

Representative Policy Board  
**Land Use Committee**  
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority  
Lake Saltonstall, 100 Hosley Avenue, Branford\*  
(Meet at Fish Shack)

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**AGENDA**

**Special Meeting of Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.**

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes –
  - a. April 10, 2024 regular meeting
  - b. April 15, 2024 joint special meeting
3. Oak Species Update: John Triana
4. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
5. Other land items
6. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, June 12, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.
7. Adjourn

\*In the event of rain *ONLY*, the meeting will be held at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut. 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](mailto:jslubowski@rwater.com).

# SAFETY MOMENT

## MAY – HEALTHY VISION MONTH

May is Healthy Vision Month: You can have a comprehensive dilated eye exam to check for common eye problems. If you haven't had an exam in a while, schedule one now.

Below are nine ways you can help protect your vision:

1. Get regular comprehensive dilated eye exams
2. Know your family's eye health history
3. Eat lots of dark leafy greens and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids to protect your sight
4. Maintain a healthy weight
5. Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities
6. Quit smoking or never start
7. Wash hands before touching your eyes

Tap Into  
Safety



Regional Water Authority



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  
April 10, 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, April 10, 2024 at the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut and via remote access. Chair Betkoski presided.

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

**Representative Policy Board:** R. Harvey and N. Campbell

**Management:** S. Lakshminarayanan, J. Tracy, and J. Triana

**Staff:** J. Slubowski

Chair Betkoski 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. Horbal, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its March 13, 2024 regular meeting.

Josh Tracy, the RWA’s Invasive Species Management Technician, provided an update on innovative methods to eliminate invasive species on RWA owned properties. He shared that the RWA was granted the Landscape Scale Restoration grant in 2022 to manage invasive species near Lake Gaillard. Mr. Tracy emphasized the need to preserve the environment and water quality due to the presence of endangered bat species that have been utilizing a pipe tunnel for several decades from Lake Gaillard to Menunkatuc.

The grant also allowed the RWA to hire interns to help with invasive species control and forestry operations and has allowed the RWA to purchase a steam weeder, which uses high-pressure steam to burn herbaceous material. The Japanese stiltgrass continues to be a problem and the steam weeder will help eradicate this plant and reduce sedimentation in the reservoirs. This new technology is expected to increase the amount of acreage that can be treated and is a more efficient alternative to heavy machinery contractors.

Committee members discussed bat population, internship program, invasive species controls, treatment progress and other grant opportunities.

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
March 31	100%	98%	91%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
March 2024	9.57	3.83	4.34
Fiscal YTD (6/1/23 – 3/31/24)	54.99	33.46	38.46

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

- Branford, Cherry Hill Rd. – Executed quit claim deed to address title issues and filed on land records.
- Cheshire, Bis/Bowman property – Money wired to their attorney for the deposit. Authorized Juliano to start survey.
- Bethany – Corresponded with property owner of 35+/- acres.
- Hamden – Corresponded with property owner of 10+/- acres.
- North Haven – Corresponded with property owner of 15+/- acres.
- North Branford, Beech St. and Poms La. properties (NB 4) – Corresponded with land trust staff about the purchase.
- Seymour, Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Discussed plans for open space with the town. Authorized the preliminary assessment and appraisal.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, Skiff St. house (HA 9A) – Received check from court through Murtha for the condemnation.
- Woodbridge, 1955 Litchfield Tpk. (WO 1) – Met Environmental Planning staff at the house to inspect the house, barn, and old treatment building.

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.
- Killingworth - N. Chestnut Hill Patch Cuts, (KI 6) – 100% complete. Equipment removed, but some firewood logs still at the landing.
- Guilford - Menunketuc High-Grade Rehabilitation Cut and Conifer Release (GU12/12A) – 20% complete.
  - Contractor completed clearing of Harry Field Rd., Madison.
  - Scheduled and participated in several meetings related to necessary road repairs and improvements at Menunketuc watercourse crossings.
  - Identified additional white oak saplings in BE 13 clearcut to expand CAES release study.
  - Conducted LSR grant planning and administrative duties related to revised budget for steamweeder, capital spending procedures, and award letter amendments.
  - Surveyed hemlock stand in BE23 for hemlock wooly adelgid.

