

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut

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AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, December 11, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – November 13, 2024 meeting
3. RWA Vault Overview: J. Triana
4. Review FY 2026 Budget Schedule: S. Lakshminarayanan
 - a. Confirm date of joint meeting with Land Use Committee to review FY 2026 Budget
5. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
6. Other land items
7. Authority meeting assignments:
 - a. December 19, 2024 – G. Malloy
 - b. January 23, 2025 – P. Betkoski
8. Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, January 8, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
9. Adjourn

**Members of the public may join the meeting in person at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, or by teams using the information at the top of the agenda. To view meeting documents, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/tvu5cy9m>. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email at jslubowski@rwater.com.

Top 10 Holiday Safety Tips

ESFi



1. Inspect electrical decorations for damage before use.

Cracked or damaged sockets, loose or bare wires, and loose connections may cause a serious shock or start a fire.



2. Do not overload electrical outlets.

Overloaded electrical outlets and faulty wires are a common cause of holiday fires. Avoid overloading outlets and plug only one high-wattage appliance into each outlet at a time.



3. Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights.

More than three strands may not only blow a fuse, but can also cause a fire.



4. Keep tree fresh by watering daily.

Dry trees are a serious fire hazard.



5. Use battery-operated candles.

Candles start almost half of home decoration fires (NFPA).



6. Keep combustibles at least three feet from heat sources.

A heat source that was too close to the decoration was a factor in half of home fires that began with decorations. (NFPA).



7. Protect cords from damage.

To avoid shock or fire hazards, cords should never be pinched by furniture, forced into small spaces such as doors or windows, placed under rugs, located near heat sources, or attached by nails or staples.



8. Check decorations for certification label.

Decorations not bearing a label from an Independent testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or Intertek (ETL) have not been tested for safety and could be hazardous.



9. Stay in the kitchen when something is cooking.

Unattended cooking equipment is the leading cause of home cooking fires (NFPA).



10. Turn off, unplug, and extinguish all decorations when going to sleep or leaving the house.

Unattended candles are the cause of one in five home candle fires. Half of home fire deaths occur between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. (NFPA)



Service – Teamwork – Accountability – Respect – Safety



Safety is a core company value at the Regional Water Authority . It is our goal to reduce workplace injuries to zero.



Regional Water Authority

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
November 13, 2024

Minutes

The regular meeting of the Land Use Committee (“Committee”) of the Representative Policy Board (“RPB”), of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District (“RWA”), took place on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut and via remote access.

Committee Members Present: M. Levine(R), P. Betkoski(R), P. DeSantis(R), B. Eitzer(R), M. Horbal(R), G. Malloy, J. Oslander and J. Mowat Young(R)

RPB: R. Harvey and C. Havrda

Authority: M. Rizzozi

Management: S. Lakshminarayanan, V. Benni, J. Triana, and T. Barger

Chair Levine called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

On motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its October 9, 2024 meeting, as presented.

Mr. Lakshminarayanan, the RWA’s Vice President of Engineering & Environmental Services, acknowledged Mr. Barger, the RWA’s Water Quality Manager, who provided an update on the lead service line inventory program.

He reported that the RWA has been reviewing historical records but identified gaps in the data regarding service lines, including new responsibilities extending to meters found inside homes. To address this, the RWA employed vacuum excavation for data collection for direct access to service lines. This method, which was used throughout the RWA’s 16-town district and resulted in the excavation of approximately 3,000 sites, yielding valuable information. The data was then integrated with existing historical records into a modeling software by consultant CDM, which provided insights into unknown contributions to the service lines. Following this analysis, they completed and submitted a report to the State Department of Public Health by the deadline of October 16th. The RWA has provided information to customers about their service lines through personalized letters.

He also stated that the RWA continues to compile a comprehensive inventory despite the challenges posed by changing field conditions. Staff members are being utilized to gather essential service line information. Communication remains a priority; engagement with municipal leaders, health departments, and other stakeholders ensures that all parties are informed of project developments. A multimedia campaign, including emails, print materials, calls, meetings, and webinars, is being employed to maintain awareness and address inquiries. Additionally, the RWA is actively pursuing funding opportunities through the State Department of Public Health's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund to support both immediate needs and future replacement efforts. Continued outreach will involve neighborhood canvassing and dialogue with diverse community groups to ensure that information is collected appropriately, and all requirements are met.

Committee members discussed challenges, expectations, and federal regulation changes.

