

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
Meeting Location: Lake Whitney Dam, 1301 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT

AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Public Comment: Residents and customers may address the Land Use Committee regarding agenda items or other issues. Discussion is limited to the presentation of information for consideration and comment on agenda items.
3. Approval of Minutes – August 13, 2025 regular meeting
4. Lake Whitney Dam Project Update: L. Marcik and C. Savoy
5. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
6. Volunteers to attend Regional Water Authority meetings on October 23, 2025, November 20, 2025, December 18, 2025, and January 22, 2026
7. Other land items
8. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, October 22, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.
9. Adjourn

*This is an in-person meeting. In the event of rain, the meeting will be held at the Whitney Water Center, 945 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT. To view meeting documents, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/3antbz44>. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email at jslubowski@rwater.com.

SAFETY MOMENT

Fall Driving Dangers & Tips to Stay Safe

With the fall season approaching, it is time to shift gears on driving safety. Fall brings its own set of hazards that can result in damage or injury if you are inattentive when behind the wheel.

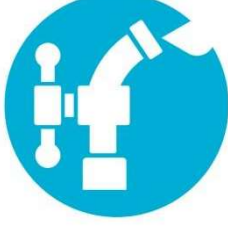
Below are possible threats that require special attention in this season:

1. Darkness – make sure car headlights are working properly
2. Animals – be aware of deer and other small animals crossing roadways
3. Leaves – wet leaves can cause slippery roads, leave plenty of stopping distance
4. Tires – check tire pressure and traction
5. Dampness – be aware of puddles on the roadway
6. Glare – have sunglasses handy and keep windshields clean
7. Fog – use low beams in addition to headlights

Service – **Teamwork** – Accountability – **Respect** – Safety

Safety is a core value at the RWA. It is our goal to reduce preventable workplace injuries to zero.

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Safety



Regional Water Authority



Regional **Water** Authority

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
August 13, 2025

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, August 13, 2025, at Route 42, Bethany, Connecticut. Chair Levine presided.

Committee Members Present: M. Levine, P. DeSantis, B. Eitzer, G. Malloy, J. Oslander, and J. Mowat Young

Committee Members Absent: P. Betkoski

RPB: R. Harvey, T. Clifford, C. Havrda, and T. Slocum

FMA: D. Borowy

Management: V. Benni, C. Cordes, and J. Triana

CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES): Dr. J. Ward

Staff: J. Slubowski

Due to the impending weather, Chair Levine called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

Chair Levine offered the opportunity for members of the public to comment. There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

On motion made by Mr. Malloy, and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its July 9, 2025 regular meeting, as corrected.

Dr. Jeffrey Ward of the CAES, provided an update on the Precommercial Crop Tree Release of White Oak Saplings Preliminary Results, which is a practice used to enhance growth and survival of white oak saplings by removing competing trees to provide more space, sunlight, and moisture for crop trees. The update included:

- Background and location
- Objective, classes, and treatments
- Observations, studies, and data analysis

Update on *The Land We Need for the Water We Use Program* – Mr. Triana reported:

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
July 31	85%	90%	81%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
July 2025	2.25	5.24	3.74
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	3.32	9.18	7.42

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

- Cheshire, former Bis property (CH 5) – Supplied updated survey to DEEP for the OSHA grant and it was approved. Started title work as required for the grant.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Following up with the town regarding P&SA.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – LUC determined that the application was complete. RPB scheduled the public hearing for September. Notices of the public hearing sent to all required parties.
- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Contacted potential buyer since there were signs posted at the property. They were still waiting to get estimates for work on the house.

Forestry Update

- Met with Audubon staff to learn how to assess a maple stand as “bird friendly.” This certification can only be performed by an Audubon endorsed forester and will allow maple producers utilizing RWA property to claim their syrup product is bird friendly.
- Discussed a potential grant opportunity through the USDA pertaining to improving forest stands for timber production.
- Continued to work on the second field season of the Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant and have RWA submit for reimbursement from the USFS.