Recreation

- Easter egg hunt had 36 kids attending with their families.
- Participated in a PayTrac migration meeting to discuss accepting credit cards for boat rentals.
- Amended the boat rental form.

- Hired one new staff member and started training.
- Ordered trout for stocking Maltby Lakes and filed the liberation permit with DEEP.
- Worked on plastic bait recycling program.

	March		February	
	2024	2023	2023	2022
Permit Holders	4,827	4,954	4,771	4,822

Special Activity Permits

- Boys Scouts of America Troop 610 (Michael Collins) – hiking trip to Camp Whiting on Route 69, Woodbridge, (3/16/2024).
- Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (Dr. Chris T. Maier, Agricultural Scientist)- Conduct research on insects, particularly longhorned beetles (continuation of 2023 projects), and flower flies and to survey for abnormal emergencies of periodical cicadas, Near Lake Gaillard and Totoket Mountain complex (North Branford); near Beaver Head Road, especially Beaver Head Swamp (Guilford); River Road Hamden (3/12/2024-11/30/2024).
- CT DEEP (Christopher McDowell, Fisheries Biologist)-To assess the fish community via night boat electrofishing at Lake Saltonstall to assess stocked Walleye population on 3/20/24 and 4/3/24 and all species on 5/15/24. (3/20/2024 - 5/31/2024).
- Trinity Baptist Church (George Hayner)-to walk Lake Chamberlain with international students bible study group at Trinity Baptist Church (3/23/24).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - North Branford, 67 Woods Hill Rd. (NB 7) – Tree house was dismantled and removed from our property.
  - Orange, 845 Alling Rd. (OR 6) – Executed license agreement with abutters to allow the lawn and drain pipe.
  - Orange, 849 Alling Rd. (OR 6) – Abutters said they would move their materials back over the property line.
  - Orange, 854 Greenway Rd. (OR 4) – Had surveyors remark corners of the property so that we could properly mark it.
  - Woodbridge, 888 Greenway Rd. (OR 4) – Sent letter to abutter about extensive lawn over the property line.
  - Seymour, 284 Roosevelt Dr. (SE 1) – Sent letter to abutter about materials over the property line.
  - West Haven, 20 Saw Mill Rd. (WH 8) – Sent letter to abutter about dumpsters over the property line.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Seymour, Branford, East Haven, and North Branford. Attended state invasive plant subcommittee meeting to discuss plants to be added to the ban list. Attended CIPWG planning committee meeting.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	44.6 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	9.7 acres

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
April 10, 2024

- Hamden, Hamden Hall scoreboard – The school notified us that the application for the scoreboard was approved by the P&Z commission. Sent email to P&Z commission stating our permission for the scoreboard to be installed.
- East Haven, Borrmann Rd. – Met with abutters about water coming from the ridge.
- Deer hunt – Notified one hunter that they will not be allowed to apply for the 2024 hunt. 381 applications for 2024 were mailed out.
- Branford, Yowago Ave. easement – Corresponded with consultant working at 15 Yowago Ave. about an old watermain and easement that crosses that property.
- Boundaries – Checked and remarked boundaries in East Haven, North Branford, Madison, Seymour, West Haven, Orange, Woodbridge, and Hamden.
- Genesee tunnel inspection – Corresponded with Engineering staff about their plans to inspect the tunnel east of Lake Menunketuc.
- Woodbridge, DOT sediment basin property – Completed research about this property and sent summary to Engineering. Filed documents in the vault that we missing.
- Cell phone towers – Met with consultant at High Rock Tank in Hamden.
- Hamden, Lake Whitney dam project – Corresponded with UI staff about signing the license agreement about our access.

Mr. Malloy discussed a recent discolored water incident in West Haven. Mr. Hill, the RWA's General Manager & Head of Operations, will look into the complaint and get back to Mr. Malloy with more information.