Chair Levine stated that the Authority voted to recommend an application to the Representative Policy Board (“RPB”) for the disposition of 56 Squantuck Road in Seymour, Connecticut. The RPB Chair referred the application to the Committee to review for completeness, mode, and date of public hearing. After discussion, the Committee found the application to be complete and on motion made by Ms. Young and seconded by Mr. Horbal, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend the Application to the RPB to schedule a public hearing,

Update on *The Land We Need for the Water We Use Program* – Mr. Triana, the RWA’s Vice Real Estate Manager, reported:

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
October 31	73%	87%	66%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
October 2024	0.79	4.01	3.84
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	17.58	24.86	19.11

Land We Need for the Water We Use Program (Dispositions/Acquisitions)

- Madison – Corresponded with property owner of 24+/- acres.
- Cheshire, Bis/Bowman property – Spoke to some abutters about marking boundaries. 490 Forestland certification was approved. Corresponded with DEEP staff about the OSWLA grant.
- Branford, Cherry Hill Rd. ext (BR 10A) – Received the updated deeds and filed in the vault.
- North Branford, Beech St., and Poms La. properties – Executed the deeds and held closing transferring the properties to the North Branford Land Conservation Trust.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Attended FMA meeting about the application. FMA approved and it was forwarded onto the RPB.
- Madison and Guilford (MA 2A and GU 21) – Spoke to representative from Guilford Sportsmen Association about their interest in the class III acres.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Consultant submitted the resubdivision application to P&Z. Public hearing is scheduled for November 12. Installed sign on the front lawn.

Forestry Update

- Killingworth - East Hammonasset Leaf Screen Thinning, (KI 4) – 75% complete.
- Hamden - Overstory removal and Tornado Salvage, (HA 36) – The harvest was halted in early June, and the logger pulled his equipment off the property on June 13th. It is uncertain at this point whether the buyer will continue with the salvage operation even if a market is found - 15% complete.
- Guilford - Menunketuc High-Grade Rehabilitation Cut and Conifer Release (GU 12/12A) – **45% complete.**
 - Inventoried ~300 acres of property in Prospect and Branford for future timber sales.
 - Gave tour of Nathan’s Pond slash for staff and volunteers of The American Chestnut Foundation.

- Led a site walk of Nathan’s Pond slash wall and nearby research plots for scouts as part of their environmental education program and a nest-box construction grant.
- Inspected GU 12/12A timber sale on a weekly basis. Also checked the new culvert crossing and sediment basin along the main access road through the Menunketuc property.

Recreation

- Oak identification walk was attended by 21 people.
- Cleared trails at Maltby Lakes and Lake Saltonstall.
- Boats and docks removed from Lake Saltonstall.
- Weeds and brush were removed from the dock area.
- About 1800 walleye fingerling (6-8”) were stocked in Lake Saltonstall.
- Locks were replaced at Lake Chamberlain and the Maltby Lakes after customer complaints.
- Tours of our recreation areas for two new customer service staff were held.
- Updated recreation pamphlet.
- The Water Wagon attended four events in October.

	October		September	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
Permit Holders	4,889	4,823	4,846	4,827

Special Activity Permits

- CT DEEP (Christopher McDowell, Fisheries Biologist)-To sample reservoir fish community via night boat electrofishing at Peat Swamp Reservoir and Lake Hammonasset to assess ecological health of fish population and perform waterbody wide inspection for invasive mosquito fish (10/8/24 – 11/15/24)
- New Haven Bird Club (Glen Cummings, Gilles Carter)-to maintain and monitor bluebird nesting boxes, Christmas Tree Fields (North Street and Great Hill Road) North Branford, (3/21/25-8/31/25).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Hamden, Hamden Hall athletic fields (HA 9A) – Corresponded with Murtha about amending the lease to reflect the new amount.
 - West Haven, Shingle Hill Tanks (WH 7) – Received COI from Yale’s contractor. Attended Teams meeting with parties involved to discuss conduit route.
 - West Haven, Allings Crossing Rd. (WH 6) – Received payment from UI.
 - Prospect, Roaring Brook Rd. (PR 7) – Checked area by Crandall’s house. Old hose was broken. Noticed dam within the stream (with logs) and an owl/wood duck box.
 - North Branford, 269 Forest Rd. (NB 17) – Saw letter from town staff to the owners of the property which included a comment about an encroachment. Property owner has a license agreement with us from when we acquired the property and has been in compliance.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford. Finished treating stilt grass, mugwort and swallow-wort using steam at Lake Gaillard, totaling approximately 1.37 acres. Prepared for stilt grass study involving the steaming of seed heads to see if steam will kill the seed.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	0.9 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	0.9 acres

