Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
Northford Playground, 1827 Middletown Avenue (Rt. 22), Northford

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AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, July 12, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – June 14, 2023 regular meeting
3. Big Gulph Recreation Area Update: J. Triana
4. Consider and act on recommendation to the Representative Policy Board regarding completeness, mode, and date of public hearings for the Authority's Applications for the disposition of:
    a. 17.22 acres located west of Beech Street in North Branford that is part of Land Unit NB 4: S. Lakshminarayanan and J. Triana
    b. 19.462 acres located north of Pomps Lane in North Branford that is part of Land Unit NB 4: S. Lakshminarayanan and J. Triana
5. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
6. Other land items
7. Elect Committee Chair 2023-2024
8. Next meeting regular meeting: Wednesday, August 9, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.
9. Adjourn

SAFETY MOMENT

Tap Into Safety

Regional Water Authority

JULY – TIPS FOR PREVENTING POISON IVY:

Before performing outdoor work where poison ivy may be present, do a thorough hazard assessment to identify if poison ivy is present, do not allow employees that are allergic to poison ivy to do the job. Don't use string trimmers to remove poison ivy. Employees that are allergic to poison ivy can be severely affected by poison ivy and should not be exposed.

Here are some tips for avoiding getting poison ivy rashes:

- As soon as you suspect that you have been exposed to urushiol, the oil found in poison ivy leaves, wash thoroughly with lots of warm water and soap (hot water opens the pores, and may transiently increase exposure).
- If you don't have water, use rubbing alcohol.
- Don't use a washcloth, since this tends to spread the oil to other patches of skin.
- Once the oil has been removed, the rash from poison oak or poison ivy is not contagious. Even the oozing blisters are not contagious, although they look like they should be.
- As long as the oil is no longer present, scratching does not make the rash spread. Scratching does make the already intense itching even more unbearable and can also cause the rash to get infected.

The best way to prevent an outbreak of poison oak is to avoid any contact with the oil in the first place. Teach your employees to recognize the poisonous plants of your area, and remove the plants by mechanical means without personal exposure or use proper ppe. Use roundup herbicide to eliminate the plants.

Service – Teamwork – Accountability – Respect – Safety

Regional Water Authority

UNAPPROVED

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District

Minutes of June 14, 2023 Meeting

The regular meeting of the Land Use Committee of the Representative Policy Board ("RPB") of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District ("RWA") took place on Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut. Chair Betkoski presided.

Committee Members Present: P. Betkoski, P. DeSantis, R. Harvey, M. Horbal, M. Levine, and G. Malloy

Committee Members Absent: B. Eitzer, J. Oslander, and J. Mowat Young

Management: J. Hill, S. Lakshminarayanan, and J. Triana

Office of Consumer Affairs: Atty. Donofrio

Staff: J. Slubowski

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

Atty. Donofrio, Office of Consumer Affairs, provided a presentation of the Representative Policy Board's (RPB) Governance, FOIA, and Ethics practices, which included highlights of:

- South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority's (RWA) Enabling Legislation
- RPB Bylaw requirements for executive sessions, committees, ethics, indemnification, and appointments
- RPB Rules of Practice functions, applications and public hearing requirements
- RPB job descriptions
- Robert's Rules of Order
- Ethics & Conflict of Interest disclosure rules
- RPB Policy Concerning Management of Confidential Information
- Freedom of Information Act requirements for meetings, executive sessions, and public hearings

On motion made by Mr. Malloy, and seconded by Mr. Horbal, the Committee approved the minutes of its May 10, 2023 meeting.

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

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
May 31	97%	96%	93%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
May 2023	2.84	2.24	3.91
Fiscal YTD (6/1/22 – 5/31/23)	42.33	46.81	46.50

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

- Prospect, 200 Saddle Ct. – Surveyor set additional pins and the remainder of the property was marked.
- North Haven – Corresponded with property owner of 14+/- acres.
- Contacted numerous land trusts about potential properties to protect in our next fiscal year.
- North Branford, Beech St. and Pomps La. properties (NB 4) – DEEP announced that NBLCT would be the recipient of an OSWLA grant for the two properties. Verified that the disposition application would go before the FMA in June.
- Spring St. PS – Engineering's consultant developed memo to share with the City about the Stiles School property.