Mr. Lakshminarayanan, the RWA's Vice President of Engineering & Environmental Services, congratulated the team on their efforts in pursuing and receiving the Landscape Scale Restoration grant.

Chair Betkoski reported on upcoming meetings:

- a. Joint meeting of Consumer Affairs and Land Use – Monday, April 15, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. (FY 2025 Budget Review – All RPB members are invited to attend)
- b. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, May 8, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Triana reported that the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting is expected to be held at Lake Saltonstall for a discussion on Oak Species.

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

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Peter Betkoski, Chairman

(R) = Attended remotely.

Representative Policy Board  
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District

**Consumer Affairs Committee  
Land Use Committee  
Joint Meeting**

April 15, 2024

Minutes

A joint meeting of the Consumer Affairs Committee (“CAC”) and the Land Use Committee (“LUC”) of the Representative Policy Board (“RPB”) of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District (“RWA”) took place on Monday, April 15, 2024 at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut and via remote access. Chair Levine presided.

**CAC Members present:** M. Levine(R), N. Campbell, S. Mongillo(R), A. Rescigno(R), and R. Smith(R)

**LUC Members present:** P. Betkoski(R), B. Eitzer(R), C. Havrda, M. Horbal(R), M. Levine(R), T.G. Malloy, J. Oslander, and J. Mowat Young(R)

**CAC and LUC Members absent:** P. DeSantis and F. Pepe

**RPB:** R. Harvey(R)

**Authority:** C. LaMarr

**RWA:** L. Bingaman, R. Kowalski, D. Bochan(R), C. DelVecchio, J. Hill(R), S. Lakshminarayanan, and P. Singh

**Office of Consumer Affairs:** Attorney Donofrio (“OCA”)(R)

**RPB Staff:** J. Slubowski

In Chair Levine’s absence, Mr. Rescigno called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

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

At 5:37 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Mongillo, and seconded by Mr. Malloy, the Committee voted to go into executive session pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200(6)(E) to discuss matters covered by Section 1-210(b)(5)(B), pertaining to commercial and financial information. Present in executive session were Committee members, Atty. Donofrio, Messrs. Bingaman, DelVecchio, Hill, Lakshminarayanan, Singh, and Mss. LaMarr, Kowalski, Bochan and Slubowski.

At 5:55 p.m., Mr. Betkoski entered the meeting.

At 6:09 p.m., Mr. Levine entered the meeting.

At 7:23 p.m., the Committee came out of executive session. No votes were taken in, or as a result of executive session.

On motion made by Mr. Mongillo, and seconded by Ms. Campbell, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its March 18, 2024 regular meeting, as presented.

Atty. Donofrio, OCA, reported on his involvement with the Target Three application and preparing for the Lake Whitney Water Treatment Plant project application public hearing, scheduled for next week.

He also stated that he has been reviewing the FY 2025 proposed budgets and attended the Finance Committee meeting earlier in the month for the same budget presentation given this evening.

Atty. Donofrio reported on a consumer issue involving a meter vault at a renovated property. The RWA has contacted the customer and is waiting for more information. The issue has not escalated to the OCA but is being closely monitored.

Chair Levine acknowledged Atty. Donofrio for budget related comments. Atty. Donofrio stated that he is currently working on his budget letter, which will be distributed to the RPB next week.

Chair Levine thanked members of management for the presentation of the proposed FY 2025 budget.

After discussion, on motion made by Mr. Mongillo, and seconded by Mr. Rescigno, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the OCA's March 2024 invoice for \$3,918.00.

There was no new business to report.

The next regular meeting is scheduled on Monday, May 20, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

At 7:30 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Rescigno, and seconded by Mr. Mongillo, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

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Mark Levine, CAC Chairman

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Peter Betkoski, LUC Chairman

(R) = Attended remotely.