Recreation

- Bass tournament was held at Lake Saltonstall with 32 participants.
- Botany walk was held at Pine Hill with 25 participants.
- The New Haven PALS camp came twice to the Maltby lakes with kids to fish with the help of our police. Sixty-one kids participated.
- Discussed proposal of a trail at the former Beech St. property with the North Branford Land Conservation Trust.
- The Water Wagon was brought to six events.

	July		June	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,861	4,929	4,916	4,989

Special Activity Permits

- URI (Ari Locklear and designees) – Release biological agent, moth *Hypena opulenta* to help control the population of invasive plants black and pale swallowwort, Lake Gaillard, Lake Saltonstall (7/17/2025) noontime.
- CT Forest & Park Assoc. (CFPA) (Julia Sonen) conduct tour of property, Master Woodland Manager Program, forestry ecology, Seymour Site, Seymour (6/13/26). Note this is for next year.

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Continued communicating with abutter who was trying to get his surveyor involved.

- Agricultural agreements – Met with potential tenant in Prospect. Executed agreement with tenant for the fields in Branford.
 - North Branford, 1790 Middletown Ave. (NB 16) – Abutter called and said they would enter into a license agreement. In process to be signed.
 - Branford, Cherry Hill Rd. (BR 10A) – Certified letter was returned unopened. Murtha to advise on next step.
 - East Haven, Barberry Rd. fields (EH 9, 10, 11, & 13) – Review of the LOA in progress.
 - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Received updated draft of the agreement with the City from Murtha. Forwarded to the City for their review.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Branford, East Haven, Bethany, and North Branford. Inspected for water chestnut in Lake Saltonstall. Collected all plants found, and documented locations. Monitored water chestnut harvest and facilities crew helping dispose of the chestnut. All accessible chestnut was harvested in 10.5 days, including the rear bay. Performed a drone mission at Furnace Pond to document the condition of the water chestnut before the harvest. Began preparation for herbicide treatment trials on the Saltonstall ridge.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	14 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	3 acres

- Woodbridge, Racebrook Rd. access (WO 10) – Sent draft of the access agreement to the property owners to review.
- Deer hunt – Two proficiency tests were held with all hunters passing. The head count after the tests stands at North Branford – 129; Bethany – 23; Prospect – 20; & Seymour – 8.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – North Branford approved the easement. Asked Murtha to send them the documents they needed to complete. Tried to correspond with UI staff about the easement over their property.
- Land Use Plan – Received final comments.
- Cell phone antennas – Corresponded with Crown Castle staff about the lease extension.
- Easements – Researched UI easement near Lake Whitney dam for Engineering. In this case, it existed by prescription due to the moving of the road over time. Researched easement for our watermain behind Walmart in the Hamden Mart off of Dixwell Ave. UI wants to move their lines to the back and is asking us to subordinate our easement.
- Drone missions - Performed a drone mission for Engineering to document condition of watermain underneath the Kimberly Ave. bridge, over the West River.

There were no other land items to report.

The next meeting is on Wednesday, September 10, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.

At 5:50 p.m., Ms. Young entered the meeting, and on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Oslander, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

Mark Levine, Chair

September 10, 2025
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
August 31	75%	87%	74%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
August 2025	1.42	6.31	3.96
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 – 8/31/25)	4.74	15.49	11.38

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

- Madison, Weber property – Completed marking the boundaries. Foresters collected data for the QFR.
- Cheshire, former Bis property (CH 5) – Certificate of Title was completed and forwarded to DEEP. FMA passed resolution to enter into grant agreement and convey the conservation easement.
- North Branford, Amatrudo Farm – Sent letter of support to TPL and NBLCT for their OSHA application for this property.
- Hamden, Davis St. and Hartford Tpk. (HA 5A) – Received notification from DOT that they were condemning a portion of the property at Davis St. and Hartford Tpk. for a sidewalk project. Sent them the forms agreeing to the transfer and compensation.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Signed P&SA with the town giving a deadline of mid-October to close.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Reviewed public notice of the public hearing.

Forestry Update

- Collected quotes and information for multiple projects as part of a New England Forestry Foundation grant through USDA that will allow us to potentially perform three projects on RWA lands. The grant application is for approximately \$600,000.
- Inventoried forest resources at the new Weber property for the Qualified Foresters Report and a PA-490 tax abatement application.
- Worked with RWA Arborist and others to plan for the restoration of a hillside at Maltby Lakes following a small crown fire.
- Explored an opportunity to become an NRCS Technical Service Provider (TSP), including a conversation with HR for a COI review.