- Deer hunt – Scouting period was completed. The hunt opened on October 28. Five deer have been harvested by the end of the month.
- Regional Conservation Partnership – Hosted part of field trip for 15 attendees talking about our land conservation efforts and timber sales.
- New Haven, Yale Golf Course drainage – Received signed MOU and filed in the vault.
- East Haven, Hellstrom Rd. – Checked slope behind houses for any movement of rocks but did not find anything.
- Madison, Durham Rd. cell phone tower (MA 2D) – Forwarded plans from AT&T for installing a new diesel generator at the site to Environmental Planning.
- Bethany, Downs Rd. Cole easement – Spoke with potential buyer of the Cole property about the easement we hold on it.
- Branford, Hosley Ave. – Staff participated in clean up along the road.
- Boundaries – Checked and remarked boundaries in Orange.
- Land Use Plan – Continued work on maps for next LUP update.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – Authorized Juliano to create survey for the easement. Contacted North Branford town staff about an easement over their property.
- Drone flights – Flew drone missions in Prospect documenting construction at the Prospect Reservoir. Flew drone missions in Ansonia and East Haven documenting the state of the hatches going into tanks.
- Watermain easement encroachments – Discussed the creation of a spreadsheet to track encroachments found through GIS.

The committee reviewed and adopted the proposed 2025 calendar year meeting dates.

The committee reviewed volunteer assignments for upcoming Regional Water Authority meetings on:

- November 21, 2024 - J. Oslander
- December 19, 2024 – G. Malloy
- January 23, 2025 – P. Betkoski

The next regular meeting is on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

At 6:20 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

Mark Levine, Chair

(R) = Attended remotely.

December 11, 2024
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
November 30	69%	86%	66%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
November 2024	2.96	3.52	3.92
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 – 11/30/24)	20.54	28.38	23.04

Land We Need for the Water We Use Program (Dispositions/Acquisitions)

- Madison – Corresponded with property owner of 24+/- acres.
- Cheshire, Bis/Bowman property – Started marking the new boundaries.
- Contacted by two abutters in Prospect and Guilford about acquiring our land. Explained that our land was protected and not for sale.
- Cheshire, Ricci property – Corresponded with consultant about the management plan for the property that was supposed to be authored by the town. The Authority holds a conservation easement over this parcel.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Composed memo answering questions from the FMA about the application. LUC determined the application was complete. Letters and applications sent to required groups.
- North Branford, Beech St. and Poms La. properties – Corresponded with NBLCT staff about the boundaries and the gates.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – P&Z application was tabled. Application for variances was submitted.
- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Prospective buyer of property emailed to ask more questions about the deed restrictions.

Forestry Update

- Killingworth - East Hammonasset Leaf Screen Thinning, (KI 4) – 75% complete.
- Hamden - Overstory removal and Tornado Salvage, (HA 36) – The harvest was halted in early June, and the logger pulled his equipment off the property on June 13th. It is uncertain at this point whether the buyer will continue with the salvage operation even if a market is found - 15% complete.
- Guilford - Menunketuc High-Grade Rehabilitation Cut and Conifer Release (GU 12/12A) – **55% complete.**
 - Corresponded with DEEP staff about installing a water level sensor at the Big Gulph tunnel.
 - Worked on a plan for a slash wall timber harvest at Lake Saltonstall.
 - Repaired the gate at the Seymour slash wall harvest.
 - Marked timber for existing woodcutters and moved some existing woodcutters to new locations.
 - Worked with Natural Resource Specialists to order forestry planting stock for next year.
 - Researched ordering more biocontrol beetles for addressing hemlock woolly adelgid infestations.
 - Met with maple tapper at Lake Gaillard to coordinate removal and remounting his tubing and the removal of invasive plants by a contractor.
 - Organized site inspection at Prospect Reservoir for a vendor to supply a quote for mowing the lake bottom.

Recreation

- New Haven Bird Club walk occurred at Lake Dawson.
- Fishing season ended at the end of the month.
- Discussed importance of causeway at the head of Lake Chamberlain with Engineering.
- Cleared trails at Lake Chamberlain.
- Bethany Horsemen members worked on horse trails at Lake Chamberlain.
- Newsletter published and mailed out.
- Updated recreation pamphlet was finalized for printer.