**May 9, 2024**  
**Land Use Committee Meeting**

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
April 30	98%	99%	94%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
April 2024	3.78	6.03	4.28
Fiscal YTD (6/1/23 – 4/30/24)	58.77	39.49	42.73

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

- Cheshire, Bis/Bowman property – Received and reviewed draft of survey. Inspected property and found farm dump. Opted to extend the due diligence period in order to perform Phase II investigation. Amended the P&SA.
- Hamden, Preisner property – Signed P&SA. Wired deposit.
- North Haven – Corresponded with property owner of 15+/- acres.
- Cheshire – Corresponded with property owner of 16+/- acres.
- Seymour, Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Received appraisal and preliminary assessment. Started compiling the disposition application.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, Skiff St. house (HA 9A) – Deposited funds from the condemnation. Received the information about recording the condemnation documents on the land record.
- Woodbridge, 1955 Litchfield Tpk. (WO 1) – Met Environmental Planning staff and consultant to inspect the house, barn, and old treatment building.

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.
- Killingworth - N. Chestnut Hill Patch Cuts, (KI 6) – 100% complete. Equipment removed, but some firewood logs still at the landing.
- Guilford - Menunketuc High-Grade Rehabilitation Cut and Conifer Release (GU12/12A) – 20% complete.
  - Planted 600+ Christmas trees at Lake Gaillard.
  - Planted 250 chestnut seedlings at Seymour slash wall harvest and Maltby Lakes. Mudpacked one fertile American chestnut tree within the harvest area.
  - Planted additional trees and shrubs at the Great Hill Tunnel clearing, Maltby Lakes, and Brenski Swamp.
  - Met with CAES staff to begin further experimentation on white oak regeneration.
  - Met with CAES staff to look at the hemlocks south of Lake Bethany (BE 23). Ordered 400 beetles for biocontrol of a hemlock wooly adelgid infestation.
  - Researched, filled out and submitted a National Woodland Owner Survey compiled by the USDA Forest Service

Recreation

- Forestry walk at Prospect had 16 attendees.
- Changed combination lock code at all locations. Several locks were broken after the change.
- Fishing began on all RWA properties on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The docks were put in at Lake Saltonstall.
- Boat rentals started on April 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Trout were stocked in the Maltby Lakes, including 12 large tagged fish. Three tagged fish have been caught.
- Cleared trees from Lake Bethany and Lake Chamberlain trails.
- Closed Big Gulph trails for a week while Sol’s Path bridge was worked on.

	April		March	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
Permit Holders	4,972	5,021	4,827	4,954

Special Activity Permits

- Irish Heritage Society of Milford (John O’Connell and designees) – hiking around Maltby Lakes with members of club, Maltby Lakes, (4/7/24).
- Quinnipiac University (Professor Scott Davies)-Study bird nest boxes and record bird nesting activity and success, band the adults and chicks, and collect tissue samples for analysis during breeding season, Lake Chamberlain Recreation Area, Sperry Rd. Farm Field, Lake Watrous, and Lake Dawson, (05/01/24 – 09/31/24).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - Orange, 854 Greenway Rd. (OR 4) – Surveyors completed remarking corners of the property. Checked work and discussed with surveyors.
  - Woodbridge, 888 Greenway Rd. (OR 4) – Spoke to property owners and sent them license agreement to execute.
  - West Haven, 20 Saw Mill Rd. (WH 8) – Met with property owner and showed property line location. Property owner said that he would move the dumpsters to his property.
  - Hamden, 445 Sherman Ave. (HA 17) – Sent letter to property owner after consultation with Murtha staff. Noted requirement to execute release of damages.
  - Hamden, 251 Sherman Ave. (HA 17) – Sent letter to property owner about invisible dog fence over the property line.
  - Hamden, 95 Booth Ter. (HA 22 & HA 22A) – Sent letter to property owner about lawn encroachment.
  - Hamden, 775 Gaylord Mountain Rd. rear (HA 37) – Sent letter and spoke to property owner about a deer stand over the property line.
  - Hamden, Hamden Hall (HA 9A) – Contacted school about the upcoming need for appraisals.
  - Branford, 91 Linden Ave. – Sent letter to property owner with shed over 8” water main.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford, East Haven and Branford.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	89 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	18 acres

- New Haven, former Prospect Hill Reservoir site – Spoke to Yale staff about the former water basin on Prospect St.
- Branford, Bayberry Rd. 2” main – Met with property owners and RWA staff at the site where we were trying to abandon the old 2” main and have the seasonal house at 219 Linden Ave. run their service parallel to it.
- West Haven, Allings Crossing Rd. (WH 6) – UI staff contacted us about expected work along the railroad tracks.
- Boundaries – Checked and remarked boundaries in East Haven, Branford, North Branford, Hamden, Derby, and Woodbridge.
- Acquired new drone that is capable of multispectral, thermal, and photogrammetric imagery.

