Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut
Or
https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/2984949087819101?p=YMGqbRjnMUvrIV7Nzc
Meeting ID: 298 494 908 781 910 1
Passcode: Wo9Fg9UY
Or
Dial in by phone
+1 469-965-2517,,219657447# United States, Northlake
Phone conference ID: 219 657 447#

AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, November 18, 2026, at 5:30 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. Six Lakes Project Update/Save the Sound: Kathy Czepiel and Jen McCaffery
4. Approval of Minutes – October 14, 2026 regular meeting
5. Set Calendar 2027 Regular Meeting Dates
6. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
7. Volunteers to attend upcoming Regional Water Authority meetings:
    a. November 19, 2026 – Mark Levine
    b. December 17, 2026 – G. Malloy
    c. January 28, 2027 – M. Levine
8. Other land items
9. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, December 9, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.
10. Adjourn

*Members of the public may attend the meeting in person or via remote access using instructions at the top of the agenda. To view meeting documents, please visit https://tinyurl.com/mvjw3hex. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email to jslubowski@rwater.com.

SAFETY MOMENT

YOU CAN PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE – NOVEMBER SAFETY

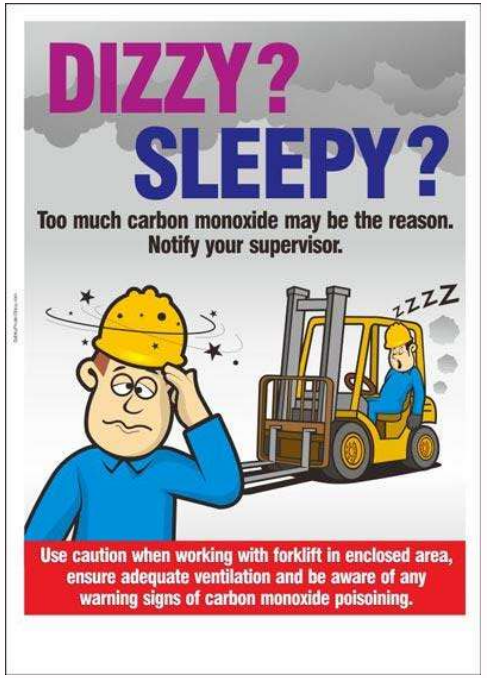
Check or replace carbon monoxide batteries twice a year: when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. Replace smoke alarm alkaline batteries at least once a year. Test alarms every month to ensure they work properly.

- **Do** have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- **Do** install a battery-operated or battery back-up CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. If the detector sounds leave your home immediately and call 911.
- **Do** seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseated.
- **Don't** use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, or garage or near a window.
- **Don't** run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- **Don't** burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.

Service – Teamwork – Accountability – Respect – Safety

Tap Into Safety

Regional Water Authority



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
October 14, 2026

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, October 14, 2026, at Lake Saltonstall, 100 Hosley Avenue, Branford, Connecticut. Chair Levine presided.

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

Committee Members Absent: M. Doyle

RPB: R. Harvey, N. Campbell, J. DiCarlo, C. Havrda, and C. Mancini

Authority: C. LaMarr

Management: M. Freda, V. Benni, E. Calo, Sgt. D. Csech, Sgt. B. Ferrara, J. Hill, and J. Triana

Chair Levine called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

On motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Ms. Young, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2026 meeting, with Mr. Eitzer abstaining.

Sgts. Csech and Ferrara, RWA Police, introduced themselves and provided background on their prior law enforcement experience with the Bridgeport and Hamden Police Departments. They also reported on recent activity and updates occurring on RWA-owned properties.

Committee members welcomed the new officers and expressed appreciation for the updates.

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

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
September 30	87%	68%	66%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
September 30	7.04	1.66	3.84
Fiscal YTD (6/1/26 –	27.03	6.40	15.30

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

- Killingworth – correspondence with property owner of 35+/- acres.
- Woodbridge, Baldwin easement – Reviewed comments from the Baldwin's. They need a trustee's certificate from the new trust. Title company is reviewing the updated survey.

UNAPPROVED

- Killingworth, Abner Lane Rd. parcels (KI 6) – Spoke to surveyor about progress on the survey and the location of the watershed line.
- Cheshire, Fenn Rd. property – Saw correspondence between DEEP and the Town about the OSWA grant. Let all know that we are willing to subordinate our easement to the state's whenever they are ready.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Pins set at the corners. Marked the new boundaries.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Pins set at the corners. Marked the new boundaries.