Recreation

- Moth event at Lake Menunketuc had 24 attendees.
- Kids archery event at Lake Gaillard had 6 attendees.
- Contractor cleared the orange trail at Lake Bethany.
- Milford Boys & Girls Club brought a summer camp group to the Maltby Lakes to participate in our fishing opportunity program. There were 35 attendees.
- The Water Wagon attended six events in August.

	August		July	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,916	4,880	4,861	4,929

Special Activity Permits

URI (Ari Locklear and designees) – Release biological agent, moth *Hypena opulenta* to help control the population of invasive plants black and pale swallowwort, Lake Gaillard, Lake Saltonstall (7/17/2025)

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Abutter contacted Gesick about the survey. Set boulders along the line in the rear.
 - Agricultural agreements – Corresponded with potential tenants found through FarmLink. Signed license agreements with Hammarlund for two fields in Guilford.
 - North Branford, 1790 Middletown Ave. (NB 16) – Sent final draft of license agreement to abutter.
 - Branford, Cherry Hill Rd. (BR 10A) – Sent regular letter via US Mail. Abutter responded. Sent them a draft of a license agreement for the yard. Contractor removed the last autumn olive behind the yard.
 - East Haven, Barberry Rd. fields (EH 9, 10, 11, & 13) – Signed a one-year access agreement with GreenVest to assess site hydrology to evaluate surface water and groundwater conditions to determine suitability for wetland restoration and/or creation.
 - Bethany, Downs Rd. turnaround (BE 17) – Contacted town staff about their need to send us notification about continued use of the turnaround at the end of the road.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Madison, Guilford, East Haven, North Branford, Bethany and Branford. Experimented with lowest rate of herbicide on the swallowwort patch in North Branford off of the watershed. Conducted post-harvest flight for the Furnace Pond water chestnut harvest.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	21 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	2.75 acres

- Woodbridge, Racebrook Rd. access (WO 10) – Property owner said she forwarded our draft agreement to her attorney.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – Murtha sent North Branford the documents they needed to complete. UI staff indicated that they are unwilling to grant the easement across their properties.
- Hamden, Walmart at Hamden Mart easement – Notified by property owner that in order to expand the store, UI would have to move their lines behind the building and required a subordination of our easement. After consideration, we decided that we would not subordinate our easement to UI's.
- Killingworth, Church Brook culverts (KI 4) – Unblocked two sets of culverts that take Church Brook over the woods road. Put in work order for Operations to repair the road.
- Killingworth, Kroupa Pond (KI 8) – Received letter and certificate about (partial) ownership of the Kroupa Pond dam. Filed in vault after consulting with Engineering.

Attachments

- August 4, 2025 - CT trees 'struggling' from changing climate patterns and pests, arborist says – CT Insider
- August 12, 2025 - 'Exotic' tick species from 7 countries 'hitchhiked' to CT, new study finds – NH Register
- August 17, 2025 - CT is experiencing a hot and abnormally dry August. What that could mean – Hartford Courant
- August 22, 2025 - This 'forgotten' invasive vine is spreading in CT, killing plants and poisoning monarchs – New Haven Register
- September 4, 2025 - Guilford Residents Asked To Reduce Water Use Due To 'Abnormally Dry Conditions' - patch.com
- September 2, 2025 - Lake Whitney Dam to be reinforced as climate change fuels stronger storms, extreme flooding – New Haven Register

Upcoming Agenda Items

October 2025 - police update

CT trees 'struggling' from changing climate patterns and pests, arborist says

Story by Tracey O'Shaughnessy – CT Insider – 8/4/25

A combination of [changed climate patterns](#), new diseases, [invasive insects](#) and [extreme weather events](#), coupled with the continued [loss of habitat](#), have left trees stressed, damaged and "just plain confused," said arborist Megan Joseph of Davey Tree in Hamden.

"Trees are used to rhythm," she said. "With the seasons getting mushier and warmer, they have been struggling."