	November		October	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
Permit Holders	4,838	4,730	4,889	4,823

Special Activity Permits

- Resources in Search and Rescue, Inc.-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)- Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, Two Cornwall Avenue, Prospect, (11/27/24 – 11/27/25).
- Resources in Search and Rescue, Inc.-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)- Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, RT 42 Swamp southeast of RT 42 Bethany; (11/30/24 – 11/30/25).
- Resources in Search and Rescue, Inc.-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)- Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, 20 Rimmon Road, Seymour (11/27/24 – 11/27/25).
- Resources in Search and Rescue, Inc.-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)-Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, Lake Watrous and Lake Dawson, (11/30/24 – 11/30/25).
- Dr. Chris Loscalzo (at request of CTDEEP) - Annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey - Lakes Saltonstall and Gaillard – (1/11/2025).
- New Haven Bird Club (Chris Loscalzo) - Annual Christmas Bird Count survey - Saltonstall, Whitney, Wepawaug, Maltby, Dawson, Glen, Chamberlain, Watrous – (12/14/2024).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Hamden, Hamden Hall athletic fields (HA 9A) – Signed amendment to agreement.
 - West Haven, Shingle Hill Tanks (WH 7) – Received payment from Yale and copy of their insurance. Parties working on relocating the conduit run from the building to the tank.
 - Seymour, Clinton Rd. (SE 7) – Corresponded with vendor for the town using the building for a radio repeater. Indicated that they are responsible for any maintenance and that the town’s agreement needs to be renewed by January if they want to keep the equipment in our building.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Branford, Prospect, Seymour, and North Branford. Contractor cleared about 2 acres of autumn olive at newly acquired property off of Cherry Hill Rd.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	5.75 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	2 acres

- Deer hunt – Hunt was completed with 40 deer harvested. Breakdown by gender and location is shown in the table.

Property	Number of Hunters	Does	Bucks	Total Deer
Gaillard (North Branford)	135	15	14	29
Bethany	25	0	2	2
Prospect	20	3	5	8
Ansonia/Seymour	8	0	1	1
Total	188	18	22	40

- Boundaries – Checked and remarked boundaries in Hamden and Cheshire.
- East Haven, Beach Ave. watermain – Consultant got the signed permission from the town. Submitted application to DEEP and notice was put into the newspaper.
- Guilford, Rockland Rd. gate (GU 18) – Corresponded with abutter about the lock on the gate.
- Hamden, Main St. – Replied to surveying firm about old maps we had from NHWC property in the Lake Wintergreen area.
- Watermain easement encroachments – Reviewed spreadsheet with GIS staff.
- New Haven, Sachem St. easement – Contacted Yale staff again in order to get easement for a portion of the street that was discontinued and is now owned by the university.
- Flood ALERT/Raw water – Renewed FCC licenses for all sites.
- Lake Whitney Dam project, East Rock Park – NRA conducted a tree inventory inside the park where we will need access to the dam.
- Land Use Plan – Worked on second drafts of maps for next LUP update.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – Corresponded with town staff about getting an easement through their property. Supplied a boiler-plate easement for them to review.
- North Branford, new tank at West Pond Rd (NB 10) – Filed P&Z permit on the land records and gave copy to the building department.
- North Branford, Lake Gaillard pavilion (NB 4) – Filed P&Z permit on the land records and gave copy to the building department.
- Drone flights – Conducted a drone flight at Farm River-North Branford diversion to document the sediment buildup that will be dredged in the future. Conducted drone flights of various water tanks for Engineering. Inspected hatches on top of the tanks to determine if people needed to make closer inspections.
- Foresters and REM attended NE Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests and Water conference hosted by the RWA at the LWWTP. Forester (JT) helped coordinate the conference. Both Foresters spoke at the conference which was attended by about 90 people.

Attachments

- November 11, 2024 - You might beat back phragmites, the scourge of wetlands, but then what? – NPR
- November 15, 2024 - NBLCT Purchases 37.5 Acres of RWA land in North Branford – ZIP06 website
- November 16, 2024 - What to know about drinking water, wildlife and more amid Connecticut drought – CT Insider
- November 26, 2024 - Get a letter about lead in your water pipes? Here's why CT residents are receiving them – NH Register

Upcoming Agenda Items

January 2025 - ???

You might beat back phragmites, the scourge of wetlands, but then what?

By Nell Greenfieldboyce – NPR - November 11, 2024

Keith Hambrecht vividly recalls his first experience with the bane of American wetlands, a tall, dense reed called phragmites.

"I didn't know what it was at the time," he says, remembering working on a small conservation crew in Utah about a decade ago. They were instructed to go to a pond and pull this invasive weed out by hand, a plan that he now calls "comical."

"We spent maybe five minutes trying to pull a few stems of phragmites out of the ground," says Hambrecht. "It's basically impossible."

Now he has a much better idea of the extreme measures it takes to battle this plant.

The trouble is, once the reed is poisoned and mowed down, what's left is a blank slate of mud—the perfect environment for phragmites to come right back.

That's why ecologists in Utah are trying to figure out how to get native plants growing there quickly, to prevent phragmites from taking hold once again.

"It's a pretty new endeavor in many wetland systems and the methods are not tried and true," says Karin Kettenring, a wetlands ecologist with Utah State University.