Forestry Update

- Met with IT to discuss adding maple tappers to RecTrac system, which would allow for maple taps to be paid for, alongside helper permits.
- Monitored the removal of a large brush pile that had been dumped in North Madison (MA4/4A) by a former firewood cutter.
- Printed copies of the new firewood brochure, and distributed brochures to the RWA Communications Team and at two educational events.
- Joined the Connecticut Timber Producers Association and inquired about their steel timber bridge lease-to-own program, which has an 80% match, and reviewed grant details.
- Sowed winter rye along a section of Saltonstall Ridge Road that was recently cleared of invasives.
- Worked with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation to collect burs from several long-surviving native trees growing at Genesee and Menunketuc.

Recreation

- Botany walk with Native Plant Trust staff at Lake Saltonstall had 15 participants.
- Woody plant ID walk at Maltby Lakes had 20 participants.
- Authorized leader of Sugarloaf volunteer crew to proceed. Forwarded the liability waiver to them for volunteers to sign.
- Cleared trails at Lake Chamberlain.
- Discussed replacement of bog bridges on the Quinnipiac Trail in Bethany with CFPA staff.
- The Water Wagon attended two events in September.

	September		August	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Permit Holders	4,662	4,892	4,830	4,916

Special Activity Permits

- CT Forest & Park Assoc. (CFPA) (Julia Sonen) – conduct tour to view the firewood plots and harvesting completed by Andrea Urbano and Nick Zito, as well as the land management that RWA has completed in the area, (9/26/26).
- Yale University, School of Medicine (Selmaan Chettih, PhD,) - scientific research field sites for study of black-capped chickadees, maintenance of feeders, observation, and mist-netting for banding and collection, Lake Gaillard, Maltby Lakes and Lake Saltonstall (10/01/2026 – 03/31/2027).

UNAPPROVED

- CTDEEP (Alexander J. Amendola, Forester) - utilize the shoreline of both reservoirs as sample areas for mesic soil-affiliated species of shrubs and trees species (primarily Salix spp., Cephalanthus spp., Ulmus spp., and others and to observe the effects of changing water tables on these species of woody plants. This data will be compared to growth habits of the same species in more static ecosystems with less dynamic hydrological fluctuations. No physical samples will be removed; only measurements taken. Lake Gaillard-North Branford, Lake Hammonasset-Killingworth (9/24/2026 – 10/1/2027).
- Univ. of New Haven Army ROTC Program Coordinator (Robert Clark) - Squad Tactical and Platoon Tactical Training - 1955 Litchfield Turnpike/West River Training Area, Woodbridge (9/25/26 – 9/30/27).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
    - Agricultural agreements – Tenant bushhogged the small Great Hill Rd. fields and the Saw Mill Hill Rd. field.
    - Madison, Dead Hill Rd. (MA 4 and MA 4A) – All of the firewood and most of the brush was removed by former firewood cutter.
    - Guilford, Route 77 (GU 12) – Police discovered a potential encroachment by the Lake Menunketuc gate.
    - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Agreed to 30-day termination clause. Engineering reviewed the construction requirements.
    - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Corresponded with abutter about his surveyor.
    - Madison, 760 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Checked property lines and emailed abutter about what needs to be addressed. Said we would send an official letter in October with the details.
    - Madison, 96 Princess Dr., (MA 2) – Abutter sent photo showing the encroachments were removed.

- Deer hunt – Three pre-hunt meetings were held. Researchers and wood cutters were notified about the hunt. Some roads were washed out due to heavy rains and will be closed during the season for repairs.
- East Haven, Barberry Rd. fields – Executed new access agreement. Reviewed the letter of agreement with HBM and had meeting to discuss our comments.
- Hamden, Wilbur Cross parkway work (HA 11/NO 6) – DOT staff said they needed to complete geotechnical research before deciding if they needed some rights over our property.
- West Haven, YNHH property – Contacted by YNHH attorney looking to do habitat management at the site within the open space area.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Woodbridge, Prospect, North Branford, and East Haven. Demonstrated the steam weeder and taught about invasive species to the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments and invited participants. Got on the mailing list for the mile-a-minute vine biocontrol from a New Jersey Department of Agriculture beneficial insect rearing laboratory. Continued drill and filling trials with the new and familiar invasive species, including ailanthus, Amur cork tree, autumn olive, and Japanese Angelica tree.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	14 acres

UNAPPROVED

Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	1.5 acres

- Drone flights - Completed drone mission for the West River residuals project in Woodbridge.

