree Wardens, and encourages education and budget for tree care in CT. Overall municipality efforts and expansion of tree maintenance and care is critical.

Response from Dr. Mitchell: This concern should be expanded into land subcommittee as these concerns would be best suited there.

**Bud McCallister, New London**

Continuing to bring together 23 local areas (New London) to expand EJ and environmental policy to increase environmental and cultural tourism. Emphasizes the importance of cohesion for more environmental activity.

Response from Dr. Mitchell: Thanked for the time and the comments

**Deb Roe, PACE**

(From the Chat) Not sure if DEEP is monitoring the chat and recording. One of the concerns mentioned is pollution from Tweed Airport. DEEP should also more carefully be monitoring Bradley Airport, a major source of pollution including particulate matter that worsens respiratory conditions. The air and noise pollution from Bradley impacts many communities including EJ communities. DEEP should be recommending a moratorium on Bradley Airport expansion.

**III. Subcommittee Report Outs**

**IV. Environmental Perspectives from Indigenous Communities**

**Facilitated by:** Danielle Russell, CT DEEP Tribal Affairs Liaison

([Danielle.Russell@ct.gov](mailto:Danielle.Russell@ct.gov))

**Speakers:**

- **Michael Kicking Bear Johnson;** *Tribal historic preservation officer (THPO); Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation*
- **Rahiem Eleazer,** *Environmental Liaison, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation*
- **Brenda Geer,** *Wandering Spirit, Vice Chairwoman, Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation*
- **Clan mother Shoran Waupatukuay Piper,** *Tribal Head Leader, Golden Hill Paugussett Tribal Nation*

**Summary Points from Discussion:**

- Emphasizing the importance between state and indigenous populations as environmental conservation and resource acquisition is critical for

sustainability, health, and livelihood of indigenous populations, both federally and state recognized populations.

- **Challenges at Eastern Pequot:** Hoping to work with DEEP to test the water quality in the area, particularly because most households are on a well-system. Additionally, tribes are concerned with lead pipes, water pollutants, and recycling.
- **Challenges for Mashantucket Pequots:** The federal administration made a declaration of emergency energy crisis that has resulted in a shortening of the review process from 30 to 7 days, and it is particularly challenging for tribes (because we only have a small group of people responsible for overseeing these documents). Thus, it is important that states, developers, federal governments contact the tribe as soon as possible to communicate about what projects are happening.
  - Offshore wind is a concern due to the impacts on both the energy grid and the shoreline on native populations. Particularly the importance of native burial sites and how new infrastructure tends to affect these locations and the indigenous populations. Michael shared a story about how representatives from the federal agency that governs offshore wind said they never thought to contact the Mashantucket's because they are nowhere near the shoreline. But the Mashantucket tribe has always utilized the coastline and the ocean for their food and culture.
- Overall, the federal tribes have limited capacity and resources such as individuals to assist with government. External communications hinder efficiency and ability to participate in policy and education. Emphasizing the quantity of communication experienced in that capacity, but also how there continues to be more work.

#### **Recommendations for CEEJAC to be more engaged with the tribes:**

- Bringing voices together is critically important, increasing education and awareness regarding native practices and knowledge.
  - Ex. shorelines are connected to inland tribes, also the relationships between the world and people.
- There are large changes for these communities and healing needs to occur. Emphasizing the need to acknowledge what has happened in the past, but to move forward with these relationships.

#### **V. DEEP Announcements**

- a. [Project Sunbridge](#) Update from Claire Sickinger, CT DEEP

- i. DEEP has released a [draft Request for Proposals \(draft RFP\) for Solar for All Technical Assistance Providers](#). Please review the [Notice for Comments here](#).
- ii. Comments due **July 8, 2025**, by **4:00PM ET** by emailing [DEEP.EnergyBureau@ct.gov](mailto:DEEP.EnergyBureau@ct.gov)
- iii. If you are interested in this initiative, please review the slides for a full overview of what Project Sunbridge is, who is eligible for solar panels through this program, and the types of technical assistance DEEP is hoping to hire.

## **VI. Upcoming Meetings**

### **a. CEEJAC Energy & Technology Meeting (Virtual)**

ISO New England and Grid 101

July 16, 2025 | 3:00-4:30 PM

[Register for Zoom Meeting Link](#)

[Download Meeting Agenda](#)

### **b. CEEJAC Air & Transportation Meeting (Virtual)**

CHEAPR: eBike & EV Incentives

July 30, 2025 | 5:30-7:00 PM

[Register for Zoom Meeting Link](#)

### **c. CEEJAC Quarterly Meeting (Virtual)**

Monday, September 22, 2025 | 6:00-8:00 PM

[Register for Zoom Meeting Link](#)

### **d. CEEJAC Quarterly Meeting (Hybrid)**

December 2025 | Time TBD

Waterbury, CT