In addition to invasive insects like the emerald ash borer and spongy moth (formerly gypsy moth), which have caused significant damage, a new threat — beech leaf disease — is affecting the silvery American beech and is rapidly spreading, arborists say.

"The weather patterns come in big waves, where we have a whole bunch of rain all at once and then the warming temperatures. The trees are stressed," Joseph said.

Homeowners concerned about the health of their trees should look for a thinning of a tree's canopy, damaged leaves, holes or hollows around a tree's root bed, as well as fungi or invasive plants such as English ivy, bittersweet or pachysandra. Anything that can choke off a tree's access to light and oxygen, the primary ingredients a tree needs to perform nature's magic trick, photosynthesis — through which they suck in carbon dioxide and water and use the energy of the sun to convert into food in the form of sugars — threatens trees. Take a good look at a tree's bark and scrutinize it for cracks, ooze, sap, fungi growth or peeling branches.

"Look up," advises Chris Martin, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's director of the division of forestry. "What's going on with the tree? You want to see nice, deep green cover. What you don't want to see is brown. Look for big dead branches, bark sloughing off."

Or, maybe just notice — as Joseph did on a recent hike through Sleeping Giant State Park in Hamden — that a tree is leaning perilously over, its bark pimpled by orange-brown fungi. The tree, she said, is in an advance state of decomposition. A quick squat to examine the root bed revealed a hole through which Joseph could poke a stick nearly to the tree's center.

Joseph said trees have been struggling through irregular climate patterns, which cause interruptions in their normal habit of growth.

"We're having less clear delineation between the seasons," she said. "It used to be that our first frost would come regularly in mid-October and we'd have our first snow in mid-to-late December."

The ground used to stay frozen through mid-March or April, allowing trees to rest or, in arborist parlance, the dormancy period, during which they slow down their activity and conserve energy, like hibernating bears.

"They rely on these cues to key them in that it is time to wake up and begin budding," Joseph said.

But lately, a freakish 80-degree day or warmer in March or April befuddles the tree and leads it to expend energy it actually needs to conserve.

"The tree is navigating that, thinking, 'Do I open my leaves now? Do I save my buds?' All of these (climate) shifts are going to take time to adjust to," Joseph said.

The warmer winters also make an ideal environment for pests and invasive plants, such as Japanese knotweed, to spread.

"A distressed tree is releasing chemicals that draw pests," she said.

Among those pests is the nematode, a tiny roundworm causing beech leaf disease, which Joseph spotted right away on the leaves of a slender beech not far from the start of the Sleeping Giant path.

"Beech trees create other trees out of their root system," Joseph said. "So they grow in families."

Sure enough, a thatch of these statuesque, smooth-barked trees ascended across the hillside.

Summers, too, have become hotter for longer. More than 100 million people in the U.S. experienced record heat from June 22-25, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, which reports that this summer is likely to be among the warmest years on record. For a tree, that means loss of water, which often shows up in drooping branches, browning leaf tips or dieback of branches, especially at the center of the top of the tree, according to the Arbor Day Foundation.

"In heat stress situations, trees are losing water faster than they are absorbing it," the organization reports.

Far more damaging than saturating rain, Martin said, is sustained drought.

"The heat and the rain does stress trees, but not to the extent that a drought would," he said.

Last September and October represented the driest two-month period in state history.

"We were fortunate in that it stressed out the trees, but the trees were starting to shut down at that time anyway," Martin said.

In addition to the three heat waves the state endured even before August commenced, the state has been deluged by saturating rains. The New York Times reports that the Northeast region of the United States has experienced a significant increase in extreme precipitation, with some reports indicating a 60% jump. If you see puddles that last for days around the bottom of a tree trunk, that's a sign the tree needs help.

And don't mulch too close to the tree. Martin and Joseph said it's best to leave a 6-to-8-inch "dish" between the bottom of the tree and the mulch line. Consider mulch as you do salt — a little goes a long way, Joseph said.

By fall, your trees will shed (pun intended) even more information about themselves, Martin said.

"If leaves skip the fall color and go from green to brown, that's a sign that it's a problem," he said. "It means portions of the tree are dying."

He suggests seeking help from a licensed arborist, a practice Joseph said homeowners should undertake annually, to avoid more costly and damaging events in the future.

