

Meeting Report
The State Water Plan
How do we re-energize it?
July 12, 2023



Water Planning Council

Department of Public
Health



Department of Energy &
Environmental Protection
and
Public Utility Regulatory
Authority



Office of Policy and
Management



Submitted by
Virginia de Lima, facilitator
Alexandria Hibbard

Contents

Contents.....	2
INTRODUCTION	3
MEETING OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA	3
Objectives:.....	3
Agenda:	3
MEETING CONTENTS	4
Presentations.....	4
Brainstorming (ideas from sticky notes and general discussion)	4
Next Steps	6
Appendix A. Participants	7
Appendix B: Agenda	8
Appendix C: Requirements of State Water Plan (22a-352).....	9
APPENDIX D. WPCAG and IWG	10
APPENDIX E. Meeting Evaluation Summary	11

INTRODUCTION

The Water Planning Council (WPC) hosted a public meeting on July 12, 2023 at Dinosaur State Park in Rocky Hill, CT. The purpose of the meeting was to look at progress on the State Water Plan (SWP) and to re-energize the process. The meeting, which replaced the regularly scheduled July WPC meeting, was announced during the June 6, 2023 meeting and an email invitation was sent to everyone who has expressed an interest in WPC activities. There were 22 attendees, representing state agencies, watershed groups, academia, water industry, and environmental organizations (Appendix A).



The organizing committee for the meeting was Jack Betkoski, (PURA), Chairman WPC; and WPC members Martin Heft (OPM), Lori Mathieu (DPH), and Graham Stevens (DEEP), working with Virginia de Lima, facilitator. The facilitation team was Virginia de Lima, Alyson Ayotte (PURA), Kim Czapla (DEEP), Rebecca Dahl (OPM), Alexandria Hibbard (DEEP), and Kelsey Sudol (NW Conservation District). My sincere thanks to each of them.

MEETING OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA

Objectives:

The objectives were determined based on input from the four WPC members as well as the Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG) and the Implementation Workgroup (IWG):

- Review progress of the State Water Plan Implementation
- Assess effectiveness of structure and process
- Determine how to address opportunities and challenges
- Identify future priorities and workgroups needed

Agenda:

The original agenda followed from the Objectives (Appendix B). However, because the interaction among the participants was so productive, it was decided to focus on priorities that are already being worked on rather than identifying new priorities. The group wanted to take the time to reboot and re-energize the process and find a clear, creative pathway forward. Therefore, the retreat was redirected to general discussion after “History” on the agenda.

MEETING CONTENTS

Presentations

History of the Water Planning Council and the State Water Plan

Enabling legislation and General Statutes

[Public Act 01-177](#) established the Water Planning Council

[Public Act 14-163](#) directed WPC to create a State Water Plan

Structure and Requirements of SWP

17 requirements of the SWP (Appendix C)

WPC to form an IWG and authorize them to make recommendations on priority issues.

The WPCAG and the IWG have overlapping missions but have different memberships, as shown here.

WPCAG (15 members, established in statute)

- Balance of consumptive and non-consumptive
- Includes water industries, government, agriculture, business, utilities, environmental interests, recreation, endangered species, academia, public health

IWG (12 members)

- 4 agency representatives
- 2 in-stream advocates
- 2 out-of-stream advocates
- 2 appointed by WPCAG
- 2 subject-matter experts

Brainstorming (ideas from sticky notes and general discussion)

WPC and IWG

The attendees participated in a Sticky Note Exercise expressing opinions on whether the two groups should remain separate or be combined. The comments serve as input to the WPC and are included as Appendix D. It is hoped that the WPC will provide guidance on this at their next meeting.

Progress on State Water Plan and Workgroup Recommendations

Successes

- Water is defined as a public trust.
- The drought plan was updated, and the recommendations of the 2016-2017 Drought Event Sub-workgroup were implemented.
- Passing the streamflow regulations and categorizing flow in the state.
- Identifying issues, such as solar siting, that need to be regulated differently.
- Requiring the water diversion registrations to report starting in 2020.
- The creation of the Department of Consumer Protection Well Driller Database. Newly drilled wells go into this database.
- Fostering more productive relationships with stakeholders.
- Alliance for Efficiency Rate Recovery Workshop held in 2021.
- Arsenic and uranium have been added to the list of required parameters for potable tests for private wells.
- The Outreach and Education Workgroup puts on two webinars a year on topics relating to the State Water Plan.
- A report summarizing progress on the State Water Plan over the past five years was submitted to the legislature.

- There is a position description for a possible Water Director.
- Land conveyances now need to identify if the property is on watershed land.
- Created a Water Planning Council and State Water Plan logo.

