



Annual Report on the Status of the State Water Plan



January 7, 2025



PURA

Submitted jointly by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, the Commissioners of Public Health and Energy and Environmental Protection, and the Chairman of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority in accordance with Section 22a-352 of the Connecticut General Statutes

About the Connecticut Water Planning Council

The Connecticut Water Planning Council (WPC)¹ was established in 2001 to address issues involving water companies, water resources, and the future of the state’s drinking water supply. In furtherance of this mission, the General Assembly in 2014 directed the WPC to develop a State Water Plan for the management of the state’s water resources, and in doing so, to balance the needs of public water supply, economic development, recreation, and ecological health. The General Assembly adopted the State Water Plan in June of 2019, after which the WPC began implementing the plan’s recommendations.

An established Water Planning Council Advisory Group (WPCAG) and several administratively established topical workgroups assist the WPC in its efforts. While numerous state agency programs support objectives identified in the State Water Plan, this report summarizes specific initiatives of the WPC.

Introduction

Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22a-352\(i\)](#) requires the WPC to “oversee the implementation and periodic updates of the State Water Plan”. This report summarizes the WPC’s work on implementing the State Water Plan during the calendar year 2024. Included at the end of this report is Appendix A: WPCAG Representatives, and Appendix B: Implementation Materials.

An electronic copy of this report and prior year reports are available at <https://portal.ct.gov/water>. An electronic copy of the State Water Plan may also be downloaded from the same address. Physical copies of all publications are on file for public viewing at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford.

Cover photo: Looking south over Easton Reservoir, Easton. Courtesy Alicea Charamut.

Water Planning Council Members

John W. Betkoski III (2001 – January 2025), WPC Chair, Public Utilities Regulatory Authority
Graham J. Stevens (November 2020 - present), Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Martin L. Heft (August 2019 – present), Office of Policy and Management
Lori Mathieu (2016 – April 2024), Department of Public Health
Eric McPhee (April – December 2024), Department of Public Health
Christopher Roy (December 2024 – present), Department of Public Health

Special Acknowledgements

John W. Betkoski III, known to all as Jack, former Vice Chairman of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, was a founding member of the WPC and served as chairman from 2001 to 2024. He guided the council with his charismatic, supportive, and approachable leadership style. Jack retired from state service on January 9, 2025.

¹ The WPC is authorized under Section 25-330 of the Connecticut General Statutes

Lori Mathieu, former Branch Chief of the Environmental Health and Drinking Water Branch at the Department of Public Health, served on the WPC from 2016 to 2024. She played a key role in shaping Connecticut's State Water Plan by contributing her knowledge of sustainable water resource management and infrastructure resiliency. Lori retired from state service on December 1, 2024.

Margaret Miner, former executive director of Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, was a fierce advocate and supporter of the formation of the WPC and the State Water Plan. She served on the WPCAG as well as chair of the Watershed Lands Workgroup from 2009 to 2024. Margaret devoted her career and life to improving laws and policies for the protection and preservation of Connecticut's precious natural resources, having worked right up until her passing on May 5, 2024.

The WPC would like to recognize Jack, Lori, and Margaret for their contributions, longstanding leadership, and passion for protecting Connecticut's water resources.

Progress on Priority Focus Areas and Other Identified Needs

In considering the WPC's statutory responsibilities, the 2023 annual report identified two focus areas:

- (1) **Identify options to fund implementation of the State Water Plan** - to ensure the WPC is equipped with the resources necessary to make further progress implementing the plan, and
- (2) **Update the State Water Plan as a dynamic policy document to address emerging challenges** – to provide support for continued planning capacity to keep pace with evolving climate change impacts and public health threats such as PFAS contamination in drinking water.

The WPC found these two focus areas to be challenging. Regarding focus area (1), an effort was made to identify and request funding for administration and operations of the WPC and implementation and update of the State Water Plan, although no funding was authorized in the state budget adoption. Support and reliance from WPC member agencies were key to carrying out the administration and operations.