Rental houses:

- (nothing to report)

Forestry Update

- Killingworth - East Hammonasset Leaf Screen Thinning, (KI 4) – **95% complete.**
- Hamden - Overstory removal and Tornado Salvage, (HA 36) – **10% complete.**
- Killingworth - N. Chestnut Hill Patch Cuts, (KI 6) – **100% complete. Equipment removed, but some firewood logs still at the landing.**
  - Operations staff improved the access to the northern field off of Downs Rd., Hamden.
  - Planted white pines at Maltby Lakes.
  - Planted native species at the two slash wall harvests.
  - Worked with Engineering staff to improve drainage and establish a parking lot with gate at the Seymour slash wall harvest.
  - Coordinated with Operations staff to mow the Christmas tree field this year.
  - Conducted planning and start-up activities related to the anticipated receipt of the US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration grant.
  - Started interviewing candidates for Natural Resources Technician positions.

Recreation

- Kids fishing derby was held at Maltby Lakes with 8 attendees.
- Recycled plastic baits were distributed to fishing derby participants.
- Charcoal history hike at Pine Hill had 9 attendees.
- Cleared trails at Sugarloaf and Pine Hill and removed a downed tree across a trail at Maltby Lakes.
- Addressed issues with Vermont vendor for online sales.
- Corresponded with property owner at 59 Rimmon Rd., Seymour about parking and storing materials in the easement area.
- The Water Wagon was brought to four events by recreation staff.

	May		April	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Permit Holders	4,972	5,676	5,021	5,792

Special Activity Permits

- CT DEEP (Andrew Bade, Supervising Fisheries Biologist)-To assess the fish community via night boat electrofishing at Lake Chamberlain and Bethany Lake with a special focus on the presence or absence of Smallmouth Bass. Up to 30 black bass and 30 Bluegill will be retained for fish pathology testing to understand the decline of Smallmouth Bass, Lake Chamberlain 5/8/2023 and Bethany Lake 6/5/2023.

- New Haven Bird Club (Mr. Patrick T. Leahy and designees)-Spring Bird Walk to observe species that nest in the bluebird/tree swallow boxes, Lake Chamberlain (5/15/2024)
- New Haven Bird Club (Mr. Patrick T. Leahy and designees)-Spring Bird Walk to observe species that nest in the bluebird/tree swallow boxes, Lake Dawson (5/29/2024)
- New Haven Bird Club (Mr. Patrick T. Leahy and designees)-Spring Bird Walk to observe species that nest in the bluebird/tree swallow boxes, Lake Watrous (6/12/2024)
- Stephen Trumbo, Ph.D. (Dept. of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, UConn Waterbury) - Continue research on the behavior and ecology of burying beetles.- Off Route 42 (near the Cheshire-Bethany-Prospect line) just east of traffic light at Rt.69-Rt. 42 juncture (6/1/2023-10/1/2023)
- UCONN and URI (Alyssa Siegel-Miles and Lisa Tewksbury, and designees) – Release biological agent, moth Hypena opulenta to help control the population of invasive plants black and pale swallowwort (Vincetoxicum nigrum and V. rossicum, Lake Gaillard, Lake Saltonstall (7/18/23-7/18/24) during summer months.

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - Orange, 43 Pine Crest Dr. (OR 3) – Contacted abutter again about the license agreement. Abutter said his attorney was reviewing the license agreement.
  - Hamden, New Haven Country Club (HA 5) – Exchanged drafts of the new agreement with NHCC staff.
  - Hamden, 33 Rolling Ridge Rd. (HA 12) – Contacted again about encroachments and offered a license agreement.
  - North Branford, 261 Forest Rd. (NB 17) – Corresponded with abutter about reviewing property line.
  - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Signed confidentiality agreement with Yale. Corresponded with WHPD staff about amending the agreement with them to include Yale in the list of groups who could house equipment in the shelter.
  - Bethany Horsemen – Executed the annual agreement.
  - Trespassing – Recorded instances of trespassing including damage to the lock at Maltby Lake, horseback riders in unapproved locations, and hikers in unapproved locations.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Branford and North Branford. Contractor cleared invasives in North Branford. Hosted invasives walk for CIPWG at the Seymour slash wall harvest to discuss how native species grow without the pressure of deer browsing.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	57.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	8.5 acres

- East Haven, Beach Ave. watermain – Juliano supplied updated map for Tighe and Bond for DEEP permit application.
- Regional Conservation Partnership – RCP meeting at LWWTP was attended by about 30 people.
- North Branford Tank (NB 10) – Corresponded with abutter about work planned at the tank.
- USDA agricultural survey – Spoke to USDA about agriculture on Authority property.
- Hamden, Robin Hill Lane – Replied to abutter calling about trees in the river upstream of Clark's Pond.
- Deer hunt – Held lottery. Letters mailed to hunters.