Chair Levine reported on upcoming Authority meeting assignments:

- October 22, 2026 – J. Mowat Young
- November 19, 2026 – J. Mowat Young
- December 17, 2026 – G. Malloy
- January 28, 2027 – M. Levine

There were no other land items to report.

The next regular meeting is Wednesday, November 18, 2026, at 5:30 p.m., hybrid.

At 5:58 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

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Mark Levine, Chair

UNAPPROVED

PRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD

LAND USE COMMITTEE

2027 PROPOSED MEETING DATES

Land Use
January 13 @ 5:30 pm
February 10 @ 5:30 pm
March 10 @ 5:30 pm
April 14 @ 5:30 pm
May 12 @ 5:30 pm
June 9 @ 5:30 pm
July 14 @ 5:30 pm
August 11 @ 5:30 pm
September 8 @ 5:30 pm
October 13 @ 4:30 pm
November 10 @ 5:30 pm
December 8 @ 5:30 pm

DRAFT

November 18, 2026
Land Use Committee Meeting

WATER SUPPLY

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
October 31	85%	65%	66%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
October 31	2.48	5.23	3.84
Fiscal YTD (6/1/26 – 10/31/26)	29.51	11.63	19.14

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

- Hamden – correspondence with property owner of 40+/- acres.
- Durham - correspondence with property owner of 6+/- acres.
- Woodbridge, Baldwin easement – Still waiting for the affidavit from the Trust. Their attorney was away at the end of the month.
- Killingworth, Abner Lane Rd. parcels (KI 6) – Reviewed draft survey.
- Ansonia, Ford St. tank (USFS) property – RWA staff were given a tour of the property from USFS staff. Discussed our interest in the property and maintenance of the grounds.

Rental houses:

- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Owners re-initiated the building permit process with the town.

Forestry Update

- Collected oak leaf samples for CAES from trees in West River area.
- Met with Yale Forestry School class and spoke about stand dynamics and forestry at a water utility.
- Participated in a chestnut blight sampling workshop sponsored by the CAES as an initial step toward implementing a biocontrol program for long-surviving chestnuts.
- Investigated a misuse of forest products sales agreement and removed a woodcutter from RWA's firewood program.
- Spent multiple days clearing roads of storm debris following a nor'easter, in North Branford, Seymour, and Woodbridge.

Recreation

- Chestnut walk with outside experts was attended by 25 people.
- Woody plant ID walk at Lake Gaillard with 8 participants.
- Hosted a hike sponsored by MLCT along Old Bangs Road and near Shepherd's Trail. About 35 people attended.
- Coordinated volunteer group on the Saltonstall ridge to plant Pennsylvania sedge plugs in areas where invasives have been treated.
- Coordinated with a firewood cutter to cut and remove large trees at Pine Hill by the Hemlock Hollow trail head.
- Cleared trails of downed trees at Chamberlain.

- Reblazed the blue trails at Chamberlain.
- Docks were removed from Lake Saltonstall and boats were secured.
- Corresponded with the volunteer head of the Sugarloaf trail crew.
- The Water Wagon attended four events.

	October		September	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Permit Holders	4,604	4,857	4,662	4,892

Special Activity Permits

- CT Forest & Park Associations (Joi Prud'homme) - As a Master Woodland Manager candidate, I would like to do my Capstone/Woodland Survey Project in a portion of the Pine Hills Recreation Area, Pine Hills Trails Woodbridge the Hemlock Hollow Loop (10/8/26 – 10/7/27).
- CTDEEP (Brooks Pitman) – to address the decline of the fisher population in CT, Lake Gaillard area and properties east of the property, (10/14/26 – 5/1/27).
- New Haven Bird Club (Glen Cummings, Gilles Carter)-to maintain and monitor bluebird nesting boxes, Christmas Tree Fields (North Street and Great Hill Road) North Branford, (3/21/27-8/31/27).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
    - Agricultural agreements – Met with potential tenant for the Johnson Rd., Woodbridge field.
    - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Waiting for the exhibits from the City. Notified City and Yale that their equipment has to come down while the tank is repainted in FY28.
    - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Murtha still trying to contact the surveyor for a meeting, so far without success.
    - Madison, 760 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Mailed certified letter to abutter about what needs to be removed and what can be covered in a license agreement.

