

Watershed Lands Work Group

MEMO TO: Water Planning Council

FROM: Steve Vitko and Kathy Czepiel, Watershed Lands Work Group co-chairs

RE: Watershed Lands Work Group 2025 Activities

DATE: July 30, 2025

Executive Summary

In 2025, the Watershed Lands Work Group advanced its mission through educational presentations, legislative tracking, and strategic alignment with the State Water Plan. These efforts support the group's transition into a merged work group with the Source Water Protection Work Group.

Background

In preparation for the merging of the Watershed Lands and Source Water Protection work groups, this report summarizes the Watershed Lands Work Group's activities since the 2024 annual report, as requested by the Water Planning Council.

The Watershed Lands Work Group's charge is to review and determine the adequacy of current statutory/regulatory provisions to protect public water supplies and maintain Class I and II lands, as well as comparable lands that are not owned by water companies.

Key Activities Since the December 2024 annual report:

- **Informational Presentations**
 - Kim Czapla (DEEP) presented on Aquifer Protection Area regulations, enhancing understanding of regulatory frameworks.
 - Eric McPhee (DPH) demonstrated the Parcel Prioritization for Source Water Protection GIS web viewer, introducing a new tool for land classification and prioritization.
- **Strategic Alignment**

Reviewed the Water Planning Council's work plan and aligned work group topics to support Section 5 of the State Water Plan.
- **Land Disposition Mechanisms**

Discussed and reviewed mechanisms for water company land dispositions, including similarities and differences across public, private, and municipal sectors.
- **Work Group Purpose Review**

Reviewed the group's title and written purpose and submitted proposed edits to the Water Planning Council.

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- Legislative Monitoring
 - HB7174 (Riparian Corridor Protections): Supports buffer zone protections around water bodies.
 - HB6830 (Inland Wetlands Commissioner Training): Enhances local capacity for watershed protection.
 - SB732 (Adding 'Climate' to the State Water Plan): Strengthens climate resilience in water planning.
- Coordination with Other Efforts

Tracked progress of the upcoming revision of the CT Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Plan (Green Plan), which may influence future watershed land conservation strategies.