But there's one spot next to the Great Salt Lake that gives her hope. There, her research team has experimental plots that have shown how mixes of native seeds can restore a wetland after phragmites has been wiped out.

"For the first time, we were seeing a much higher diversity of native species reestablishing," she says. "We literally had not ever achieved that before."

A risky packing material

Puffy-topped phragmites has been around North America for more than a century. It likely got introduced to the east coast as a kind of packing material, with the fluffy seed heads used like Styrofoam in shipping, says Kettenring.

"It didn't get out to Utah, or at least didn't explode in Utah, until the early nineties," she says.

Now, tens of thousands of acres in this state are covered by this reed. Its giant stems can grow over twelve feet tall, in thick, impenetrable bunches that crowd everything else out. And its dense root systems go deep into the wet ground.

"Just how the water is flowing over the land is significantly altered by this plant. That's just completely different from anything that was here beforehand," says Hambrecht, noting it can choke up canals and block the flow of rivers. "It has pretty far reaching impacts."

Utah is just one story. This plant has become a major problem in wetlands across the United States, where it dominates areas that should be filled with a diverse array of native plants that fill the needs of insects and animals such as migrating birds.

To get rid of phragmites, land managers like Hambrecht, who works for the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, & State Lands, have to spray herbicide over thousands of acres. After that, the massive amount of dead plant material has to be chopped up or burned.

Once areas are treated, however, native wetlands plants don't just naturally spring back. Given how much it would cost in labor and time to try to put in mature native plants, says Hambrecht, spreading seeds seems to offer the only feasible option.

Getting seeds to take hold is hard, in part because of changeable water levels.

"You would think with a wetland, and water being the defining feature, that you can plan to have consistent water," says Hailey Machnikowski, a graduate student in Kettenring's lab. "We find that that's not the case."

Mixing up seeds

Machnikowski is standing in a kind of wet meadow at the Howard Slough Waterfowl Management Area. This vast marsh has channels of water crisscrossed by dikes with roads on top.

To get to their experimental plots, the researchers have to put on waders and cross a channel of water, then muck through mud.

This is where they've strewn seeds from a carefully chosen mix of nearly two dozen different native species. They included everything from drought-tolerant plants to ones that like to have their feet wet, "basically hoping that something within that mix is going to match what the conditions are," explains Machnikowski.

"Every two weeks, we come out here and we do visual estimations of cover by species," says graduate student Montana Horchler, who has been testing the effect of putting out seeds multiple times a year, rather than just once in the spring.

Some seeds they've tried have been a bust. Others are doing surprisingly well, like a native plant called pickleweed and a type of beggartick that has bright yellow flowers.

"We're trying and slowly but surely, we're learning things one bit at a time," says Sam Kurkowski, the manager of Kettenring's lab.

If the lessons they learn are going to be applied on a larger scale, however, somehow they'll have to get ahold of a lot of seed that normally isn't found in a store.

For their test plots, they gathered seed by hand from wild plants—a laborious process. Ideally, they'd be able to get native plant seed companies to supply the seeds, but that's something that still needs to be worked out.

"We just had a big collaborative meeting this fall with native plant vendors and wetland managers to kind of share our experiences and help facilitate working together," says Hambrecht.

A lot of the native seed providers are "are smaller businesses and they don't have a big profit margin," says Kettenring. That means they may not be able to take the financial risk of producing a lot of uncommonly requested seeds unless they know for sure that they'll have a buyer.

In thinking through all of these challenges, Hambrecht says the collaboration between land managers and the researchers has been invaluable.

"I hope that it can serve as an example for other issues like this," he says. "I think people look at large invasive species problems and feel like they're completely futile. But really, we just need to find solutions to a lot of the challenges and then work together in a strategic long-term plan to restore these ecosystems."

NBLCT Purchases 37.5 Acres of RWA land in North Branford

ZIP06 website - By Submitted by David Sargent, North Branford Land Conservation Trust – 11/15/2024

In 2011, the South Central Regional Water Authority (RWA) received approval to sell the Class III lands (land outside of the RWA watersheds) at the intersection of Beech Street and Poms Lane for “highest and best use.” Unfortunately, this term often implies development, which tends to increase land value compared to leaving it as woodland. This proposal faced significant opposition due to its original zoning of R40. Before the parcels could be put up for bid, the town rezoned the land to R80. This action would force the RWA to restart its lengthy disposition process - if they wished to sell again. It was just not in the cards in the years that followed.

Fast forward ten years: Charley Ferrucci contacted the new RWA Land Manager, John Triana, offering to contribute \$100,000 toward the purchase of these parcels, provided they would be preserved as open space. In turn, John reached out to me, knowing these parcels were of interest to the North Branford Land Conservation Trust (NBLCT).