Challenges

- There need to be dedicated resources, such as staff or funding, for the Water Planning Council. Currently there is not.
- The Legislature focuses on track record. When they haven't heard from the Water Planning Council in five years, it may appear that we are doing okay or not accomplishing as much. We need to tell our story.
- The Water Planning Council should be presenting our work to legislative committees or hold a forum before the legislative session starts.
- Having a statewide Low Impact Development manual would accomplish many of our priorities.
- Need a press person for the Water Planning Council. Alternatively, we could have agency press staff identify reporters that are tuned into environmental issues to help relay stories to the public.
- The Department of Consumer Protection is not involved in these meetings, and that is the state agency responsible for regulating well drilling and water fixture standards.
- Legislature – some implementing measures need to go through a legislative process.
- Increase communication with Council of Governments
- Rising issues – drought, floods, PFAS
- The request for a Water Director was made four years after the State Water Plan was adopted. It can appear that the position may not be necessary if time has passed without the position. Also, in the request for a Water Director, it should be clarified how the role would interact with the four state agencies. To circumvent the challenge of state hiring, could an institution, such as the Institute of Water Resources, be hired to serve as the “director,” either through a contract or Memorandum of Understanding?
- When the annual report was submitted to the legislature, more can be done to bring the report to the forefront of the discussion such as presentations to the Planning & Development or Environmental Committee.
- Conservation.
- There are 17 requirements of the SWP– this is a lot to focus on at once. To overcome this, we could pick three items and focus on implementing those.
- To adapt to a changing climate, we should prioritize updating safe yields for surface water reservoirs.
- There is no social media presence for the Water Planning Council (in-flow-encers)
- There is no strategy plan with goals and timelines. Developing a plan could help guide stakeholders.
- Opportunities/Resources
- Communicate with colleges on paid internship programs (get students involved)– Yale Conservation Scholar Program, University of Connecticut, Gateway Community College (now all community colleges in the state are under one system), Goodwin College.
- Work with Alliance for Water Efficiency and Institute of Water Resources
- Embrace the One Water approach and message.
- Use legislative changes to give structure to the Water Planning Council and require certain action items.
- Could create an Interagency Climate Change Workgroup (similar to the Interagency Drought Workgroup)

Next Steps

- Explore funding a water director position through a MOU between the four agencies and an entity such as the Institute of Water Resources (through the University of Connecticut).
- Develop a strategic timeline, ideally synced with the state budget, on implementation.
- Identify a legislative advocate.
- The Water Planning Council can have a forum (similar to the PFAS forum) to the legislature at the end of the year before the legislative session begins.
- Continue conversation on consolidation of the State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup and Water Planning Council Advisory Group
- Enhance the outreach and education of the State Water Plan.
- Coordinate with Councils of Governments
- Low Impact Development Planning

Appendix A. Participants

Name	Affiliation	**	Email	Phone
Ali Hibbard	DEEP	A	Alexandria.hibbard@ct.gov	860-424-3348
Ally Ayotte	PURA	A	alyson.ayotte@ct.gov	860-827-2755
Lori Mathieu	DPH	A	Lori.mathieu@ct.gov	860-509-7333
Graham Stevens	DEEP	A	graham.stevens@ct.gov	860-424-2392
Jack Betkoski	PURA	A	john.betkoski@ct.gov	860-707-4926
Becca Dahl	OPM	A	rebecca.dahl@ct.gov	860.418.6412
Martin Heft	OPM	A	martin.heft@ct.gov	959.282.6239
Kim Czapla	DEEP	A	kim.czapla@ct.gov	860.424.3335
Chris Bellucci	DEEP	A	Christopher.Bellucci@ct.gov	860.424.3735
Martha Smith	West River	E	marthamsmith@att.net	203-498-9698
Alicea Charamut	Rivers Alliance	E	alicea@riversalliance.org	860-416-7859
Glenn Warner	UCONN	E	glenn.warner@uconn.edu	860-942-7353
Kelsey Sudol	NW Conservation District	E	kelseys@nwcd.org	475-316-3175
Bonnie Burr	UCONN Ext	E	bonnie.burr@uconn.edu	860-416-9531
Sean Hayden	Lake Waramaug	E	seanhayden@lakewaramaug.org	860-868-0331
Rob LaFrance	Audubon	E	robert.lafrance@audubon.org	203.668.6685
Erica Fearn	CT Irrigation Contractors	I	efearn@cicaweb.org	860-586-7563
Rich Orsillo	Central Turf	I	rorsillo@centraltis.com	203-415-9922
Britt'ny Bettis-Allen	Operation Fuel	P	brittney@operationfuel.org	860-243-2345; x3316
Dan Lawrence	Aquarion	W	DLawrence@aquarionwater.com	203-223-0607
Betsy Gara	CWWA	W	gara@gmlobbying.com	860-841-7350
Rich Hanratty	CT Water	W	Richard.Hanratty@ctwater.com	(860) 490-5652

** A: agency; C: consultant; E: Environmental, G: Government; P: public; U: University; W: water Industry

Appendix B: Agenda

Original Agenda

Welcome

Objectives / Agenda

History of the Water Planning Council and the State Water Plan

 Enabling legislation and General Statutes

 Structure / Requirements of WPC and SWP

Identify priority recommendations (part 1, working lunch)