Regarding focus area (2), incremental efforts were made to conduct research, outreach, and collaborative problem solving relating to some of the plan's more pressing recommendations, such as improving the structure for drought management, and addressing gaps in data collection and monitoring. However, due to administrative challenges and resource constraints, such efforts have not yet resulted in program or policy improvements that would address emerging challenges in a measurable, actionable manner.

Despite the lack of progress in these priority areas, the WPC's workgroups continued to make progress on plan implementation. Workgroup activities are described in the following section.

2024 Implementation Activities

Simplification of Organizational Structure

At the 2023 retreat of the WPC, the attendees agreed that the WPCAG and the State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup (IWG) had intersecting missions and proposed that the groups be

consolidated. The WPC voted to do so at its November 7, 2023 meeting. The merger became effective in April 2024.

Topical Workgroup: Conservation Pricing & Rate Recovery Analysis

This workgroup identifies regulatory, operational, technological, and financial barriers that prevent utilities from taking advantage of conservation pricing programs with modern rate setting tools. Conservation pricing is an important contributor to climate resilience through incentives for reducing water use during times of drought. An example is tiered water rates for customers who exceed specified usage thresholds. This can be difficult for some utilities to implement because their operations rely on revenue from the predictable sale of water. Also, many smaller utilities lack the infrastructure or technology required to successfully and seamlessly enact a tiered rate system. This work complements the State Water Plan goal of drought resiliency and conservation that is being explored in the Water Utility Coordinating Committee implementation process.

2024 Key Accomplishments: The work of this group was put on hold for 2024 due to capacity constraints of key members and the chair. The group will reconvene in 2025.

Chair: Alicea Charamut, Executive Director, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut and WPCAG member

Topical Workgroup: Evaluation of United States Geological Survey Data Collection Programs

This workgroup evaluated the U.S. Geological Survey’s surface water and groundwater monitoring programs in Connecticut. Its work included:

- evaluating how monitoring data supports decision making,
- identifying gaps within the monitoring networks to address current and future needs,
- reviewing the recommendations of the State Water Plan that might be resolved by expanding data collection, and
- identifying funding requirements to support current and expanded data collection efforts.

2024 Deliverable: A report titled “*Report on the Evaluation of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Data Collection Programs to support the recommendations of the State Water Plan*” was submitted to the WPC on April 17, 2024. A link to the report is found in Appendix B.

Chair: Chris Bellucci, Assistant Director, Water Planning and Management Division, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Topical Workgroup: Source Water Protection

As the threats and costs of addressing water quality and quantity issues increase exponentially, protecting the sources of our drinking water is vital. This workgroup is reviewing the status of source water protection measures in Connecticut, including the roles of state agencies, federal and state programs and regulations,

and the report of the Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GC3). The group is analyzing other ongoing efforts and identifying gaps in source water protection.

2024 Key Accomplishments: A draft white paper on the status of Source Water Protection in Connecticut is anticipated to be presented for public comment in early 2025.

Chair: Denise Savageau, President, Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts and WPCAG member

Standing Workgroup: Interagency Drought

The Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW) is responsible for authoring, updating, and implementing the Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan (State Drought Plan) and regularly monitoring hydrologic conditions throughout the State. The IDW is charged with recommending drought mitigation actions to the Governor and implementing the recommendations of the State Drought Plan.

2024 Key Accomplishments:

- Activated stage 2 of the State Drought Plan in response to dry conditions during the fall months
- Directed a DPH Fellow from Yale School of the Environment to study and evaluate the effectiveness of municipal drought ordinances and the roles of municipal officials related to drought
- Began preparing for a statewide drought tabletop exercise designed to test the State Drought Plan and identify areas in need of improvement

Chair: Martin L. Heft, Undersecretary, Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division, Office of Policy and Management

Standing Workgroup: Watershed Lands

The Watershed Lands Workgroup reviews and comments on the adequacy of current statutory and regulatory provisions to protect public water supplies and maintain Class I and II lands², as well as comparable lands that are not owned by water companies. This group also reviews controversial or environmentally sensitive land use proposals (both public and private) that could have detrimental effects on drinking water watersheds.