Charley, who grew up in the neighborhood, was motivated by his mother’s fondness for the woodlands. He and his wife, Mary, had previously established the “Mary Lloyd Ferrucci & Charles Ferrucci Jr. Family Foundation”. They believed that preserving these parcels as natural habitat aligned perfectly with their philanthropic goals.

Recognizing Lake Gaillard as a major drinking water source, John understood the importance of protecting the land surrounding it. If developed, some backyards would be only a few hundred feet from the lake, making it difficult to protect the boundary line.

John moved forward and had the two parcels appraised for a combined total of \$584,000. As much as John might have wanted to offer some discount to the land trust, for the peace of mind of the woods being a natural buffer, his fiduciary responsibility is to the RWA “ratepayers”. If he wanted the transaction to be approved, he had to use appraisals as a selling price. No discounts here. With Charley’s & Mary’s pledge of 100k, and a firm selling price, the NBLCT had to figure out if acquiring these parcels was even feasible.

With a “we can do it” attitude, the board unanimously voted in favor of moving forward. It was time for the NBLCT to roll up its sleeves and begin fundraising. This would be, by far, the most expensive acquisition in the land trust’s history. Add to the \$485,000 for the purchase price, we also needed to pay for associated costs - like our own appraisals, surveys, title searches, etc.

To raise this money, we applied for a state Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Grant (OSWA). We received letters of support from our town, our Economic Development Commission, our state legislators and our Regional Council of Governments. A lot of effort went into meeting the requirements and there were no guarantees we’d be awarded anything. There were even a few times we missed a step, and almost voided our application. When it was finally approved, we held our breath - for what seemed like eternity. Finally, in May of last year, Governor Ned Lamont announced the OSWA grant awards. To our astonishment, we were awarded \$385,450! This was the second highest award in the grant round. Our hard work really paid off.

To cover some of the significant upfront costs, we applied for a Transaction Assistance Grant (TAG) through the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) and were awarded \$5000. We also had very generous donations from the Summer Hill Foundation, Donald and Celeste Krahl, Michael Belfonti of Belfonti Companies and many, many towns folk who sincerely care about nature and preserving the character of our town. On October 23rd, 3 ½ years later, we finally became the proud owners of the parcels!

Lots of NBLCT volunteer time & energy went into this effort and those hours of dedication cannot be discounted. Protecting this land from development would not have been possible without their efforts!! We had one more wonderful thing going for us. Our general counsel, Ted Fretel’s, unwavering commitment to seeing this project through to completion was invaluable.

The next chapter in this story is still to be written and you can be a part of it! We have obligations to fulfill the OSWA grant requirements, and we have ambitions of our own. Some of our to do list: create off road parking, make an ADA accessible trail to a vernal pool, a much longer trail throughout the properties and general forest management from invasive removal - to planting native trees. Our goal is to create a healthy forest everyone can enjoy for passive recreation. Join us in our efforts to preserve North Branford’s rural character. You can be proud you helped improve this land for future generations! To get involved contact: secretary@nblandtrust.org

What to know about drinking water, wildlife and more amid Connecticut drought

By Jesse Leavenworth – CT Insider - Nov 16, 2024

Connecticut's herons and raccoons are nabbing fish more easily in rain-starved streams, but the ongoing drought could make life harder for wildlife and people if dry weather continues. The good news is that trees and other plants can survive with relatively little water until the growing season returns, although forests that cover about 60 percent of the state are vulnerable to fire.

Connecticut is under a Stage 2 drought advisory (Stage 5 is the most extreme) due to far below normal precipitation and ongoing fire danger. This is an awareness stage, state officials say, with potential impacts on water supplies, agriculture and natural ecosystems if conditions persist. Western parts of the state are under "severe drought" conditions while the rest of the state is experiencing moderate drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, which produces maps showing conditions across the U.S. and individual states every Thursday.

"The lack of rain over the past two months has caused exceptionally dry conditions across Connecticut, resulting in numerous wildfires and reduced groundwater levels and stream flows," Gov. Ned Lamont said. "We want to raise awareness that as this lack of rain continues, there is a possibility that this emerging drought event could intensify, which is why we want to encourage everyone right now to be mindful of their water consumption and take some simple, sensible steps to stretch water supplies."

The unusually dry fall pattern will likely continue through most of the coming week and that is not a sure bet.

The lack of rainfall this autumn has been startling. Bridgeport has received just 7 percent of its average rainfall since the beginning of October, according to the National Weather Service. New Haven has seen just 8 percent and Hartford has only had 11 percent of average rainfall for the period.