- Deer hunt – The scouting period occurred. The hunt started on 10/30. Six deer were harvested during the last two days in October.
- West Haven, YNHH property – Met with YNHH attorney and consultant about their request to use some of the dedicated open space area for new turtle habitat. YNHH will contact us when the habitat plan is complete.
- West Haven, Burwell Tank property (WH 3) – UI and Comcast contacted other RWA staff about the service that comes up to the tanks and Comcast building. Discussed various options.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Prospect, West Haven, East Haven and North Branford. Continued drill and filling invasive species, including ailanthus, bittersweet, and autumn olive. Presented, moderated and gave closing remarks at the biennial Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group symposium, discussing RWA's use of the steam weeder with Japanese stilt grass and black swallow-wort.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	15.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	4 acres

- Drone flights - Conducted multiple drone missions including West River residuals project, tank climbing class at Rimmon Rd., videos for communications, and experimentation with LiDAR.

- Branford, Hosley Ave. clean up – Staff participated in the clean up of materials dumped along Hosley Ave.
- Boundaries – Checked and remarked boundaries in Durham and Madison.

Attachments

- September 27, 2026 - Waterbury seeks $25M to fix aging water system after major – CT Insider
- October 26, 2026 - Why some bees rest in flowers and what you can do to help – CT Public Radio
- November 4, 2026 - 3M agrees to pay more than $7 billion to settle 'forever chemical' groundwater contamination claims – AP
- October 30, 2026 - For injured bats and other wildlife, these volunteers are a lifeline
- July 16, 2026 - As Climate Change Expands Mosquito Ranges, Better Monitoring Is Key to Preventing Disease – insideclimatenews.org

Upcoming Agenda Items:
December 2026 – ?

Waterbury seeks $25M to fix aging water system after major outages
CT Insider (Hearst) | *By Michael Walsh* | *Sept. 27, 2026*

City leaders are asking the Board of Aldermen to approve a $25 million capital appropriation and bond authorization to improve Waterbury's water system after water main breaks in December and July left thousands of residents without water for days.

Ramon Esponda, who became the city's new water superintendent over the summer, said this request is just "a drop in the bucket" in terms of what Waterbury will need to spend to completely rectify problems plaguing the water system. But it's a start, he said.

"The system needs a lot of work," he said. "There's a lot of issues that need to be addressed. It's my problem now and I'll fix it as best as I can."

A key piece of this ask, he said, is replacing three "major" valves that contributed to residents in parts of the city losing water during those water main breaks.

"These valves are broken," Esponda said. "If I have a break in these lines, I'm stuck. I can't get water to certain places. If these valves are in place, I'm able to change the direction of water, isolate breaks and keep larger portions of the city with water."

Esponda also wants to enhance lines used by the fire department in emergencies.

"We have a lot of lines that are very limited in their capacity," he said. "They require a lot of cleaning and lining. We're planning to do probably nine miles of cleaning and lining, over multiple years, phase by phase, to get it done."

He also wants to replace fire hydrants that he said aren't up to standards, a process that also would include surveying the city's hydrants, of which there are around 5,000.

Esponda said another $8 million project would replace a water tank that currently has a hole in it, limiting its effectiveness.

"There's a ton of work to be done here," Esponda said. "I want to put the plans in place and put the projects in order. It's about making tomorrow better."

The Board of Aldermen held a public hearing on the bonding, but delayed a vote on it. Only one resident spoke during the public hearing.

"We cannot have half the city out of water every three months," said resident Paul Kondash. "We've known for 40 years that these water pipes and the water supply system of our city was not getting any younger."

Earlier this year, the Board of Aldermen approved a hike of the water usage rate from $2.65 to $3.50 per centum cubic feet. The board also approved a service charge rate for large commercial uses, increasing it from $12 to $120.

The city has also targeted another $32 million towards repairs, including new high service pumps and mixers at the water treatment plant, new lining on Thomaston Avenue pipes and installing new pumps in parts of the city.

Why some bees rest in flowers and what you can do to help

Connecticut Public Radio | By Áine Pennello - October 26, 2026

A bee rests on a Ligularia flower in the cool temperatures of an early fall morning in Mansfield, Connecticut.

Have you ever seen a bee lying perfectly still on top of a flower and wondered, “Is that bee sleeping? Is it alive?”

The other morning, I opened the door to my apartment and counted eight bees (eight!) lying on top of my bed of flowers. Some were splayed out, legs and antennas stretched, while others were curled up.