'Exotic' tick species from 7 countries 'hitchhiked' to CT, new study finds

By [Nathaniel Rosenberg](#) – NH Register - Aug 12, 2025

"Exotic" tick species are "hitchhiking" to Connecticut from across the world, according to [a new study](#) from [Connecticut's tick testing lab](#).

The study, published Friday [in the journal iScience](#), was conducted by researchers at the [Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station \(CAES\)](#), and details how ticks from seven countries across three continents — Belize, Costa Rica, Germany, Guatemala, Poland, Scotland and Tanzania —were brought into the state by humans between 2019 and 2023.

The ticks were picked up by travelers who had been horseback riding in tall grasses, touring a national park, or going on nature walks, all activities that lead to tick bites at home, or abroad. Upon returning to the state, they discovered the ticks on their body, and brought them to healthcare providers, which sent the ticks to CAES for testing.

According to [Goudarz Molaei](#), one of the paper's co-authors and a research scientist and medical entomologist who the director of the CAES Tick Testing Program for Lyme and Allied Diseases, the purpose of the study was to get a better understanding of the species of non-native ticks entering the state, and the manner by which they enter.

"We are always monitoring those tick specimens that are hitchhiking on people, just to [protect the health and well being](#) of residents of our state," Molaei said. "And also to make sure that these ticks do not make Connecticut their home."

Molaei said that over the past 10 years, researchers had identified approximately 20 different non-native tick specimens that had arrived in the state from overseas, though none of them had successfully been able to establish a permanent population in Connecticut.

Of the seven cases studied in this paper, it found four different tick species: *Amblyomma coelebs*, *Rhipicephalus pulchellus* also known as the Zebra tick, *Amblyomma mixtum* or Cayenne tick and *Ixodes ricinus* or Castor Bean tick. The [Cayenne tick](#), which was brought in by residents returning from Guatemala and Costa Rica, sparked particular concern for researchers.

That's because these species of ticks tested positive for the bacteria [Rickettsia amblyommatis](#), which is a member of the family of bacteria linked to [spotted fever](#), including the rare disease [Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever \(RMSF\)](#), which is spread through bites by American dog ticks.

None of the cases presented in the study involved people getting sick from their tick bites, though Molaei said it was possible that either *Rickettsia amblyommatis* or another similar bacteria could be responsible for the [uptick in Connecticut residents diagnosed with RMSF](#) over the past few years.

"We have tested hundreds of American Dog ticks and none of them have tested positive for Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever," Molaei said. "We have had annually, up to eight cases (of RMSF since 2018)." Now he's wondering if all the cases were Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever or if they were pathogens that presented similarly to it.

While none of the ticks analyzed in this study had settled in Connecticut, three other invasive tick species have found homes in the state in recent years: [lone star ticks](#), [long horned ticks](#) and [Gulf Coast ticks](#). [Lone star ticks carry a pathogen](#) that can cause a red meat allergy, and Gulf Coast ticks carry a bacteria that causes diseases similar to RMSF, Molaei said.

Climate change is also influencing the expansion of non-native ticks throughout the state.

When he started working at CAES in 2004, Molaei estimated that they received 3,000 ticks a year from residents, health professionals and health departments across the state. Recently that number has increased to close to 6,000.

"It is playing an important role facilitating the establishment and the range expansion we have, particularly lone star and Gulf Coast ticks, the fact that these ticks were able to establish population and start expanding their range is the direct result of climate change," Molaei said. "We no longer have that kind of harsh winter that could kill all these ticks, particularly those non-native tick species. They are able to withstand warmer winter months."

As for what residents can do to avoid bringing unwanted arachnids back into the country, Molaei emphasized that they should take [the same precautions](#) they would in the United States, namely [conducting regular tick checks](#), wearing long sleeves and pants tucked into socks, applying repellent with DEET to clothing, and seeking medical attention if they see a tick bite.

CT is experiencing a hot and abnormally dry August. What that could mean

Hartford Courant | By Stephen Underwood | Aug. 17, 2025

As Connecticut starts off August with soaring temperatures and lots of sunshine, the state is facing abnormally dry conditions with the potential to turn into a moderate drought, according to officials.

