



Indian Neck, Branford

SUPPORTING CONNECTICUT'S WATER PLAN

WHY DOES CONNECTICUT NEED A STATE-WIDE WATER PLAN?

Connecticut has long struggled to devise a statewide plan for stewardship of our water resources to ensure now and for the future that we have ample, high-quality water in our streams, wetlands, aquifers, reservoirs, and well fields.

Legislation calling for a statewide water supply plan passed back in 1967; however, the plan was never completed. Subsequently, there have been repeated administrative and legislative efforts to protect water resources. In 2001, the General Assembly created the Water Planning Council (WPC), comprising the four state agencies with responsibilities for water. The Council also has a multi-stakeholder advisory group. But its authority and accomplishments have been limited, and funding has been low to zero.

Interest in a state-wide water plan spiked again in 2013 when a controversial proposal by the MDC to divert millions of gallons of water from the Farmington River to meet increased water demand for development on the Storrs UConn campus, created a public uproar. Eventually, a better solution emerged for supplying water to UConn. However, the controversy highlighted the urgent need for a state-wide, comprehensive water plan.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE STATE-WIDE WATER PLAN?

Governor Malloy has called water the state's most valuable natural resource and committed to supporting the creation of an effective, comprehensive state water plan. With leadership from both the Governor and legislators, last year Connecticut adopted PA 14-163, which mandates the creation of a comprehensive statewide water plan. The Act includes the following provisions:

- Empowers and directs the state's Water Planning Council (WPC) to prepare a state water plan by July 1, 2017.
- Criteria for protecting water supply and water in nature.
- Allows input from a wide variety of stakeholders in the planning of the state water plan.
- Addresses supply distribution infrastructure and many other technical aspects of water management.

The WPC has contracted with Tom Callahan of UConn to be the Project Manager. Mr. Callahan will be on loan from UConn for two days per week. The Water Planning Council has been consulting with its advisory group as required in the statute, which is studying existing

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plans in other states. The Council is also considering a working relationship with the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control (NEIWPC) based in Lowell, Massachusetts.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

While the progress from last year is encouraging, there are still matters of concern with the existing plan:

1. Obtaining adequate funding for the work.

2. Allocating the funding prudently.

At this time 70% of available funds (\$250,000) seem to be ticketed for the Department of Public Health for water supply planning via the Water Utility Coordinating Committees (WUCCs), rather than to comprehensive planning for how the resource of water is used.

3. Accessing the data needed for planning.

Much of this data is not accessible to the public under current Freedom of Information law. This barrier should be removed to facilitate meaningful public input.

The Governor, legislature and local officials recognize that statewide water funding is extremely important to the economic and ecological future of Connecticut. The FY 2016-2017 budget must ensure adequate funding to the statewide water plan and proper distribution of those funds between water supply and natural water within the project.

Governor Malloy recently released his proposed FY 2016-2017 budget with some cuts to water conservation projects. Adequate funding for Connecticut's state-wide water plan will be part of the ongoing budget discussions in 2015.

For more information
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