

CONNECTICUT GEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

A BRIEF HISTORY

EARLY DAYS

The State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut was created by the Connecticut Legislature in 1903. In the early days, the State Survey was composed of a Board of Commissioners, with distinguished members representing the major institutions of higher education, in the sciences of geology and biology. The Commission leadership rotated among the membership, with the State Survey operating from the academic institutions. Scientific work was done under contract with the Survey, and the first employees were hired when Dr. Joe Webb Peoples of Wesleyan was Director of the Survey.

DINOSAUR STATE PARK DISCOVERY

Dr. Peoples was the lead scientist on site in 1966 at the dinosaur trackway discovery in Rocky Hill. When it opened in 1968, the State Geological and Natural History Survey independently operated the educational programs at Dinosaur under an agreement with the Dept. of Agriculture and Natural Resources. [1 full time Survey geologist, and 3-5 part-time guides, operated the educational programs at the park]. On Oct 17th, 1968 at the dedication ceremony for the Park it was also officially designated a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service.

DEP

When the Department of Environmental Protection [DEP] was formed in 1971 [PA71-872], the environmental agencies of the State were consolidated within DEP and the State Geological and Natural History Survey was moved from Wesleyan to Hartford as part of DEP. Dr. Hugo Thomas of the University of Connecticut was named State Geologist by DEP Commissioner Lufkin. The State Survey was organized under the Commissioner's office, science staff was hired, and through the Natural Resources Center and Federal cooperatives, produced most of the foundational map data used by the agency to craft environmental policy. This included working agreements for topographic data, aerial photography, drainage basin mapping, bedrock and surficial geology, and soils. The State Survey and map sales room operated from the 5th floor of 165 Capitol Ave for many years supporting the agencies information needs in 3 areas of expertise: Geology, Biology, and Hydrology.

GIS in DEP

The State Survey hosted the Association of American State Geologist National Meeting in Mystic, showcasing the extraordinary capabilities of GIS in 1985. By the time the agency moved to 79 Elm St. under the leadership of Commissioner Keeney, the agency GIS system was running on Unix Workstations and Desktop PCs. The State Geological and Natural History Survey continued to modernize the agency traditional mapping, digitized maps and produced new GPS based field maps, databases, and GIS applications. This work was supported largely through Federal grants, with fewer State funded positions over time due to reduced budgets. As the technology advanced, the workforce shrank, especially through early retirement incentives in the 90's. In the late 90's the Hydrologic Sciences component of the State Survey with ties to the USGS-Water Resources Division was eliminated when the senior hydrogeologist at the State Survey retired. The two remaining professionals of the hydrological sciences discipline were reassigned to other duties.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVIDE

In 2006, under Commissioner McCarthy, the State Geological and Natural History Survey was split in the agency, with the Natural History Survey transferred to the Wildlife Division, and the Geological Survey remaining in the Bureau of Central Services, with GIS. In 2011, under Commissioner Esty, Public Act 11-80 added energy policy to the agency's mandate and DEP became the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection [DEEP].