Scientists say these bees are probably just sleeping and that they’re most likely to be solitary male bees who live outside a hive and don’t serve a queen. That’s actually true of most bee species, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

While solitary female bees make nests, solitary male bees don't. Instead, when they emerge from their mother’s nest in the summer, they start sleeping in flowers.

Why? To put them closer to potential mates, according to Ana Legrand, assistant professor of entomology at the University of Connection Extension.

“The females will be visiting the flowers to collect pollen, and so [the male bees] are right at the flower when the females start foraging and that kind of gives them a leg up in terms of finding mates and competing with other males,” Legrand said.

Flowers also give male bees pollen and shelter from the cold. There’s even research that suggests dark-colored flower petals provide more warmth to bees.

But this time of year, cooler temperatures make for sleepier bees. Unlike humans, insects can’t regulate their body temperature. So, you’re more likely to see them sleeping in flowers after the sun is up.

“We maintain a body temperature at a constant level, but insects in general, including bees, are more tied to the outdoor environment,” Legrand said. “They become very inactive with the cold temperature.”

Sadly, there is a chance the bee is dead. Solitary male bees spend most of their lives in the early development stage, spending just three to eight weeks as adults.

Either way, Legrand says, if you see a sleeping bee, it’s best to leave it alone.

“There's not much you can do. It might be dead or it might be just resting. So it's just best not to disturb it,” she said.

“If you're really curious, you could poke a little bit and see if there's some movement. But if it's been there for a while, it may be just stuck on the flower. That can happen,” she said.

How to help pollinators survive this winter

Most native bees survive winter not as adults, but as pupae — the life stage before adulthood — hibernating in nest cells.

In Connecticut, most bee species nest in the ground, digging tunnels in soil or sand that can vary from six inches to several feet below the surface, according to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.

If you want to help them survive the winter, the National Park Service recommends you skip raking up leaves since they can provide much needed insulation for ground-nesting bees.

You can even postpone pulling up dead annual and perennial flowers until the spring, since the flowers can help trap leaves and create mulch, according to the University of New Hampshire.

Keeping old wood, logs and bark in your yard undisturbed can also help bees that nest in cavities.

And be sure to plant flowers that bloom early and late in the year to ensure food for pollinators. Growing them in clusters helps pollinators find them more easily and conserve energy while looking for food.

3M agrees to pay more than $7 billion to settle 'forever chemical' groundwater contamination claims

AP – November 4, 2026

Chemical manufacturer 3M will pay up to $7.35 billion to settle lawsuits by people who say they were sickened by groundwater contamination from compounds used in firefighting foam and other consumer products.

The St. Paul, Minnesota-based company announced the settlement Tuesday. It will pay the money over nine years to as many as 120,000 people who say they were harmed by exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known collectively as PFAS. The chemicals contaminated groundwater near military bases, airports and other locations where the foam was used to extinguish fires.

3M did not admit liability for the contamination under the agreement.

Called "forever chemicals" because they don't degrade naturally in the environment, PFAS have been linked to health problems including liver and immune system damage and some cancers. The chemicals are also used in nonstick, water- and grease-resistant products, including clothing and cookware.

3M chairman William Brown called the settlement a "significant milestone" that substantially reduces uncertainty from the litigation. The company previously reached settlements in other PFAS-related lawsuits, including a $450 million agreement with the state of New Jersey to settle claims of natural resource contamination and a deal to pay more than $10 billion to many U.S. public drinking water systems.

Other manufacturers, including DuPont de Nemours Inc. and spinoffs Chemours Co. and Corteva Inc., have agreed to settlements totaling more than $1 billion to resolve PFAS claims.

Fred Thompson, an attorney with the Motley Rice law firm that helped negotiate the 3M settlement for the plaintiffs, called it welcome news for "the thousands of victims who have sought answers and accountability for nearly a decade."

He said in a news release that the plaintiffs urgently need help covering mounting medical bills and other costs.

Under the terms of the settlement, the payouts will begin with $50 million this year, followed by yearly payments of more than $1 billion each year from 2028 to 2033.

3M could make additional payments if enough plaintiffs participate. If too few sign on, 3M has the option to cancel the settlement and continue fighting the lawsuit.

Environmental activists say PFAS manufacturers knew about the chemicals' health risks long before they became public. They noted that the same attributes that make the chemicals so valuable in many uses — resistance to breakdown — also make them hazardous to people.

The Environmental Protection Agency has set strict limits on PFAS in drinking water from public utilities and requires testing, but those rules do not apply to private wells.