- Orange, Wepawaug Tunnel – Found manhole over the Wepawaug Tunnel on OR 3. Marked in the field and took GPS coordinates.
- ISMT performed multiple drone missions at the Derby tank site.
- Boundaries – Completed remarking property lines in Guilford, North Branford, Bethany and Branford.
- Real Estate staff assisted with maintenance of the pollinator garden at 90 Sargent Dr.

Chair Betkoski stated that next month's meeting would include the election of Committee chair. He informed Committee members of his interest in continuing to serve another year.

Committee members thanked Atty. Donofrio for the refresher presentation. Discussion ensued regarding RWA police, PAL fishing program, science educator, invasive species removal at Furnace Pond, and plantings on RWA properties.

Mr. Horbal reported that RWA's President & CEO, RWA's Board Chair, and the First Selectwoman of Seymour met with Senator Blumenthal at the Seymour Wellfield to discuss recent federal funding for the Seymour Wellfield generator, as well as funding for other critical infrastructure projects.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 12, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

At 6:55 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy, seconded by Mr. Harvey, and unanimously carried, the committee meeting adjourned.

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Peter Betkoski, Chairman

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD

Proposed Resolutions

July 12, 2023

(Land Use Committee's recommendation to RPB re Authority's Applications for the disposition of: 1) 17.22 acres located west of Beech Street in North Branford that is part of Land Unit NB 4, and 2) 19.462 acres located north of Pomps Lane in North Branford that is part of Land Unit NB 4)

WHEREAS, the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, on June 22, 2023, filed two Applications with the Representative Policy Board ("RPB") for the dispositions of:

1. 17.22 acres located west of Beech Street in North Branford; and
2. 19.462 acres located north of Pomps Lane in North Branford (the "Applications"); and

WHEREAS, the Land Use Committee of the Representative Policy Board reviewed the Applications and recommended that the Applications be accepted by the RPB as complete; and

WHEREAS, the Land Use Committee recommended that the public hearings be conducted by a Presiding Member; and

WHEREAS, the Land Use Committee proposed public hearing dates of September 28, 2023 at 7:00 pm., in accordance with Special Act 77-98, as amended, and the RPB Bylaws and Rules of Practice.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the RPB accepts the Land Use Committee's recommendation to consider the Authority's Applications and determined to hold public hearings, to be conducted by a Presiding Member, on September 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m., in accordance with Special Act 77-98, as amended, and the RPB Bylaws and Rules of Practice; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chairperson is hereby directed to give notice of said hearing in accordance with Section 11 of the Rules of Practice, as amended.

July 12, 2023
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
June 30	92%	91%	88%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
June 2023	2.48	2.48	3.71
Fiscal YTD (6/1/23 – 6/30/23)	2.48	2.48	3.71

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

- Prospect, 200 Saddle Ct. – Surveyor set additional pins and the remainder of the property was marked.
- North Haven – Corresponded with property owner of 14+/- acres.
- Cheshire – Corresponded with property owner of 50+/- acres.
- North Branford, Beech St. and Pomps La. properties (NB 4) – The FMA approved the disposition applications and they were transmitted to the RPB.
- Spring St. PS – Met with West Haven staff to discuss possible sites for a replacement pump station to Spring St. PS.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Asst. Town Attorney wrote that the condemnation was ready except for the compensation. He opined compensation should be zero. We replied that we disagreed with this and it should be some figure since they were taking part of the property fee-simple and an easement.

Forestry Update

- Killingworth - East Hammonasset Leaf Screen Thinning, (KI 4) – 95% 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** - 10% complete.
- Killingworth - N. Chestnut Hill Patch Cuts, (KI 6) – 100% complete. Equipment removed, but some firewood logs still at the landing.