About 23 percent of Connecticut residents have private wells, according to the state Department of Public Health. People with homes served by shallow wells, including older homes with dug wells, are at a higher risk to run dry than residents with deeper, drilled wells, Jenna Nicol, chief of the agency's environmental health section, said. Home owners should pay attention to their water pumps and surges in pressure, Nicol said. A persistent clicking sound often means the pump is working overtime to fill the storage tank when there's not enough water in the ground. Also, Nicol said, people who get water trucked in to recharge their wells should ensure that the water is tested and potable.

She advised people concerned about their well water levels to conserve by ensuring, for instance, that a dishwasher is full before running and putting off washing the car. Visit the agency's private well site and another page on well types and construction for more information.

Manchester's water and sewer department issued a "water supply alert" to residents in its service area, which includes Manchester and Glastonbury. Capacity has dropped below 80 percent, and the department asks consumers to be mindful of unnecessary water use. Continuing dry conditions would trigger more measures, including mandatory use restrictions if reservoir capacity falls to 60 percent or lower.

The Metropolitan District, which provides water to Hartford and its suburbs, is carefully monitoring reservoir levels and weather conditions, but MDC reservoirs "are in good shape," agency spokesperson Nick Salemi said Friday. The district has two large surface water reservoirs that hold about 40 billion gallons when full. Capacity on Friday was at 89 percent, Salemi said, so there are no current water use restrictions.

An ongoing burn ban issued by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection prohibits use of outdoor grills, firepits, campfires and use of flame outdoors at all state parks, forests and wildlife management areas.

For trees, late fall is the least impactful time for drought, DEEP director of forestry Chris Martin said. A mature oak can suck up 100 gallons or more a day during the growing season, but the state's widespread hardwoods and other trees are not drawing that groundwater now. Connecticut forests were well watered in the spring and summer and there is plenty of time for recovery with winter snow and rain, Martin said. He stressed he was not downplaying the need for conservation, but if the drought ends within the next few weeks, Connecticut's forests should be fine.

Lamont's decision to declare a Stage 2 drought advisory came after a recommendation from the Connecticut Interagency Drought Workgroup, a multi-agency panel that assessed precipitation, surface waters, groundwater, reservoirs, soil moisture, vegetation and fire danger conditions.

"We have experienced significantly drier than normal conditions this fall," group chairman and Office of Policy and Management Undersecretary Martin Heft said. "In terms of precipitation, we have had the driest two-month period ever recorded since records began in 1905 and have seen the impacts with increased fire danger conditions. We must begin early steps now to mitigate the potential for harm should the drought be prolonged."

During this Stage 2 drought advisory, residents and businesses are encouraged to shut down automatic outdoor irrigation, minimize overall water use by fixing leaky plumbing and fixtures and follow conservation requests from water suppliers and municipalities.

Lower stream levels have not been an issue for trout stocking because DEEP's fisheries division had almost completed that job, state supervising fisheries biologist Mike Beauchene said Friday. Smaller waterbodies in the Northwest Corner could dry up and fish could perish, Beauchene said, but the state can mitigate some of the damage by managing flow into rivers such as the Farmington River.

The last time drought advisories were issued in Connecticut was during the summer and fall of 2022, when six counties reached Stage 2 and two counties reached Stage 3. About 58 percent of the Northeast is in at least a moderate drought, an increase of nearly 2 percent compared to last week. Southern New Jersey moved up to extreme drought level (three of four), while northern New Jersey, parts of eastern Pennsylvania, southeastern New York state, including most of the New York City area, and western Massachusetts are in a severe drought.

Get a letter about lead in your water pipes? Here's why CT residents are receiving them

By Jordan Nathaniel Fenster - NH Register - Nov 26, 2024

If you've recently received a letter warning of lead in your drinking water, you're not alone. Residents across Connecticut have opened their mail recently to learn they may be drinking lead.

A change in federal rules three years ago required every water company nationwide to put together an inventory of all service lines in the drinking water system.

In Connecticut, that inventory was due to be submitted to the Department of Public Health by Oct. 16. The rules then required water companies to inform residents who may have lead in the pipes that bring water to their homes.

The federal program is administered and funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"I applaud the EPA and public water systems for taking these unprecedented steps to protect our communities from exposure to lead and other dangers in our drinking water," Connecticut health Commissioner Manisha Juthani said earlier this month. "These rule changes from the EPA and the funding to implement them are vital to protect the public health of our communities."

According to the state's informational website on lead, "A service line is a pipe that connects a water main to a home or other building."

"The goal of this effort is to identify and replace all drinking water service lines made of lead and galvanized steel downstream of lead," the website says.