Amid a summer heat stretch this month, Connecticut has seen temperatures climb into the upper 80s and 90s throughout the week, with mostly sunny and humid conditions, according to AccuWeather meteorologists. So far, this month has been dry, with less than an inch of precipitation falling across the state.

"It's been a very dry start to August," said AccuWeather senior meteorologist Tom Kines. "There's been little to no rain across the state. ... But as far as any break in the pattern, we don't necessarily see that happening anytime soon."

//According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, most of the southern part of the state is listed as "abnormally dry" along the shoreline.

"The problem with this time of year is that we have a high evaporation rate," Kines said. "So most rainfall events are quickly evaporated from the ground within a day or two. As we get closer to September, the evaporation rate goes down. So more moderate rainfall events generally take longer to evaporate."

August generally experiences high evaporation rates due to increased temperatures and solar radiation. While heat is a major factor, wind speed also plays a significant role, especially in arid regions, where it can exacerbate evaporation, according to AccuWeather.

"We generally want to see higher rainfall in August as the chance for thunderstorms drops once we get into September and October," Kines said. "This is time of year, we often see a lot more precipitation events. The frequency of those events tend to drop as we head into the fall months."

So far this year, 25.54 inches of rainfall has been recorded in Connecticut, well below the 30.82 inch average for this time of year, according to RainDrop.com. June saw just 1.66 inches of accumulated rainfall, and July saw 5.17 inches. This August, just 0.11 inches of accumulated rainfall has been recorded across the state to date. As of August 15, the total rainfall in the Hartford area since the beginning of this month is 0.91 inches. This is 1.18 inches below the average for the month to date, according to the National Weather Service.

"Because of the high evaporation rate, almost all of that rainfall has evaporated, leaving the ground relatively dry," Kines said. "What we really need is some sort of slow moving front or a weakened tropical system moving into the Northeast. The downside to those is sometimes they produce too much rain and cause flooding. It's kind of pick your poison unfortunately." A slow-moving front, also known as a stationary front, occurs when a weather front, either warm or cold, stalls or barely moves. These fronts are characterized by the boundary between two air masses remaining in the same location for an extended period, he said.

Last August, heavy rains in Connecticut caused flash flooding and rescues in Fairfield County. Towns including Seymour and Oxford suffered historic flooding that totaled millions in damages. The massive downpour dropped 14 inches of rain on Oxford in a single day and represented a 1,000-year storm, officials said. But while storms remain unpredictable, this year may see abnormally dry conditions persist into September, as the state still reels from a series of devastating wildfires last year that led to the death of a Wethersfield firefighter.

The Hawthorne fire in Berlin, which consumed more than 100 acres at its peak, was one of the largest in the state in decades. So far this month, there have been two brush fires reported in Westport and Durham, according to the Wildland Fire Reporting System through the state's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

The state's largest water utility company Aquarion Water said that water levels remain normal but precautions are in place, according to corporate communications director Peter Fazekas. "While conditons have been dry, we're not seeing any big water impacts," Fazekas said. "Water levels remain normal, but we are closely monitoring them to ensure any timely updates to our irrigation program."

Aquarion Water partnered with the state back in 2016 to develop irrigation schedules for towns to help conserve water during summer. The irrigation schedule runs from April 1 to Oct. 31 and is usually two times per week. The water company said they don't recommend automatic sprinkler irrigation systems because they often use large volumes of water — about 40% more than homes without the systems.

"That's to ensure we can deliver water supplies during high demand periods in the summer months," Fazekas said. "So we're closely monitoring that and making sure people know about our irrigation schedule, especially during ongoing drought conditions."

Customers in Darien, East Granby, Easton, Fairfield, Granby, Greenwich, Groton, Mystic, New Canaan, Ridgefield, Simsbury, Stamford, Stonington, Trumbull, Weston, Westport and Wilton must follow a twice-weekly watering schedule from April 1 through Oct 31, Fazekas said.

This 'forgotten' invasive vine is spreading in CT, killing plants and poisoning monarchs

By Sloan Brewster – NHR - Aug 22, 2025

Black swallow-wort, an [invasive non-native plant](#) that kills all greenery in its path and threatens [monarch butterflies](#), is in Connecticut.