A study that would help federal regulators understand which industries dump the forever chemicals with their wastewater has been stalled for two years, awaiting review by the White House Office of Management and Budget.

For injured bats and other wildlife, these volunteers are a lifeline

by Angela Eichhorst - October 30, 2026

Maureen Heidtmann's fourth call of the day was for a big brown bat stuck in a glue trap. She hoped to save its life, even if its wing had to be amputated.

She was able to coach her other callers through a variety of stuck-bat situations over the phone, but for this creature the size of a fig, she would need to use mineral oil and a tongue depressor to wiggle it free of the glue trap it arrived in.

Nelson — she names the bats that can't be released — now snacks vigorously on mealworms, but it still carries signs of trauma after nearly starving in the trap.

Callers from across the state can deliver injured bats like Nelson to Heidtmann's house for treatment, where she cares for up to 40 of them at a time.

Heidtmann isn't the only person with such a specialist's toolkit in Connecticut. She is one of a small army of 57 volunteers licensed by the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to rehabilitate wildlife.

When a Connecticut resident reports an injured or distressed animal, DEEP refers them to rehabilitators who can nurse the animals back to health until they can be returned to the wild. Rehabbers also advise the public on how to stay safe around wild animals and run educational programming about the state's species, many of which are endangered.

And they do so without compensation, often spending their own money as well as countless hours in a labor of love.

Heidtmann has been rehabilitating bats for 25 years, a passion that first took flight when one snuck into her family's Brooklyn, N.Y., apartment, when she was 5 years old.

"My mother went nuts," Heidtmann said. "She was convinced this bat was going to get tangled in her hair, suck the blood of her children, just be an evil presence. So she slapped the newspaper on her head, picked up a broom and started to whale away."

Common belief at the time was that bats were blind, and echolocation was poorly understood, but Heidtmann watched as the bat expertly avoided her mother's swinging broom.

"I crept out from under the table, opened the window, the bat flew out, and I fell in love," Heidtmann said.

The path to becoming a bat-saver

For four decades after that first flight, Heidtmann kept the spark alive by scouring her local library for books about bats. She studied biology in college and became a librarian and a single mom.

One day when she was working at the library some 25 years ago, a little boy found a young bat outside in a pool of water. He brought it inside, not knowing what to do, Heidtmann said.

When she saw the bat, "it was not even a week old. It didn't even have fur." She felt compelled to help.

"I dried it off, got it home, warmed it up and fed it, just using my common sense," Heidtmann said. "I did not have the specific formulas then that I now have when I'm raising baby bats, so I just bought a can of milk replacer for kittens." It worked.

For other rehabbers, the pipeline into the work is often similar. People come across injured wildlife, are referred by DEEP to a wildlife rehabber and realize the depth of the need.

Aspiring rehabbers must pass a state exam and complete 40 hours of training over at least three years under an authorized rehabber to get their DEEP license. Those working with endangered animals must earn additional federal permits.

"I actually found an injured turtle and didn't know rehabbers existed," said Angelina Carnevale, who has been rehabbing Connecticut's native turtles in North Branford for the last eight years.

"It wasn't until years later, when I had some kind of disposable income, that I was like, oh, maybe I can do this. Because as soon as I looked into it the first time, it was very straight up front that they don't pay you anything, and they don't reimburse you for anything," Carnevale said.

Even after donations from appreciative community members, Carnevale expects to spend $4,000 of her own money this year. Heidtmann's personal share of the bill averages $2,000 each year she operates, she said.

This year, a lawmaker sought to change that.

A labor of love and the law

Sen. Paul Cicarella, R-North Haven, was on a walk with his family last year when they came across an injured turtle.

DEEP's wildlife program referred him to Carnevale, and he was impressed by the promptness of her response while still working her day job as a children's librarian. Carnevale's voicemail directs people to other resources if she doesn't return their call within 10 minutes.

"When no one else could help me, and the state refers me to a nonprofit and they're not given anything, it seems like something that's worth investing into," said Cicarella.

So last session, Cicarella proposed SB 456, a bill that would provide $500,000 in grants to DEEP-licensed wildlife rehabilitation nonprofits. Carnevale and other rehabbers testified in favor of the bill.

The bill passed the environment committee unanimously but was not taken up by the full Senate.

"I think it's a great idea, and clearly my colleagues on both sides of the aisle thought it was as well," Cicarella said.

"If you follow the building, you'll realize that bills have to be put forward multiple times before they pass. It's part of the process. It's unfortunate."