  - Mowed Christmas tree plantation at Lake Gaillard.
  - Hosted professionals from New Jersey, Vermont and Connecticut at our two slash wall harvests to discuss our experiences and outcomes related to them.
  - Conducted planning and start-up activities related to the anticipated receipt of the US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration grant. Worked on and submitted various forms for LSR pre-award process including SF-424, SF-424A, and FS1500-35. Reviewed RWA's Grants Certifications Report and forms AD-1047 & AD-1049 for background.
  - Suspended one woodcutter for non-payment as a result of a check returned to AP due to insufficient funds.
  - Installed approximately 18 tree shelters around newly planted trees suffering deer browse damage at Maltby.
  - Investigated sugar maple die-off event on Saltonstall Ridge and contacted CAES experts for on-going follow-up toward identifying casual factor(s).

Recreation

- Trails Day hike at Big Gulph had 5 attendees.
- Tree identification walk at Saltonstall had 10 attendees.
- Bass tournament at Lake Saltonstall had 42 attendees.
- Cleared more trails at Sugarloaf.
- Attended meeting about the option to use PayTrac to collect credit card payments for boat rentals at Lake Saltonstall.
- Answered questions from Bethany Horsemen about what is allowed through their permit.
- Corresponded with UConn staff about their websites about trails.
- The Water Wagon attended four events in June.
- Picked up 20 donated used rod/reel setups from Bass Pro Shops to be used at out kid's summer camp fishing events.
- Hamden Hall Camp Hornet brought 57 kids to the Maltby Lakes for a morning of fishing and hiking.

	June		May	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Permit Holders	4,980	5,218	4,972	5,676

Special Activity Permits

- Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (Dr. Goudarz Molaei, Chief Scientist and designees) - To conduct research on mosquito activity and eco-epidemiology of eastern equine encephalitis virus, 331 Old Toll Road, Madison-Cedar Swamp, Rt. 80 (6/1/2023-6/1/2024)
- Collins Engineers, Inc. (Robert F. Snelgrove, P.E.) – to perform an underwater inspection of the Amtrak bridge between Furnace Pond and Lake Saltonstall (6/22/23-6/23/23)
- Bimbler's Bluff 50K (Russell Hammond) - Annual 50K foot race - Use of trails through Genesee Preserve north of Guilford (10/22/23)

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
    - Orange, 43 Pine Crest Dr. (OR 3) – Executed license agreement.
    - Hamden, New Haven Country Club (HA 5) – Continued to correspond with NHCC staff about an amended agreement for the parking area.
    - Hamden, 33 Rolling Ridge Rd. (HA 12) – Sent draft license agreement to the property owners.
    - North Branford, 261 Forest Rd. (NB 17) – Met with property owner and their tenant about the encroachments and showed them where the property line is.
    - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Continued to correspond with the contractor for Yale re: using the tanks for a repeater. Corresponded with West Haven staff about amending the license agreement with the City.
    - Trespassing – Recorded instances of trespassing including dirt bikes and ATV's at Lake Gaillard, trees cut at Big Gulph, and mountain bikers and fishermen without permits at Maltby Lakes.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in East Haven, Branford, Bethany, and North Branford. Released bio-control for hemlock woolly adelgid at Lake Glen

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	51.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	4.5 acres

- Cheshire, Cheshire/ former Ricci property – Corresponded with Cheshire Land Trust staff about the town mowing the meadows.
- East Haven, Beach Ave. watermain – Juliano updated map again for Tighe and Bond for DEEP permit application. Corresponded with Tighe and Bond staff about the application.
- North Haven, Dodge Ave. easement – Responded to agent representing property owner about the status of the easement across their client's property.
- Prospect Reservoir – Gave tour of the area around the dam for Cheshire Historical Society members. Spoke to DEEP staff about latest plans for the dam. We expect to repair the dam and keep the supply in the water supply plan.
- Bethany, Rocky Corner development – Corresponded with other RWA staff about the need for an easement(s) to be conveyed to us around the wells before we accept the operation of the water system.
- Branford, Blackstone Ave water main – Corresponded with resident at Blackstone Ave. about our crew's access to and work on the water main. Discussed matter with Murtha staff.

Attachments

- July 3, 2023 - What do grouper and vultures have in common? These animals are moving into CT as the climate warms – NH Register
- July 5, 2023 - Investigators identify remains of woman missing from New Haven for 53 years - NH Register
- July 6, 2023 - Drought conditions are already starting in CT despite massive rains earlier this week – CT Public Radio
- July 4, 2023 - Hungry ticks can use this static trick to land on you and your pets - AP

Upcoming Agenda Items

August 2023 – Derby tank

What do grouper and vultures have in common? These animals are moving into CT as the climate warms

John Moritz, Vincent Gabrielle – *NH Register* - July 3, 2023

A slow, incremental transformation is underway across wide swaths of Connecticut's deciduous forests and the waters of Long Island Sound.