Also known as dog strangling vines, the woody plant twines around anything that dares attempt to maneuver through its thickets, said Master Gardener Dave Lewis. An import from Japan, the plant is alleopathic, meaning it produces a chemical compound that inhibits growth of other plants around it.

"It creates monoculture, destroys all plants around," Lewis said.

Lewis has been assisting the [Department of Energy and Environmental Protection](#) in creating a wildflower meadow at [People's State Forest](#) in Barkhamsted and introducing more wildflower diversity to the area and has been helping manage beds of black swallow-wort in the area. He is also a member of a group called the Knot Heads, which consists of folks from several towns working together to control another [invasive plant, Japanese knotweed](#).

Lewis took a couple members of the Knot Heads on a tour of the wildflower meadow last Friday and pointed out patches of black swallow-wort, showing them its thick woody texture and the lack of other plants where it thrives.

"It certainly doesn't stand out," noted Edna Travis, of Colebrook.

Lewis first became aware that black swallow-wort was growing in the state in 2018 or 2019, when someone brought a sample to his office and asked what it was. When he looked into it, he realized it was harmful and already in the state.

While it's on lists of invasive plants, it's "sort of been forgotten," Travis said.

In the milkweed family, black swallow-wort produces pods similar to milkweed and attracts adult monarch butterflies. The butterflies lay eggs on the plant, which is toxic to monarch caterpillars and poisons them, Lewis said.

The plant sprouts little purple flowers and was brought to this country from Japan as an ornamental plant, they said.

Lewis said he saw a recent post about someone who was given a piece of the vine and thought it was beautiful and planned to plant it along a fence. The person was told to plant it in pots instead, which Lewis said was bad advice as it doesn't spread by the roots.

"Well, it spreads by the wind, so, if you plant it in pots, it's not going to help," he said. "So, it's just filled with all kinds of misinformation about it."

He found a pod and opened it, showing the white feather-like seeds that catch on the breeze to start new colonies where they land.

Different management tactics at Peoples State Forest include Lewis hand pulling the plants where he finds them.

Mowing early in July before the pods come out and then spraying in August with an herbicide such as phosphate or Triplopyr allows the plant to regenerate but weakens it in resurgence, he added.

"The spray will knock down all the new vegetation," he said. "When it comes back it won't be as tall."

During the visit to the meadow, Lewis said he had spoken to a DEEP manager who was going to have the thicket mowed.

"It's better I think at this point because most of the pods are not mature," he said when asked if it was too late.

Spraying can be tricky. Lewis noted that some people will spray from the midst of an expanse, but should start at the edge to get it from the outside, confining it to the middle.

Christian Allyn, founder of Invasive Plant Solutions in Canaan, said he knows of patches of black swallow-wort in a few towns.

"It's all over Torrington, the center of Torrington and throughout Salisbury and Lakeville," he said. "Towns generally are not working on it and that's been an issue because they see it as a low priority, however the ecological importance is severe."

Controlling the plant should be a higher priority for land trusts too, Allyn said, noting that many are still lacking on stewardship.

Planting pollinator meadows is not the immediate solution, he said.

"It's almost like putting the cart before the horse," he said. "You have to take care of the invasives first."

Tom Zetterstrom, tree preservationist, tree management activist and recipient of the 2024 Leslie Mehrhoff Invasive Plant Awareness Award, recalled encountering black swallow-wort several years ago near Washinee Park in Salisbury and Salisbury Town Hall.

He and a friend traced the vine to its source a block down the street where a fence was wrapped in it. With permission from the property owner, they sprayed.

"So as far as I can tell, we got it all," Zetterstrom said.

There are also other non-native invasive plants to contend with, according to Lewis and Travis. Included on the list are pale swallow-wort, wisteria, autumn olive and Asian bittersweet.

Guilford Residents Asked To Reduce Water Use Due To 'Abnormally Dry Conditions'

[Richard Kaufman](#), Patch Staff – patch.com – 9/4/25

GUILFORD, CT — Guilford residents are being asked to reduce their water use by 10 percent due to "abnormally dry conditions and low rain forecast levels," according to [an announcement from Connecticut Water](#).

