



DRAFT Connecticut Source Water Collaborative Meeting Minutes

June 11, 2024 | 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Easton Lake Water Treatment Plant Conference Center, 35 Buck Hill Road, Easton, CT 06612

&

Easton Lake Reservoir, 660 Tashua Road, Trumbull, CT 06611

Participants

Aaron Budris, *Environmental Planning Director*, Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG)
Alicea Charamut, *Executive Director*, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut (CTRA)
Becca Dahl, *Planning Analyst*, Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (CTOPM)
Casey Cordes, *Forester II*, South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (SCCRWA)
Colin Csizmadia, *Watershed Management Intern*, Aquarion Water Company (AWC)
David Dickson, *Director & Extension Educator*, Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR)
Denise Savageau, *Chair*, Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation (CSWC)
Eric Lindquist, *Water Resources Planner*, Connecticut Department of Public Health (CTDPH)
Eric McPhee, *Supervising Environmental Analyst*, CTDPH
Evan Moore, *Source Water Technician*, SCCRWA
John Triana, *Real Estate Manager*, Regional Water Authority (RWA)
Joseph Welsh, *Natural Resources Manager*, AWC
Joseph Zeppieri, *Summer 2024 DPH Intern*, CTDPH
Joshua Tracy, *Invasive Species Management Technician*, SCCRWA
Kim Czaplá, *Supervising Environmental Analyst*, Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CTDEEP)
Kira Jacobs, *Source Water Protection Coordinator*, Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1 (EPA)
Lilian Ruiz, *Executive Director*, CSWC
Lisette Stone, *Environmental Analyst 2*, CTDPH
Lucy Morrison, *Watershed Management Intern*, AWC
Manisha Juthani, *Commissioner*, CTDPH
Michael Dietz, *Extension Educator*, CLEAR
Paige Bogart, *Environmental Analyst*, New York State Department of Health (NYDOH)
Raul Almonacid, *Environmental Analyst*, AWC
Rob Turnbull, *Forester*, AWC
Russell Melmed, *Director of Health*, Chatham Health District (CHD)
Sarah Coccaro, *Assistant Director of Environmental Affairs*, Town of Greenwich (Greenwich)
Steve Vitko, *Environmental Planning Manager*, RWA
Thomas Morgart, *Connecticut State Conservationist*, United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Tim Sargent, *Supervisory Hydrologic Technician*, United States Geological Survey (USGS)

Introduction

- Eric McPhee, [Connecticut Department of Public Health \(CTDPH\)](#), welcomed participants and outlined the agenda for the day.

Welcoming Remarks

- Manisha Juthani MD, *CTDPH Commissioner*, gave opening remarks emphasizing the importance of each Collaborative participant's role in coordinating and implementing State-wide source water protection initiatives for the resilience, safety and health of Connecticut.

Discussion/Brainstorming: *Incorporating Source Water Protection into Local Land Use Planning and Decision-Making*

I. Current Status

Aaron Budris – [Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments \(NVCOG\)](#)

- Explained the role of [Councils of Governments \(COGs\)](#) as regional planning organizations, similar to counties in other states, providing technical assistance, coordinating with towns/state, and providing outreach to the public
- NVCOG handles transportation, environmental planning, compliance assistance, technical support for municipalities, referrals and project reviews for long/short term plans, municipal taxes, grants, and plans of conservation and development (POCD)
- Challenges include operating in an advisory capacity and dealing with water resources that cross town boundaries.

Mike Dietz & Dave Dickson – [Center for Land use Education And Research \(CLEAR\)](#) & [Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials \(NEMO\)](#)

- NEMO, established in the 1990s, focuses on education about groundwater and water quality while providing low cost testing for private residents.
- Discussed the transition to CLEAR and the creation of the [SWP \(Source Water Protection\) Parcel prioritization tool](#).
- Challenges include securing funding from CTDEEP (MS4 funding has ended) and providing training for municipal planning and zoning commissioners who are required to have training every 4 years.

Sarah Cocco – [Town of Greenwich \(Greenwich\)](#) Assistant Director of Environmental Affairs

- Described Greenwich's environmental initiatives, including updates to the open space plan, upland area reviews for potential impacts within watersheds, and the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) tools for public education.
- Highlighted the challenges of public communication and enforcing regulations such as limits to outdoor irrigation during droughts.

Russel Melmed – Director of Health, [Chatham Health District \(CHD\)](#)

- Addressed issues in rural and small suburban areas, such as the proliferation of small wells/septic systems, lack of groundwater access, and the maintenance of small public water systems with private operators who don't respond to violations.

- Emphasized the difficulties in developing infrastructure to support larger public water systems because people want to develop on their property and don't want to wait for existing public infrastructure to connect to their development.

II. **Open Discussion – Challenges and Successes for Source Water Protection and Local Planning**

Key topics included:

- Proactive vs. reactive approaches to source water protection.
- Targeted land conservation and municipal decision-making.
- Aligning municipal/state plans of conservation and development (POCD).
- Regulatory tools and challenges in water supply areas.
- Coordination between municipalities, COGs, and state agencies.