#### Attachments

- April 10, 2024 - EPA puts limits on 'forever chemicals' in drinking water
- April 24, 2024 - Do you own forested property? Connecticut's experts want to talk to you about your trees – NH Register
- April 23, 2024 - Digging In To Reveal Lead Water Pipes – Milford Orange Times
- May 2, 2024 - 'They are here to stay:' Invasive plants are more prevalent than ever in CT – NH Register

#### Upcoming Agenda Items

June 2024 - ?

## EPA puts limits on 'forever chemicals' in drinking water

By Pien Huang - April 10, 2024

The Environmental Protection Agency announced new drinking water standards Wednesday to limit exposure to a class of chemicals called PFAS.

"There's no doubt that these chemicals have been important for certain industries and consumer uses, but there's also no doubt that many of these chemicals can be harmful to our health and our environment," said EPA administrator Michael Regan in a call with reporters. This is the first time the agency has set enforceable limits on PFAS in drinking water.

PFAS stands for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances – a large group of man-made chemicals that have been used since the 1940s to waterproof and stainproof products from clothing, makeup and furniture to firefighting foam and semiconductors. Manufactured by several large companies including Dupont and 3M, PFAS have strong molecular bonds that don't break down for a long time, which is why they're known as "forever chemicals."

PFAS from the 1940s "are still in our environment today," says Anna Reade, lead scientist on PFAS for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "The levels of these chemicals keep building up in our water and our food and our air." Evidence for their harmful effects on human health have also accumulated. "Long term exposure to certain types of PFAS have been linked to serious illnesses, including cancer, liver damage and high cholesterol," the EPA's Regan said. The EPA also noted PFAS exposure has been linked to immune and developmental damage to infants and children.

That's why the EPA has finalized a rule restricting six PFAS chemicals in the water – individually, or in combination with each other or both – meaning water systems are required to monitor for these chemicals and remove them if they're found above allowable levels. While some states have instituted their own PFAS limits, this is the first time it's happening on the federal level.

Public water systems will have five years to address their PFAS problems – three years to sample their systems and establish the existing levels of PFAS, and an additional two years to install water treatment technologies if their levels are too high, senior government officials told reporters. The EPA expects that excess PFAS levels will be found in around 6-10% of water systems, affecting some 100 million people in the U.S.

"This is historic and monumental," says Emily Donovan, co-founder of Clean Cape Fear, an advocacy group working to protect communities from PFAS contamination. "I didn't think [the EPA] would ever do it." Donovan lives in an area of North Carolina which has been contaminated with PFAS from the Chemours chemical manufacturing plant.

She says seeing the EPA set limits is "validating." Six years ago when her group first raised the issue of PFAS, she says they were told that the water met or exceeded state and federal guidelines. "And that's because there weren't any," she says. "It really broke public trust for so many people in our community."

"The final rule is a breakthrough for public health," says Erik Olson, a senior director with NRDC. "We believe it's going to save thousands of lives as a result of reduced exposure of tens of millions of people to these toxic chemicals in the tap water."

There are more than 12,000 known PFAS chemicals. The six that the EPA is restricting "have had many animal and, in many cases, human studies, so [the EPA] feels confident that they have estimated the safe levels of these chemicals," says Elizabeth Southerland, a former EPA official in the Office of Water, who left the agency in 2017. Southerland says the new limits are a bold first step towards addressing the PFAS problem. And while the EPA has focused on only six chemicals, the treatments that water utilities use to remove these chemicals will also remove other chemicals of concern from drinking water.