2024 Key Accomplishments:

- Reviewed Class II land definitions and discussed existing levels of protection
- Hosted a presentation on layers of statewide land protections by Charles Vidich of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments
- Hosted a presentation on the Statewide Aquifer Protection Area Program by Kim Czapla of DEEP

² Land owned by a water company within a drinking water supply watershed, defined by [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 25-37c](#).

- Leadership of the work group was in transition this year. The watershed lands work group wishes to recognize the contributions of longtime co-chair, the late Margaret Miner, as well as Rich Hanratty, formerly of Connecticut Water

Chairs: Kathy Czepiel, Save the Sound, WPCAG member representing land protection, and Steve Vitko, South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, WPCAG member representing regional water utility

Standing Workgroup: Outreach and Education

The Outreach and Education Workgroup, under the direction of the WPC, works to facilitate the implementation of the State Water Plan by increasing stakeholder and public awareness of the State Water Plan and increasing participation in water resource planning, management, and protection in Connecticut. The workgroup hosts workshops and webinars to educate and inform water resource leaders, stakeholders, and the public on what they can do to protect and enhance Connecticut's water resources.

2024 Key Accomplishments:

- Conducted three virtual lunch and learn workshops commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act and the 20th Anniversary of the Aquifer Protection Act
 - *Celebrating 20 Years of the Connecticut Aquifer Protection Area Regulations*
 - *Source Water Protection and Emerging Contaminants*
 - *Imagine a Day Without Water: Flash Drought*
- Began working with the University of Connecticut to develop a draft fact sheet on private wells
- Began exploring the best way to engage other stakeholders in WPC activities. This includes developing a draft survey to be released in 2025 to assess knowledge of the various groups that support the State Water Plan and designing a State Water Plan "Stewards" program

Chair: Denise Savageau, President, Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts, and WPCAG member

Water Planning Council Advisory Group

The WPCAG is optionally established under Conn. Gen. Stat. § 25-330(c) to assist in researching and analyzing water resource issues and advise the WPC on matters of interest. The statute requires that the group's representation be balanced between consumptive and non-consumptive water interests. The WPCAG helps the WPC set priorities for implementing and/or updating the State Water Plan. A list of WPCAG representation is included in Appendix A.

2024 Key Accomplishments:

- Revised the WPCAG's operating procedures to accommodate the merger with the IWG
- Shared and distributed information on current issues such as new Environmental Protection Agency regulations for Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water, updates to the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Management Plan, and legislative proposals
- Directed and oversaw the activities of topical workgroups

Co-Chairs: Alicea Charamut, Executive Director, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, and Dan Lawrence, Vice President of Engineering, Planning, and Real Estate, Aquarion Water Company, and both WPCAG members

2025 Outlook

The WPC will begin 2025 with a newly elected chairman – Martin L. Heft, who currently represents the Office of Policy and Management, and two new agency designees, Christopher Roy representing the Department of Public Health, and David Arconti representing the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority.

The WPC established its 2025 work plan priorities as follows:

- Improve communication with the General Assembly through forums and presentations on progress and challenges related to the implementation of the State Water Plan
- Review State Water Plan recommendations under Section 5.2 – Water Management Policies; Section 5.3 – Pathway Forward Opportunities; and Section 5.5 – Water Management Structure and Decision Framework to identify needed changes to the SWP and set priorities for 2025 and beyond
- Develop a strategic timeline, ideally synced with the state budget, on State Water Plan implementation
- Identify a legislative advocate to represent the WPC
- Continue outreach and education of the State Water Plan
- Engage with Regional Councils of Governments
- Review the practicality of low impact development planning
- Research opportunities for partnerships with higher education (e.g., UConn Institute of Water Resources)
- Explore funding for implementation and update of the State Water Plan

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared with the assistance of the following staff and volunteers:

- Alicea Charamut, Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council
- Audrey Berry, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Eric Lindquist, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Kim Czapla, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Virginia de Lima, United States Geological Survey (retired)

Acronyms

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| CGA | Connecticut General Assembly |
| DEEP | Department of Energy and Environmental Protection |
| DPH | Department of Public Health |
| OPM | Office of Policy and Management |
| PURA | Public Utilities Regulatory Authority |
| WPC | Water Planning Council |
| WPCAG | Water Planning Council Advisory Group |

Appendix A: WPCAG Representatives

The following lists reflect membership of the WPCAG as of December 2024. Note: Representation is subject to change on an ongoing basis. Vacancies are filled by the WPC on a continual basis.

Water Planning Council Advisory Group Representatives

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| Academia, Public Health, Ecology | Nicole Deziel, Yale School of Public Health Virginia de Lima, retired USGS (alternate) |
| Agriculture | Bonnie Burr, UConn Extension |
| Business & Industry (Association) (Water Residential Filtration) | Steve Woltornist, Water Quality Association, Marmon Holdings, Inc. |
| Business & Industry (Water Intensive Business) | Darryl Newman, CT Nursery and Landscaping Association/Planters Choice Nursery |
| Conservation | Denise Savageau, CT Association of Conservation Districts |
| Consumer | Alison McHorney, CT Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) Brooke Parker, OCC (alternate) |
| Electric Power | Len Greene, First Light Power |
| Fisheries | Alicea Charamut, Fisheries Advisory Council (Co-chair) |
| Investor-owned Water Utility | Dan Lawrence, Aquarion Water Company (Co-chair) |
| Lakes and Ponds | Sean Hayden, Lake Waramaug Task Force Kelsey Sudol, Lake Waramaug Task Force (alternate) |
| Land Protection | Kathy Czepiel, Save the Sound Chase Lindemann, Legal Fellow, Save the Sound (alternate) |
| Municipal Water Utility | Patrick Kearney, City of New Britain |
| Public Health District (Local) | Sonia Marino, Town of Guilford Health Department |
| Recreation | Jeff Shaw, Connecticut Outdoor Recreation Alliance |
| Regional Councils of Governments | Aaron Budris, Naugatuck Valley Regional Council of Governments |
| Regional Water Utility | Steve Vitko, Regional Water Authority (RWA) Nicoletta Blevins, RWA (alternate) |
| River Protection | Martha Smith, West River Watershed Coalition Maggie Favretti, Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed (alternate) |
| Small Water Utility | Josh Cansler, Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority |
| Wastewater | Tom Tyler, Metropolitan District Commission |
| Water Resources Protection | Carol Haskins, Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition Aimee Petras, Farmington River Watershed Association (alternate) |

Appendix B: Implementation Materials

State Water Plan

<https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Water-Planning-Council/State-Water-Plan>

Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan

<https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Drought/State-Drought-Plan>

2024 Webinars hosted by the Outreach and Education Workgroup

[Celebrating 20 Years of the Connecticut Aquifer Protection Area Regulations](#), March 6, 2024

[Source Water Protection and Emerging Contaminants](#), September 24, 2024

Imagine a Day Without Water: Flash Drought, November 16, 2024 (link to be published soon)

2024 Report on the Evaluation of the United States Geological Survey Data Collection Programs to support the recommendations of the State Water Plan

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/water/workgroup-reports/usgs-data-collection-workgroup-report_final.pdf?rev=8059659a3ce546918b4384175e3ad633&hash=F7552AD6495728F932D2A15F2702B26D

2023 Annual Report on the State Water Plan

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/water/wpc-2023/wpc-2023-annual-report-on-status-of-the-state-water-plan.pdf?rev=b12548fd57724d5d998885f16f1caa3a&hash=C2AFA4639BA65858558FBA43EDF157C6>

2022 Drought After-Action Report & Improvement Plan

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2023/231003-WPC-IDW-Adopted---2022-Drought-Post-Action-Report.pdf>