Connecticut, along with the rest of the northeast, is warming at a faster rate that much of the United States, bringing with it stark changes to the region's distinctive seasons as well as more extreme weather in the form of heat waves and hurricanes.

As a result, scientists predict that by the end of this century Connecticut's climate and ecosystem will more closely resemble more temperate, southern states such as Virginia and the Carolinas — and that wild plants and animals will react to the shift accordingly. Some of these changes are visible in your garden.

"You can see it in a shift in ornamentals that people plant," said Jenny Dickson, director of the wildlife division of DEEP. "Magnolias are a very southern species, and tied culturally to the south, but it's surviving here."

Dickson explained that outside of ornamentals, the changes in plant species would be subtle. The timing of flowering in spring will change as will the duration of the growing season. The lack of harsh winters will allow frost-intolerant plants and insects to spread north. All of these things will have cascading effects on animal life.

"Oaks might fail to produce acorns which means that many wildlife species start looking for other food," said Dickson. "So that might mean they go into winter not as fat as they usually are, which means they don't do as well over the winter which means they don't have as many young next spring… a lot of these things are subtle but tied to the overall health of the ecosystem."

Unexpectedly, one of the most obvious markers of changing climate on the landscape can be found in local ponds. Red-eared sliders, a turtle species native to the midwest and northern Mexico, used to not be able to overwinter as easily here after being released by unscrupulous pet owners. Warmer winters have allowed them to thrive.

"Normally you'd only see painted turtles and musk turtles," said Dickson. "Now you can look out on a log and see a big red-eared slider and then you see the normal painted turtle next to it. It's a really quick visible indication of what the problem has become."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the first pioneers into new regions often come by wing, and have since before humans began making wide scale changes to the environment.

"Rare birds turning up in unusual places happens all the time and has for a long time," said Chris Elphick, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the UConn. "Birds can fly, they get moved around by storms and they make mistakes and they end up in weird places."

It can often be hard for scientists to deduce whether a wayward bird has veered off course as a result of climate change, or if they're simply lost.

In the summer of 2021, for example, birders in Connecticut reported multiple sightings of a roseate spoonbill, a large, pink wading bird that is typically a resident of Florida and tropics further South.

The species, which had only been recorded once before in Connecticut, stayed for a few days before moving on and several scientists, including Elphick, downplayed the association with climate change.

Similarly, another southern species, the anhinga — or Devil Bird, as it is known in parts of South America — drew headlines this spring when several specimens appeared in New York, including one bird that decamped in a Brooklyn pond, leading to speculation more were on their way.

"The caveat though is that, if those birds end up in a place where the condition has changed and the climate is warmer and maybe the habitat is shifting to a little bit more suitable conditions for them, sometimes rather than turning around and going back they might stay," Elphick said.

In other cases, the sudden appearance of what may seem to many like any exotic species is actually the result of long-running efforts to restore Connecticut habitat's to their original state.

The recent appearance of dolphins off the coast of Westport and Norwalk, for example, have been cited by experts as evidence for the improving water quality of Long Island Sound.

Vultures, Ibis and Warblers

One species that Elphick said is a likely candidate to move its range northwards into Connecticut is another Florida native, the white ibis, a wading bird with a long, curved bill that it uses to pluck crustaceans and small fish out of the water.

“If you’ve ever been to Disneyland and you’ve seen these kind of gawky-looking, slightly-bigger-than-a-chicken white birds walking around begging for french fries, they’re probably white ibis,” Elphick said, adding that the species has recently been seen breeding as far north as New Jersey, with several wanderers being spotted further north.

“I would expect them to show up in Connecticut as a breeder before spoonbills,” Elphick said.

Elphick is currently working on a multi-year project mapping the distribution of breeding and wintering birds in the state, known as the Connecticut Bird Atlas. A similar undertaking completed in the 1980s has allowed researchers to compare their findings and identify species that have already migrated into the state.

For example, Elphick said that black vultures — a southern species not even recorded in the earlier census — are now widespread across Connecticut.

“Is that due to climate change? I can’t say for certain but they’re birds that are moving northwards, in a way that exactly predicts what you would expect if it was the result of climate change,” Elphick said.

Two species of warbler have also exemplified the shifts occurring in Connecticut.