Discussion Highlights:

- **Importance of Riparian Buffers**
Sarah Coccaro (Greenwich) emphasized the importance of riparian buffers in source water protection and development planning.
- **Consistency of COG support for Municipalities**
Alicea ([Rivers Alliance of Connecticut](#) - CTRA) raised questions about the consistency of support across COGs and the frequency of their meetings—Aaron Budris (NVCOG) was unsure of the consistency, but stated they get together once per month
- **Communication Between Municipalities and Water Companies**
Steve Vitko (RWA) highlighted the disparity in engagement levels among municipalities, saying that they serve 17 plus municipalities, but only deal with 5 municipalities 90% of the time
- **Lack of Dedicated Municipal Environmental Staff**
Denise Savageau ([CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation](#) - CSWC) discussed the need for better integration of environmental staff and IWWA's regulatory capabilities.
- **Alignment of Municipal, COG and State POCDs**
Eric McPhee (CTPDH), Becca Dahl ([Connecticut Office of Policy and Management](#) – CTOPM), and Aaron Budris (NVCOG) discussed the alignment of local and state POCDs:
 - [Municipal POCDs](#) are reviewed by the COGs
 - State reviews COGs and assesses how they align with [State POCD](#).
- **Prioritized Protection of Surface versus Groundwater**
Russel Melmed (CHD) noted how POCDs tend to look at open space as recreational and not employ considerations for ground water – they want to preserve what they see rather than what is under the ground.
- **Determining State Agency Source Water Protection Regulatory Authority**

Kira Jacobs ([Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1 – EPA](#)) mentioned confusion associated with Connecticut (CT) having groundwater and surface water in two separate agencies, CTDEEP and CTDPH, respectively.

- **Definition of an Aquifer Protection Area (APA)**

Russel Melmed (CHD) stated that APA does not apply to areas with multiple private wells, as the current regulations/definition only apply to an aquifer with one or more single wellhead that serves 1,000 people or more.

III. Potential Tools for Source Water Protection

Denise Savageau – [CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation](#)

- **Sustainable Connecticut**

Denise offered that [Sustainable CT](#) has a whole section for water source protection and land management. Here, municipalities can adopt plans without each town having to do their own.

- **Source Water Protection (SWP) White Paper**

Announced a forthcoming Source Water Protection (SWP) White Paper in Connecticut, aiming for a comprehensive assessment of current efforts and gaps between agencies. This needs many different eyes on it to ensure all entities are captured.

- **Safe Drinking Water 50th Anniversary Events and Resources**

Mentioned a workshop for the 50th anniversary of the [Safe Drinking Water Act](#) on September 24th (lunch and learn) for education/outreach to municipalities.

Eric McPhee – *CTDPH*

- **Introduced the [Source Water Protection Parcel Prioritization Mapping Utility](#)**, highlighting its value for land trust procurement, showing where to spend money to best protect drinking water resources. Public access to this available and shows separate scores for groundwater and surface water which can be combined and scored as well.

IV. Grant and Funding Opportunities

- Kira Jacobs – [EPA Region 1 Source Water Protection Coordinator](#)

- Discussed the lack of dedicated congressional funding for SWP and the reliance on state assessments and healthy watershed grants.
- Noted importance of protecting water that is already clean rather than remediate contamination.
- Mentioned the revival of the [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund](#) (DWSRF) for source water protection projects. Suggested that Long Island Sound Funds should be dedicated to CT statewide.

- Denise Savageau – [Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation](#)

- Highlighted a \$175k grant (requiring a 50/50 match) for riparian restoration and opportunities for additional funding through various programs, a \$600k grant with CT set

- to receive a significant chunk, and \$60 million for Long Island Sound (LIS) to reduce nutrients and algal bloom.
- Emphasized the concept of how all CT water systems are One Water.
 - Mentioned a possible opportunity to tap into CTDEEP's [319 \(non-source protection\)](#) and CTDPH's DWSRF funding.
- Thomas Morgart – [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#), [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#)
 - Detailed funding opportunities from the [Farm Bill](#) with 10% of funding being put towards SWP and the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) for easement programs and climate-related projects bringing an additional \$10 million (from \$7 million, \$10 million reserved for climate) for procurements for easement programs.
 - Described how easements have historically been used for previously drained land or adjacent to permanently protected wetlands/watersheds (within 1 mile) where NRCS not only protect it but remediate it.
 - Noted that NRCS only works with private lands but can partner with non-profit organizations or farmers to manage lands that would be eligible for funding.

V. **Lead into Treatment Plant/Reservoir Walking Tours**

- Joe Welsh - [Aquarion Natural Resources Manager](#)
 - Discussed balanced recreational use of Aquarion-owned lands with fishing, hiking, and forestry management with permits and months of operation.
 - Described the management of public lands abutting SWP areas through easements and communication with land trusts.
- Rob Turnbull - [Aquarion Forester](#)
 - Emphasized the importance of forest management of a healthy, biodiverse forest for watershed protection and introduced the biggest issue of invasive pests.
 - Noted how marking property boundaries is a big deal as not everyone is on the same page about their land.
- Joshua Tracy - [Regional Water Authority Invasive Species Management Technician](#)
 - Highlighted the impact of invasive species (deer, barberry, etc.) on water quality and how they cause more organic matter and turbidity to enter reservoirs.
 - Introduced topic of drone technology for monitoring and management of construction, storm water control, and erosion, being able to catch problems before they get out of control.

VI. **Tour of the Easton Lake Treatment Plant** - 11:25 AM – 12:15 PM

VII. **Break for Lunch** - 12:15 PM – 1:15 PM

VIII. **Walking Tour of the Easton Lake Reservoir** - 660 Tashua Road, Trumbull, CT 06611

IX. **Meeting Adjourned** – 3 PM