Young children are particularly susceptible to the dangers of lead, the natural occurring substance negatively impacting cognitive abilities, speech and language development, hearing, visual-spatial skills, attention, emotional regulation and motor skills, according to DPH.

Residents who received a letter from their water companies can assume the service lines are made of lead, are galvanized or are made of an unknown material. If residents do not receive a letter, their service lines do not fall into those categories.

Public water systems are able to receive funding to replace impacted service lines through the Drinking Water State Revolving Funds program, which was funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law promoted by President Joe Biden.

The program dovetails with a larger Connecticut initiative to remove lead from areas where children may be, including removing lead paint from residences for free.

The Vault

- Financial records
- PILOT and tax records
- Historic records
- Copies of critical documents
- Land records



Vault Filing System

LETTER ASSIGNMENTS

Appraisals	A
Branford, Branford Water Co.	R
Cheshire, <i>Prospect</i>	P
Contracts Black Book Index	L
Contracts Contract Index	T
East Haven	B
Forestry	Q
Guilford	W
Hamden (Whitney Leases & Rental Assignments)	E
Hamden (Whitneyville)	D
Hamden (Wintergreen) DON'T USE	G
Killingworth	X
Madison	Z
Milford, Milford Water Co.	S
Miscellaneous BUI <i>some located here</i>	M
North Branford	Y
Orange (Wepawaug)	N
Orange/West Haven (Maltby)	I <i>- was A in the original vault system; now I.</i>
Ordinances, Zoning, Title Search, Jan Rpt, Policy Statement	V
Quinnipiac River Pipe Crossings	H
Sundry / <i>North Haven</i>	J
Wallingford	C
Watershed Reports & Lab Reports	O
Woodbridge & Bethany	F
<i>BUI material</i>	U





Isaac Baldwin Deed
To Josiah Harrison Junr

Recorded - - -
November 9th 1748

In Branford; 6 Book
of Records Page 732-3

Isaac Baldwin

Town Clerk - - -

To all people to whom these presents shall Com Greeting Know ye
that I Isaac Baldwin of Branford in y^e County of New Haven and Colony
of Connecticut in New England for the Consideration of y^e full sum of
One Hundred & Twenty three pounds ten Shillings & Tenour in hand Received
to My full Satisfaction of Josiah Harrison Jun^r of Town County & Colony
a fore said therefor Given Granted Bargained sold & Confirmed and by
these presents Do Give Grant Bargain Sell and Convey unto the said Josiah
Harrison Jun^r his Heirs & assigns forever Twelve Acre & Fifty six rods of
fifth and Seventh Division Land lying in y^e Township of Branford aforesaid
on y^e further Great Hill Northward of Jonathan Butlers bounded as followeth
beginning at a red oak pole with Stone about it y^e South east Corner of y^e
Land that I y^e above said Baldwin had sold to Josiah Butlers Jun^r and from thence
running North east Ninety seven rods to a red oak pole with Stone a bought it
and from thence y^e Hill Northwesterly a straight line Eighty four rods to
a heap of Stone and from thence Southwesterly Twenty seven rods & a half to
a heap of Stone y^e North east Corner of said Butlers Land and from thence
Southwesterly adjoining upon said Butlers Land a straight line Eighty five rods
to y^e first Station TO HAVE and TO HOLD — the above Granted
and Bargained premises with the appurtenances thereof unto him the
said Josiah Harrison Jun^r his Heirs and assigns for ever to him and their
own proper Use and Benefit and also I the said Isaac Baldwin Do for
My self My Heirs Executors and Administrators Covenant with the said
Josiah Harrison his Heirs and assigns that at any until the Expireing
of these presents I am Law fully satisfied of the premises as a good
and feasible Estate in Fee Simple and have y^e right to Bargain and
sell the same in any manner and form as is above written and that the
same is free of all Incumbrances whatsoever and farther more I the
said Isaac Baldwin Do by these presents bind My self My Heirs for ever
to warrant and Defend the above Granted and Bargained premises
to him the said Josiah Harrison Jun^r his Heirs and assigns against all
Claimes and Demands whatsoever In witness whereof I have here unto set
My hand & Seal the twentieth Day of November — in y^e Twenty second
Year of y^e Reigne of Our Sovereign Lord George y^e Second of
Great Britain the King Annoque Domini 1778

in presence of
J^{no} Russell
Samuel Howe

Isaac Baldwin

Branford November 21st 1778
then personally appeared Isaac Baldwin
the Signer and Sealer to y^e above written
Instrument and Acknowledged the same
to be his free Act and Deed to be fore
J^{no} Russell — J^{no} Dav^s