



What environmental legislation will emerge in 2012 and how does the economy tie to those environmental initiatives?

There is no “either/or” choice between the economy and the environment. It is impossible to disconnect the two. Public, private, and nonprofit interests are all stakeholders—how can we be sure in 2012 that all three sectors are moving together to benefit the environment and the economy at the same time?

The challenge is to address the individual wants of various stakeholders and still keep issues moving forward in a positive direction for all.

This document provides a snapshot of the long term goals for each resource area, followed by immediate legislative initiatives expected in 2012 to advance these larger goals. All of these issues are tied to our state’s environmental and economic quality of life.

WATER

Goals & Vision:

- Our goal is for the waters of the state to be of a high quality and ample quantity to support healthy aquatic life and adequate supply for societal uses including economic development. This will require investment and effort to reduce pollution of both surface and ground waters. The state must continue to progress toward effective management of sewage and stormwater; toward limits on harmful lawn treatments, plastics, and other non-essential toxins in the environment; toward protection of natural flows in streams and rivers; and toward efficient programs and priorities for clean-up of contaminated waters. The dead zones in Long Island Sound must be reduced. The inevitable impacts of climate change, including sea rise and intense storms, must be mitigated.

Some steps we can take in 2012 to help achieve our vision include:

- Maintain funding levels for clean water bonding
- Revise water-utility rate structure to favor water conservation
- Establish incentives to implement streamflow regulations sooner than required
- Create local or regional water-focused governance entities, such as a Long Island Sound stormwater authority or municipal stormwater utilities.

OPEN SPACE AND LAND USE

Goals & Vision:

The State's goal is to preserve 21% of CT's land area or 633,210 acres by 2023. This was enacted into law in 1997, with recommendations that 10% be acquired by the State and 11% by "others" (land trusts, towns, and water authorities). However, based upon the state's estimate of the number of acres conserved to date, it is clear that the state will fall far short of the 21% goal unless it makes a commitment to provide consistent funding for open space acquisition.

The State Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust (RNHT) program was created by the Legislature in 1986 in order to help preserve Connecticut's natural heritage and is the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) primary program for acquiring land to expand the state's system of parks, forests, wildlife, and other natural open spaces. In order to uphold the expressed intent of the program, the legislature needs to establish a mechanism to ensure that properties purchased using RNHT funds are consistently defined and legally protected for conservation purposes.

Another important land use issue is the remediation of Brownfields, both for health reasons and to spur urban redevelopment (thereby protecting green spaces and encouraging sustainable, livable communities).

Some steps we can take in 2012 to help achieve our vision include:

- Reforms to speed cleanup of brownfields and contaminated sites through meaningful oversight and deadlines
- Permanent conservation of state-owned agricultural lands, including Southbury Training School.
- Maintain bonding for open space and farmland preservation including dedicated funding through the Community Investment Act.
- Increase participation in training programs for Inland Wetlands commissions
- Flood control through green and natural infrastructure (vegetated buffers on rivers and streams)
- Establish an Open Space Registry

ENERGY

Goals & Vision

Connecticut should lead the nation in its policies and practices that promote energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy technologies. Such policies reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels, reduce energy bills for consumers and help Connecticut reach its legislatively mandated greenhouse gas reduction targets by 2020. A key element of our success to date has been our participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) which reduces greenhouse gas emissions from the electric power sector and provides funding for programs that reduce emissions from residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. We should strengthen RGGI as part of the scheduled 2012 program review to enhance the economic and environmental benefits that Connecticut derives from our participation in this program.

Some steps we can take in 2012 to help achieve our vision include:

- Provide energy efficiency services for oil heated homes with a stable source of funding
- Adopt building energy efficiency disclosure requirements for commercial buildings and explore energy efficiency disclosure for residential buildings
- Adopt financing for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy deployment
- Adopt rules that promote Virtual Net Metering
- Promote development of electric vehicle infrastructure and incentives
- Adopt Low Impact Hydropower Institute certification as the standard

TRANSPORTATION

Goals & Vision:

Connecticut has a multi-modal transportation system that provides consumers with appropriate transportation options, reduces VMT, congestion and GHG, and at the same time spurs transit oriented development and promotes sustainable land use. The transportation system is fully integrated into the regional “knowledge corridor”, provides easy access to jobs, education, recreation and tourism for all users, and addresses the specific needs of the fastest growing segment of Connecticut’s population – our senior citizens.

Some steps we can take in 2012 to help achieve our vision include:

- Provide funding and framework to generate transit-oriented development to support and spur economic development
- Enable new transportation finance mechanisms of dedicated revenue (eg. gas tax, congestion pricing) to fund multi-modal transportation with priority given to repair and maintenance of roads and bridges, public transit and bike/ped investments
- Maintain/increase level of service for public transit, keeping fares reasonable to encourage transit use
- Enact Vulnerable User protections
- Improve law enforcement agencies’ ability to enforce existing ATV laws by 1) requiring registration and 2) forfeiture of the vehicle as a potential penalty. (No new trails for ATV’s without maintenance and enforcement funding and staff, safety regulations, and universal registration)

TOXINS/WASTE

Goals & Vision:

Connecticut will continue to lead the nation in precedent-setting policies that improve the health of citizens and the environment by reducing exposure to toxins in products. A process will be established for identifying chemicals of concern and for shifting to safer alternatives.

Some steps we can take in 2012 to help achieve our vision include:

- Moratorium on outdoor wood burning furnaces until DEEP adopts regulations that establish maximum emission levels
- Mercury thermometer recycling initiative
- Pesticides 1) overturn state preemption 2) more education is part of the law 3) prevent rollback of current bans at schools and day care facilities
- Phase out policy for chemicals of concern
- Expand producer/owner responsibility for post consumer recycling
- Safe disposal of Pharmaceuticals

DEEP RESOURCES & EFFECTIVENESS

Goals & Vision:

DEEP's budget is currently less than one percent of the state's General Fund. As we look to better integrate our agencies and wisely use our scarce budget dollars, DEEP must be fully enabled to do its job to improve compliance with environmental laws through improved permitting, enforcement, efficiency and sufficient staffing. The public would be more supportive of investments in the environment if they were better informed about the real economic, health and quality of life benefits of protecting our natural resources.

With the proper tools and staffing, DEEP could ensure a smooth, timely and predictable flow of administrative actions, including permits and enforcement, as well as restoring and conserving the parks and natural resources for which it is responsible. All data trends for air, water, land and wildlife as tracked by our state's Council on Environmental Quality should be positive.

Some steps we can take in 2012 to help achieve our vision include:

- Provide the agency with administrative penalty powers to more efficiently, consistently and effectively exercise enforcement and oversight capabilities.
- Reduce the costs and difficulties in dealing with DEEP by transforming it to a fully electronic agency. Permit applications, mandated data submissions, training, grant applications, compliance issues, contaminated sites, remediation actions, enforcement actions and similar information should all be electronic and made easily accessible to the public via the web.
- Expand, improve and integrate DEEP's database regarding environmental resources and conditions to improve regulatory decision-making capacity.
- Review inspection and enforcement processes to ensure that compliance is being meaningfully monitored and laws are being enforced in a consistent and effective manner.