The utility company said in a social media post Thursday it has entered Stage 1 Drought conditions in its shoreline service areas.

"We are asking customers in Clinton, Madison, Guilford, Old Saybrook and Westbrook to reduce their water use by 10% to ensure adequate supply for public health and fire protection," Connecticut Water said. "This request is until further notice. We will continue to update customers on drought status."

According to the National Weather Service as of Thursday afternoon, there is a chance of showers for Thursday night in Guilford. There is an 80 percent chance of rain for Saturday night.

Lake Whitney Dam to be reinforced as climate change fuels stronger storms, extreme flooding

By Austin Mirmina, Staff Writer - Sep 2, 2025

HAMDEN — Project officials are finalizing plans to [reinforce the 163-year-old Lake Whitney Dam](#) to withstand heavier rainfall and flooding fueled by climate change.

Built in 1862, the dam gave New Haven a reliable drinking water supply for its rapidly-growing population and helped fight fires. It also powered the armory of Eli Whitney, Jr. — son of the [cotton gin inventor](#) — which produced weapons for Union soldiers during the Civil War.

The dam has undergone regular maintenance over the years. But the Regional Water Authority, which owns Lake Whitney, now says it needs bigger upgrades to prepare for stronger storms and meet industry standards.

The plan calls for excavating several feet of dirt near the dam's crest and replacing it with concrete to improve stability and reduce water loss, said Lawrence Marcik, Jr., a senior RWA engineer.

"That makes it stronger and better because it's a big mass of concrete," Marcik said. "Bigger masses can hold more force."

Crews will also widen and deepen the spillway — the channel where water flows over — along the side of the dam to increase its capacity so it can handle more water during major storms. In addition, the ground below the spillway will be widened and reinforced with concrete to prevent long-term erosion and improve passage for fish and eels.

The lake's water level must be gradually lowered before construction can begin. To do this, two temporary cellular coffer dams — rings of barrel-like structures filled with dirt and stones — will be placed upstream: one near the Davis Street bridge and another about 30 feet above the Lake Whitney Dam.

Crews will then lower the water to about 10 feet, channeling it across the lake bed and through a notch cut into the existing dam, where it will continue downstream. Lowering the lake any more would have exposed pungent-smelling mud flats, according to Marcik.

During this step, a pipe will be installed before the Davis Street bridge to carry water to the Lake Whitney water treatment facility, officials said. This ensures that there is ample water for customers after the lake is lowered for dam work.

To keep construction vehicles from jamming up the parking lot used to access the Whitney Water Center, [Eli Whitney Museum](#) and East Rock Park, temporary access roads will be built from Whitney Avenue to storage areas near the site. The sidewalk along Whitney Avenue will also be moved to make room for protective fencing, plans show.

After consulting historic preservationists and other stakeholders, the RWA chose to rehab the existing dam and preserve its stone facade rather than build a new one downstream.

Once finished, the dam will look largely the same but be strong enough to hold up against the [extreme downpours and flooding becoming more frequent](#) as the planet warms from burning fossil fuels.

The upgraded dam will be designed to safely withstand a so-called "probable maximum flood" — the largest flood possible at the site — which Marcik said could bring up to 34 inches of rain over three days. That's more than double the rainfall during the [record-setting June 1982 floods](#) that killed at least 11 people and [caused a dam failure in Essex](#).

The project plans are 97% complete, Marcik said, and will likely be submitted for approval to the Army Corps of Engineers and the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection by the end of September. While those agencies review the plans, Marcik and other officials will also seek approval from the RWA's five-member board.

The project's total cost is estimated at around \$60 million. Funding details aren't available yet, but a RWA spokesperson said they expect to receive "substantial support" through low-interest federal and state loans.

"Lower borrowing costs can have a dramatic impact on total costs over the life of the loan, as any homeowner knows, and we are eager to leverage this on behalf of our customers," the spokesperson, Edward Crowder, said.

Construction is expected to begin at the end of 2026 and last about two-and-a-half years, according to Marcik.

The senior engineer had planned to retire but will stay on to see the project through, having worked on it for most of his RWA career. "This is my baby," he said.