Canada warblers, a more northerly species that was widely recorded in the upper half of Connecticut in the 1980s is now relatively rare except in higher elevations, Elphick said. Meanwhile, pine warblers from the south have become a common occurrence around the state — along with their preferred type of trees.

The shift in the Sound

Long Island Sound has traditionally been a border region between more northerly and more southerly aquatic species. The water is almost tropical in the summer and icy cold in the winter.

“We are living in a place that has among the steepest winter-to-summer changes in coastal water temperature,” said Hannes Baumann, a professor of marine sciences at UConn. “But there are very few places on earth that are like ours.”

Baumann explained that as the climate warms this will alter the range of temperatures in the Sound, effectively moving that north-south temperature border somewhere north of us. That’s bad news for our cold water species.

“Lobster, they’re doing very poorly and they probably aren’t ever coming back,” said Baumann.

He explained that lobster has drastically declined in the Sound. Only part of that is on the temperature itself, the rest is probably on a species of grouper, the black sea bass, drawn to the north. The black sea bass eats everything from small crustaceans to small fish.

“We can say that in the last four years of the Long Island Sound trawl survey we’ve recorded more black sea bass in the past four years than in the prior 32 years combined,” said Baumann. “It’s an exponential increase that is completely upending the food web here.”

Baumann said that previously the Sound was only comfortable for black sea bass for a short period of time. Warmer winters have increased the time they spend here, and made their year-round range much farther north. Meanwhile fish like winter flounder have been vanishing.

“They’re eating more and more fish as they come into Long Island Sound and the worry is they might affect other fish that are forage for other organisms,” said Baumann.

Like on land, extreme storms and seasonal changes in currents can also draw tropical fish to the north. Unlike birds, however, it’s unlikely that these fish will survive year-round here if current climate projections hold for the century.

“Probably in our lifetime we will see Long Island Sound become more like New Jersey in its species composition,” said Baumann.

If we want to protect species so they can migrate north experts say that we need to provide safe corridors for them to move through. This means unbroken forests, marine protected areas, and moratoriums on catching and fishing for the most vulnerable.

“I’m a proponent of the idea that if you give nature the space for finding a solution it will, in the short term,” said Baumann. “So if you have a species on the short end of the stick for climate change just don’t make the situation worse.”

Investigators identify remains of woman missing from New Haven for 53 years

Meghan Friedmann – NH Register - July 5, 2023

Sarah Tatham Abbott, also known as "Sally," was reported missing from New Haven in 1970. Authorities have identified remains discovered in 1979 as those of Abbott. - Othram / Contributed photos

NEW HAVEN — Her disappearance was a mystery for 53 years, until last month when investigators used DNA technology to positively identify remains found in 1979 in West Haven as those of Sarah Tatham Abbott.

Abbott, known to her loved ones as "Sally," was reported missing from New Haven in 1970, according to West Haven police Detective Tammy Murray.

Nearly a decade later, on April 20, 1979, skeletal remains were found near Route 34 on what then was New Haven Water Co. property.

Due to the state of the remains, the medical examiner's office was unable to determine the woman's cause and manner of death. Law enforcement struggled to identify her, and she was known only as Jane Doe for the next 44 years.

Murray began to work the case alongside Michelle Clark, a medicolegal death investigator in the state Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, a decade ago.

Recently, the pair sought help from the forensics company Othram, setting up a crowdfunding campaign to support DNA testing and genealogy work.

Othram is able to crack tough cases by identifying the distant relatives of unidentified persons and then working backward to build a family tree, according to Michael Vogen, the firm's director of account management.

When law enforcement works a case, investigators typically upload DNA profiles to the Combined DNA Index System, or CODIS.

Because CODIS uses DNA profiles that have 20 to 24 markers, Vogen said, CODIS must contain the profile of a very close relative to match to an individual.

"The problem with CODIS is that it looks at 20 to 24 markers," Vogen said. "We look at half a million, sometimes over a million markers of DNA."

Othram uploads its DNA profiles into consumer databases that permit law enforcement use, Vogen said. From there, the company's team of genealogists gets to work.

"We were able to find distant family members and build a family tree, and kind of reverse engineer our way to this woman's identification," Vogen said of Abbott's case.

Once the company believes it has a match, it shares the information with law enforcement to help make the final identification, he said.

In the West Haven case, police obtained a DNA sample from Abbott's sister, which Othram then used to confirm Abbott's identity, according to Murray.