Progress on State Water Plan and Workgroup Recommendations

 Successes / Opportunities / Challenges to implement recommendations

Identify priority recommendations (part 2)

 Identify needed workgroups

Identify metrics needed to assess and track implementation

Next Steps

Review action items

Group closure

Adjourn

Appendix C: Requirements of State Water Plan (22a-352)

1. Identify the quantities/qualities of water available
2. Identify present/projected demands for water
3. Recommend utilization of water resources to balance public water supply, economic development, recreation and ecological health
4. Recommend steps to increase the climate resiliency of existing water resources and infrastructure
5. Recommend technology and infrastructure upgrades, interconnections and/or major engineering works
6. Recommend land use and other measures to ensure the desired|water quality/abundance and promote development in concert with available water resources
7. Take into account desired ecological, recreational, agricultural, industrial and commercial use of water bodies
8. Inform state residents on the importance of water resource stewardship/conservation
9. Establish conservation guidelines/incentives for water conservation with energy efficiency consideration
10. Develop a water reuse policy with incentives for matching the water quality to the use
11. Meet data collection and analysis needs to provide for data driven decisions
12. Account for the ecological, environmental, public health/ safety and economic impact implementation will have on the state
13. Include short and long-range objectives/strategies to communicate and implement the plan
14. Incorporate regional and local plans/programs for water use and management
15. Promote intra-regional solutions and sharing of water resources
16. Develop and recommend strategies to address climate resiliency
17. Identify modifications to laws/regulations necessary in order to implement recommendations

APPENDIX D. WPCAG and IWG

Sticky Note Exercise on Separating or Combining the Water Planning Council Advisory Group and the State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup

Workgroups: Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG) and State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup (IWG)	
Separate	Combined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The IWG brings in technical resources as needed to solve problems and has focused groups with identified tasks. The WPCAG provides a broad view of State Water Plan priorities and other water related items. These are important separate views. (3 similar comments) - The WPCAG is mostly made of stakeholders without state agencies influence. State agencies have more input on IWG actions (3 similar comments) - If combined, there would be too many members sitting on the WPCAG - Separate workgroups allow for more focused meetings - The IWG seems to have more flexibility and allows for broader representation - If the groups will continue to be separate, the specific duties and roles of each need to be defined more clearly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too many meetings covering similar agenda items. Agendas are often the same, and the meetings become duplicative. Combining would be a more effect use of time (3 similar comments) - Given that the State Water Plan is now in place, two working groups seems redundant - Having one workgroup would streamline the process, reduce the number of meetings, which makes it easier and clearer for the public to get involved. Multiple workgroups are difficult to describe to the general public (3 similar comments) - Two workgroups require more volunteers, and it is difficult to fill the membership of each workgroup as it is (4 similar comments). - State agency staff do not sit on the WPCAG, but state agencies are already represented in the Water Planning Council itself. Agency staff also can participate as a non-member or lead sub-workgroups (3 similar comments) - There is poor clarity on which workgroup does what. The overlap between the two workgroups is too close to warrant two separate groups (4 similar comments) - Combining would have more effective collaboration and combine resources. Together one workgroup would have a unified vision (6 similar comments) - Complicated structure and procedures for getting reports reviewed and approved (2 similar comments). - Reduce burnout amongst volunteers - Both workgroups bring in subject matter experts (2 similar comments) - A unified approach can help push for legislative changes that help with implementation. Certain entities will not get involved in planning but will actively lobby for legislative changes that go against plan priorities. Yet the WPC is not active in the legislative process

APPENDIX E. Meeting Evaluation Summary

8 Evaluations were received.

1. What went well?

Conversation!

This is the first time since COVID that stakeholders have had to have with WPC

Open communications / sharing ideas

Great handouts

Wide discussion among participants

APCAG – Implementation Workgroup discussion

A good mix of old timers and new faces

A dedicated block of time to focus on WPC

Red Bull Energy!

Easy flow of conversation

Honest conversations about our concerns and wants

I reel re-energized and like we're climbing out of the hole it feels like were stuck in

It was great

Good dialogue

In-person works best for planning

Nice location

I enjoyed the meeting and the changes that were made to the agenda

Virginia as a facilitator—moved things in an organic manner—great process!

2. What could have been improved?

Nothing! It was great

Actually, water bottles??? Seriously???

More participation

More help for meeting logistics

Willingness to attempt hard to do path

Still need to find resources to accomplish tasks

Doing something like this more often is needed

More attendees

All was good

Not sure—other state agencies

3. What suggestions do you have for a subsequent meeting?

Give the WPC one thing to focus on.

A subsequent meeting

Work plan for actionable items

Need for Water Chief is top priority

Follow up on our action items; not just talking about our plan, but really acting on it.

Provide materials to attendees prior to mtg

Encourage greater participation

Break-out sessions would have helped on topics

Same format at least once a year!