In addition to other PFAS, "they will also be taking out all kinds of pesticides, pharmaceuticals and personal care products that are unregulated now under the Safe Drinking Water Act, but [which] we know have serious health effects," Southerland says.

The agency estimates that it will cost \$1.5 billion a year for water companies to comply with the regulation – for as long as PFAS continues to show up in the drinking water. "The costs are not just for a one time sampling and then putting in the treatment," Southerland says. They include ongoing monitoring and maintaining equipment, for instance replacing carbon filters on a regular schedule. The EPA says the benefits will equal, if not exceed the cost, in terms of less cancer, and fewer heart attacks, strokes and birth complications in the affected population.

The announcement comes with \$1 billion in grants to help water systems and private well owners conduct initial testing and treatment. It's part of a \$9 billion funding package for PFAS removal in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Companies that made these chemicals are also on the hook for more than \$10 billion from a class action lawsuit – money which will go to public water systems to remove PFAS.

If water systems can't access those funds, or if the funds run out, some of those costs may eventually get passed on to consumers, says the NRDC's Olson.

## Do you own forested property? Connecticut's experts want to talk to you about your trees

By Jesse Leavenworth, Staff Writer - NH Register - April 24, 2024

Connecticut state foresters are gauging the impact of a free service meant to advise and guide the private land owners who control about three quarters of the state's forested acres.

For years, foresters with the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection have visited properties and talked to owners and land trust representatives about timber harvesting, invasive species, insect damage, and other topics affecting forest health. Now the forestry division is comparing data on visits with statewide demographics to assess the program's impact and make sure foresters are reaching as many people as possible, state service forester Frank Cervo said Tuesday.

Last week, Cervo met with members of the Essex Land Trust to discuss invasive plant control, diseased beech trees, and creation of a shrubland habitat for wildlife. Visits are initiated by the private landowners, who typically own at least 10 acres. The service also is available to municipalities.

Forests cover 56 percent of Connecticut and of that 1.8 million acres, 73 percent is owned by individuals, families, land trusts, tribal owners, clubs, and corporations. Municipalities own an additional 9 percent, according to DEEP.

"This means that the efforts taken by private and municipal landowners have an enormous influence over the quality and extent of our forests," according to a DEEP description of the forest service program. "Understanding forests, taking an active interest in their dynamics, and implementing a forest management program are among the best things an owner can do to promote long-lasting forest health and associated ecological, social, and economic benefits."

On visits to landowners, Cervo said he wants to hear about their goals for the property and how he can help achieve those goals. Before each visit, he gathers maps and other information about the parcel before walking and talking with the owners on site and making recommendations.

Frequent topics include:

**Insect damage.** For instance, the spongy moth has killed trees throughout the state, particularly oaks. In some cases, robust saplings are growing in the area and the land owner need take no action. In other cases, Cervo said, he might advise the owner that a tract has too many single species and there's a need to diversify to make the forest healthier and more resilient to insect damage and other disturbances such as windstorms and flooding.

**Timber harvesting.** When a landowner talks about logging, Cervo said he asks about the owners' goals. Is the idea to make money? Connecticut has "a fairly robust forest products industry," he said. Besides trees cut for firewood, hardwoods such as oak and maple are harvested for furniture and flooring, while lower-grade lumber is used for items such as railroad ties and softwoods are used for construction and interior paneling. He also noted that some insect-damaged trees are still marketable.

**Invasive species.** Some owners say they are overwhelmed by invasive plants, Cervo said. He will help figure out a first step, for instance, by seeing where an invasive such as barberry is causing the most damage and make a recommendation to tackle that area first. The foresters also refer owners to contractors who remove invasive plants and also to cost sharing resources, Cervo said.

Also, owners may have ideas or plans that would conflict with local, state, or federal laws and policies, and Cervo said he will advise them on alternatives.

"We can help them figure out how to operate within those regulations," he said.

Service foresters make follow-up visits to assess the effects of their recommendations, figure out what went well, and next steps. Information compiled from the visits helps DEEP and other organizations such as the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station gauge the health of the state's forests, Cervo said.