Cicarella said government leadership told him his legislation would be included in the final budget and implementer bill. He was surprised when he saw that it wasn't there.

"Hopefully, we can get it done again," Cicarella said.

Carnevale says she hopes to see some of the language tweaked to make the carveout open to all DEEP-licensed rehabbers.

"Most rehabbers are not 501(c)(3) nonprofits. It took me five years before I was able to get around to doing all of the paperwork to become one."

"And when you are rehabbing animals, that's where all your time goes," she said.

Educating against the odds

Rehabbers, especially of bats, are fighting a battle for education against misinformation.

"Bats have been given a bad rap," Heidtmann said. But if thoughts of vampires get the public interested in learning more about the science of bats, so be it, she said.

Connecticut is home to nine species of bats, and through their diet, they control the populations of pests including moths, ash borer beetles and spotted lanternflies, said Devaughn Fraser, a mammal biologist at DEEP.

Bats are "the only really predominantly night flying insectivore that's controlling night flying insects," Fraser said.

And all of Connecticut's native bat species are in great conservational need. Five are endangered, with white nose syndrome decimating populations.

Bats, like other mammals, can carry rabies, a disease that is nearly always fatal in humans once symptoms start. And that's what many people's fears hinge on, Heidtmann said.

But those who study bats say that the disease's prevalence is overstated. In her 25 years of rehabbing hundreds of bats, Heidtmann has only seen three rabies cases. And studies of bat fatalities at wind farms show less than 1% of wild bats to have the disease, Fraser said.

If a bat is found indoors, the first step to get it out is opening a window, according to DEEP's website. People can also use a cardboard box to safely remove a bat.

While wearing thick leather gloves, move toward the bat slowly and place a container over it, then slide stiff paper under to form a lid and then release the bat outside, advises Heidtmann's website.

People who are bitten or scratched by a bat should seek medical advice; effective post-exposure rabies vaccines are available. If a bat is found in the room of a child, someone sleeping, or a person otherwise cognitively impaired and unable to communicate about a bat encounter, rabies prevention care should be followed, and if possible, people should take the bat in for testing.

About 4% of bats brought in for testing this year in Connecticut were positive for rabies, the same percentage as the last two years.

Healthy bats do not seek out interaction with humans, Fraser said. And if they are stuck inside, they most likely got lost and are trying to find a way out.

Heidtmann's busiest time of year is in June and July, when newborn bats may have become separated from their mothers. The next couple of months in Heidtmann's care are about bringing them up to weight, encouraging flight and socializing them with other bats.

In their first few weeks, Heidtmann feeds them species-specific formula every two to three hours throughout the night before gradually weaning them onto mealworms. She has had to improvise to find feeding applicators tiny enough.

“I use whatever will work. Sometimes they will take to eye makeup applicators … they’re like little sponges.”

If all goes well, she releases them into an outdoor flight cage on her property and, eventually, into the wild. The ones unable to hunt for themselves because of their injuries are kept inside for educational programs.

But it takes newborn bats time to learn the skills of flight and navigation, and sealing up holes in a property at the wrong time of year can be a death sentence for pups nesting there with no way out.

That’s why John Griffin, Senior Director for Urban Wildlife Programs at the Humane World for Animals, sees codifying humane exclusion standards as an important step in protecting bats and many of Connecticut’s wildlife species.

“A stronger framework [for bats] could include prohibitions on exclusions (with certain exemptions) during pup season (June 1 through August 15), a ban on entombment, a requirement to use one-way devices, and meaningful enforcement for anyone performing exclusions for hire,” Griffin said.

Animals are “adapting to our communities and flourishing because we’re providing habitat,” Griffin said.

“Sometimes people think, ‘Oh, if I occupy my house, why would an animal want to live here?’ Well, they’re looking at your house with a different perspective. They’re thinking about, does it meet my denning or roosting needs, and is there an opening?”

As Climate Change Expands Mosquito Ranges, Better Monitoring Is Key to Preventing Disease

Monitoring is expensive and labor intensive. But it helps public health officials stop outbreaks.

By Madeline Shaw - July 16, 2026 – insideclimatenews.org

With summer heat comes pool parties, beach days, backyard cookouts and, of course, swarms of bloodthirsty mosquitos.

But while insect bites have always been a side effect of time spent outdoors, the species doing the biting are changing in historically temperate regions like New England. As climate change makes these areas warmer and wetter, their ranges are expanding—and any diseases they carry come with them.