They learned Abbott's siblings, who are still living, reported her missing in 1970 when she was 29 years old, Murray said.

Abbott originally was from Schenectady, N.Y., Murray said.

The detective believes Abbott moved to New Haven because her then-husband was studying at Yale, she said. Murray said Abbott was divorced by the time of her disappearance and did not have any children.

Though her name now is known, the circumstances surrounding Abbott's death remain a mystery. "She did have some psychiatric issues," said Murray. "She was kind of struggling with those issues."

Detectives have asked anyone with information about Abbott to contact them at 203-937-3905.

"If anybody has any info concerning her, they're certainly welcome to call us," said Murray, adding that Abbott's case will remain open as long as her cause of death is undetermined.

Drought conditions are already starting in CT despite massive rains earlier this week

Connecticut Public Radio | By Michayla Savitt - July 6, 2023

Data released Thursday shows much of Connecticut is experiencing low-level drought conditions, even after rain flooded parts of the state this week.

Most of the state is “abnormally dry” according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. But southwest Fairfield County is in a “moderate drought” despite the rain, which can evaporate under prolonged heat.

Peter Fazekas, spokesperson for Aquarion Water Company, said Aquarion is seeing the issue reflected in falling water reservoir levels at its Greenwich and Stamford facilities.

“Those numbers are currently dropping pretty quickly,” he said. “And we'd obviously like to slow their decrease since we're just at the beginning of July here.”

A “moderate” drought can lead to depleted reservoirs, poor crop outcomes or even wildfires. But soil for crops is still adequate for farmers at this time, the Connecticut Water Planning Council said in a Thursday meeting.

Aquarion asked customers in Greenwich, Stamford, Darien and New Canaan to conserve water by 10%, Fazekas said.

“It's not surprising based on the heat and the lack of rainfall, that we're hitting this first drought advisory,” Fazekas said. “If we could get customers to simply make some simple changes, hopefully we can avoid hitting other triggers later in the summer.”

According to Fazekas, the next drought “trigger” would require a 20% reduction in water usage.

The drought conditions come alongside extreme heat. Gov. Ned Lamont recently activated emergency heat protocols in Connecticut, extreme temperatures have blanketed parts of the United States from Texas to Florida and just this week Earth’s average temperature reached an unofficial high record.

But Aquarion said residents can still do their part to combat future water shortages caused by drought.

The first recommended change for local customers is following the twice-weekly mandatory sprinkler irrigation schedule. Being mindful about water conservation while washing dishes, laundry, or bathing is also recommended, the company said.

Hungry ticks can use this static trick to land on you and your pets

By Maddie Burakoff / Associated Press - July 4, 2023

NEW YORK (AP) — Hungry ticks have some slick tricks. They can zoom through the air using static electricity to latch onto people, pets and other animals, new research shows.

Humans and animals naturally pick up static charges as they go about their days. And those charges are enough to give ticks a boost to their next blood meal, according to a study published Friday in the journal Current Biology.

While the distance is tiny, “it’s the equivalent of us jumping three or four flights of stairs in one go,” said study author Sam England, an ecologist now at Berlin’s Natural History Museum.

Ticks are “ambush predators,” explained Stephen Rich, a public health entomologist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

They can't jump or fly onto their hosts, he said. Instead, they hang out on a branch or a blade of grass with their legs outstretched — a behavior known as “questing” — and wait for people or animals to pass by so they can grab on and bite.

It seemed that ticks were limited to how far they could stretch on their “tippy toes,” England said. But now, scientists are learning that static charges may help expand their reach.

“They can now actually end up latching onto hosts that don’t make direct contact with them," he said.

The researchers looked at a species of tick called the castor bean tick, which is common across Europe. This bloodsucker and its cousins are major culprits in spreading diseases to animals and humans, including Lyme disease, and are most active in warm months.

Researchers found that when they charged up electrodes and placed them near young ticks, the creatures would whiz through the air to land on those electrodes.

A normal level of static — the charge that fur, feathers, scales or clothes pick up with movement — could pull the critters across gaps of a fraction of an inch (a few millimeters or centimeters), according to the study. While those distances may seem small to us, for a tiny tick, they represent a big leap, England said.

In the future, there might be ways developed to reduce that static, experts said. But for now, Rich said people should keep using classic tick prevention measures, including repellents, to keep themselves safe from bites.