Advice and technical assistance to forest landowners also includes wildlife habitat management, stream and wetlands protection, and enhancements for recreation and aesthetics. DEEP spokesperson Paul Copleman said Tuesday a forester told him the program dates back to about 1913, when the first Connecticut forest land classification program for property tax assessments occurred. The effort at that time was to reforest the state after expansive agriculture and clearcutting for charcoal production, Copleman said.

For more information and to make an appointment with a service forester, visit DEEP's service forestry support site.

## Digging In To Reveal Lead Water Pipes

By Patricia Houser - For Nature's Sake - Posted on April 23, 2024 – Milford Orange Times

Residents and business owners in Milford and Orange will notice a few discrete digging projects in certain neighborhoods over the next several months – small ditches near the curb that will be excavated and, on the same day, refilled by contractors working for the water company, all to get a glimpse at what the below-ground pipes are made of.

It's part of a federal campaign to lower the risk of human exposure to lead in public water supplies with local inventories/digging, mandated by the US Environmental Protection Agency and carried out in our area by the Regional Water Authority. The campaign is aimed at locating and eventually replacing our remaining water pipes made from lead.

Like other public water suppliers around the nation, the RWA is working toward an EPA deadline of Oct. 16 for completing their initial inventory and sharing those results with the public. By late October, according to RWA spokesperson Kevin Watsey, an online map of our towns, showing the composition of water service lines going to each address, will be available on the RWA website. For those interested in seeing examples of such maps for other places, two cities that have finished their preliminary inventories ahead of the deadline and have their interactive maps online are Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Lead does not belong in drinking water, in any amount, according to public health experts. Children especially should not be exposed to lead from *any* source. But the Flint, Michigan water crisis, which began 10 years ago, reminded Americans of the particular risks from older lead pipes still present in places throughout the country – beneath the ground and out of sight.

The EPA estimates that there are 146,574 lead service lines still in use across the state of Connecticut, comprising 1.6 percent of all our in-state water pipes. That may be less alarming than statistics from the state of Florida, where more than one million lead service lines in use comprise nearly 13 percent of the total. Still, whether in Florida or Illinois (where 11 percent of service lines are made from lead) or Connecticut, each of those leaded water lines presents ongoing danger of exposure for entire households, schools or businesses where people spend much of their day.

Though the water company sends safe water through large non-leaded mains that run down the middle of our streets, the pipes branching off to connect those mains to our homes – so-called service lines with diameters of two inches or less – can be made from lead, which is fraught. Some have likened it to drinking clean water through a lead straw.

For more details consider the following questions and answers:

1. True/False: The installation of lead pipes and lead solder to connect copper pipes were banned in the US in 1986.

Which of the following cities has replaced all its lead service lines?

- a) Newark, New Jersey
- b) Lansing, Michigan
- c) Madison, Wisconsin
- d) All of the above

True/False: The EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

Even low levels of lead exposure in children, according to the CDC, can cause

- a) Behavior and learning problems
- b) Lower IQ and hyperactivity
- c) Slowed growth
- d) Hearing problems
- e) Anemia
- f) All of the above

The cost of removing lead pipes from public water systems across the US will be close to \$50 billion, but the savings to government from the health benefits will be \_\_\_\_\_ dollars.

- a) \$20 billion
- b) Also \$50 billion
- c) Hundreds of billions

True/False: High school water supplies must be sampled at least once every year for lead.

Answers:

True. Medical experts were warning of the health risks from lead exposure in the first decades of the 20th century, and many places around the US stopped installing lead pipes in the 1930s and 40s. However, that triggered a major campaign by the Lead Industries Association and others to obscure those dangers – even to the extent of delaying major federal action to limit the use of lead for decades. For a short summary of that history, see the *Guardian's* September 2022 online article titled, "Profiting from Poison."

d. All of the above

True. An EPA website adds, "Infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40 percent to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water."

f. Among the effects of lead poisoning on adults are reproductive difficulties for both men and women, problems with memory and concentration and high blood pressure.

c. A recent study by the Harvard Chan School of Public Health confirms that the benefits from the absence of lead pipes will yield hundreds of billions of dollars in government savings in health costs. That includes people who will be free of certain cardiac or kidney or other problems, and thus not filing medical claims because they will not have been exposed to lead in water.