In Connecticut, for example, a statewide mosquito monitoring program has detected 54 different species, including invasives like the Asian tiger mosquito, which can transmit potentially serious diseases including dengue and Zika. The mosquito's historical territory is in hot and humid climates farther south, but it has been moving north.

"There are a number of new species that are creeping into our area," said Philip Armstrong, chief scientist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, which coordinates the state's mosquito trapping and testing program.

Programs like these are key for preventing mosquito-borne diseases, especially as climate change alters the risks. "You really do have to test the mosquitoes to know where the hot spots are for these viruses," Armstrong said. "By the time we learn about human cases, it's usually too late to do anything."

There aren't statewide monitoring programs in much of the country. Instead, a patchwork quilt of more than 1,000 mosquito control agencies tries to keep ahead of an evolving problem. Most are run at the local level, with a wide range of organizational structures and monitoring practices.

The U.S. ought to have a national surveillance database collecting and sharing information from all monitoring programs, said Dan Markowski of the American Mosquito Control Association, a nonprofit that works to reduce mosquitos and vector-transmitted diseases. But, he added, "it all obviously comes back to money."

Last week, Connecticut announced that mosquitos in the state have already tested positive for West Nile virus this season. The virus, which appears every summer, has become the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the Northeast. While most infections are asymptomatic, it can cause flu-like symptoms and has resulted in more than 3,300 deaths since it first appeared in the U.S. in 1999.

Connecticut established its monitoring program two years before that to monitor for a different virus: Eastern equine encephalitis, a rare but serious mosquito-borne disease that can cause neurological issues and has a roughly 30 percent fatality rate. While it is still uncommon, outbreaks are becoming more frequent in New England.

"There's these cycles of increased virus activity, and we didn't see that before, historically," Armstrong said. "It has the hallmarks of something that's being affected by climate change."

In temperate regions like the Northeast, global warming can alter mosquito-borne disease risks not only by expanding the range of virus-carrying insects but also by lengthening the transmission season, reducing the number of mosquito predators and changing habitats, among other factors. Researchers predict that tropical mosquito-borne diseases like Zika, dengue, chikungunya and malaria will likely become established in temperate areas because of climate change.

"As the temperatures rise, you can actually speed up mosquito development, so you can have multiple cycles of mosquitoes every year in new areas," said Brian Leydet, who studies mosquito and tick-borne diseases at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

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Beyond mosquitoes, Leydet said environmental changes can also affect viruses and their original hosts, such as birds and deer, creating complex ecological shifts that can be difficult to study.

Leydet helped to establish a monitoring program in St. Lawrence County, New York, in 2024, after an Eastern equine encephalitis outbreak. Unlike Connecticut, New York does not have a statewide program, and many counties "lack the infrastructure and budget to conduct regular mosquito monitoring," according to the project announcement.

Monitoring programs are typically labor-intensive and expensive, requiring teams to set and check traps, alongside specialists who can identify, sort and test the samples. While some traps attract female mosquitoes with "stinky water" loaded with decaying organic material, others require dry ice to release carbon dioxide that mosquitoes sniff out when hunting for mammals. But in rural parts of New York, dry ice can be hard to come by—the team had to make their own.

Even beyond the logistical and resource challenges, communication, coordination and data sharing for mosquito monitoring can be a challenge.

“One of the problems with states that are not comprehensively doing these surveillance programs is that surveillance is hit or miss,” Leydet said. “A lot of these surveillance programs are run by the counties, and they’re not really talking to each other.”

Leydet’s lab found that this patchwork system means some invasive mosquito species are flying under the radar.

Funding is another challenge to better surveillance. “If the county doesn’t have money or resources, these programs fade away,” Leydet said. “If we don’t have these surveillance programs, then all we’re doing is responding to a problem when it’s already a problem, and that’s never how prevention works.”

That could change with a bill introduced in the New York State Legislature this session, which would lay the groundwork for a comprehensive mosquito surveillance program—rather than what the bill calls the “sparse and disintegrated” current system—to help public health officials respond before an outbreak.

Proactive measures can include removing pools of standing water, applying targeted larvicides in breeding habitats and warning the public to use insect repellent and cover bare skin when outdoors, though outbreaks may require more widespread pesticide spraying.

Leydet said greater centralization would be a start, but widespread coordination in large states like New York can be a challenge: “There is general interest in these programs, but when you start seeing what they cost, it’s like, ‘Maybe we’re not that interested.’”

Still, he said, “any help is better than nothing.”