False. There is no federal requirement for testing for lead in water at secondary schools today.

Even well water, it should be noted, can be contaminated with lead when it travels through lead or galvanized pipes or copper pipes with lead solder. Public health officials say private well owners should, at some point, test their water for lead, with different timetables for testing depending on the presence of an expectant mother or small child in the home.

Explanations for well owners can be found at the state Department of Public Health webpage titled "Educational Materials on Testing Recommendations for Private Wells and Semipublic Wells."

Meanwhile, as the Regional Water Authority carries out its program of mapping service lines, Watsey notes that the RWA offers significant advance warning of any digging adjacent to a particular property as well as explanations at every step of their findings. Their website also invites input from the property owner on what they might know about parts of the service line within their buildings with an option to follow step-by-step instructions online for identifying the composition of the pipes in their building. A helpful resource is RWA's webpage titled, "Lead and Drinking Water."

## 'They are here to stay:' Invasive plants are more prevalent than ever in CT

By Jesse Leavenworth, Staff Writer – NH Register - May 2, 2024

In a video shot recently in state woodlands, Connecticut service forester David Irvin spotlighted two major villains in the continuing fight against invasive plants.

Freshly green Japanese barberry and multiflora rose stood out amid bare trees at Camp Columbia State Park in Morris in a video shot in mid-April and posted on the Connecticut Fish and Wildlife Facebook page.

The two species are among invasive plants that are now more prevalent in Connecticut than ever before, Irvin said on Wednesday. Some people think such plants can be eradicated statewide, he said, but barberry and other tough invasives are so well established that the realistic approach now is to target plants in active management areas — where state foresters are trying to regenerate native trees, for example, Irvin said.

"They are here to stay," he said. "We are learning to manage them on a more logical basis so they don't control the landscape ... We're trying to find the middle ground."

Irvin encouraged private land owners to identify and attack invasives in their woodlands and yards. Forests cover 56 percent of Connecticut and of that 1.8 million acres, 73 percent is owned by individuals, families, land trusts, tribal owners, clubs, and corporations. Municipalities own an additional 9 percent, according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

"This means that the efforts taken by private and municipal landowners have an enormous influence over the quality and extent of our forests," accord

ing to a DEEP description of a state program meant to guide owners of 10 acres or more of forest on best practices.

Invasive plants were either brought to Connecticut as ornamentals or hitchhiked from overseas. With no natural enemies to check their spread, they have thrived.

"The environmental costs of invasives are great — they crowd out native vegetation and reduce biological diversity, can change how entire ecosystems function and pose a threat to endangered species," according to a guide published by the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District.

In backyards, invasives kill trees, choke gardens, and take over lawns. They can lower property values due to the cost of removal. Also, insects that kill trees, such as the spongy moth, deplete the natural forest canopy, and invite invasives to take over. In some areas, intruders such as tree-of-heaven, have established a new canopy.

Means of removal include uprooting the plants with shovel and pick or cutting them to the ground and either shading the stumps with heavy black plastic or applying herbicide. For state foresters, the extent of the problem means limited use of herbicides is necessary, Irvin said. Painting the stumps of multiflora and barberry with herbicides, for example, is effective. Applications are targeted, not done near waterways, and are part of a multifaceted attack that can include burning invasives with a propane torch, but only if the ground is wet enough to avoid sparking a fire, Irvin said.

As woods green up this month, the window to clearly identify and attack invasives is narrowing. The plants are particularly prone to spread in wetter sites and on the edges of old farms, pasture lands, and developments. Irvin's advice is to "get them now while you can." People who choose purely mechanical means should know they are in for a long fight, he said, because the plants will be back "and you're going to have to keep hitting them."

Irvin and others battling invasives also stress that Connecticut residents should not plant invasives. Surprisingly, some nurseries still sell invasive plants such as burning bush, which turns bright red in the fall. Instead, residents are urged to plant native species.

For more information, the public is asked to visit the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group site.