

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, CT 06511

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AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – January 14, 2026 meeting
3. Water Chestnut Update: W. Henley and J. Tracy
4. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
5. Other land items
6. Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.
7. 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/3u3h9n3x>. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email to jslubowski@rwater.com

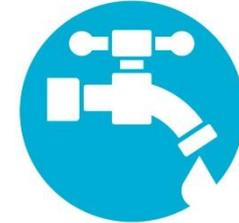
SAFETY MOMENT

SEASONAL INFLUENZA PREVENTION

According to the World Health Organization, there are approximately one billion cases of seasonal influenza reported annually, including 3-5 million cases of severe illness. People at greater risk include pregnant women, children under the age of 5, older people, and individuals with chronic medical conditions. Symptoms begin 1-4 days after exposure and usually last about a week. Below are ways to prevent the flu:

- Wash hands regularly and keep hand sanitizer nearby.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Dispose of tissues correctly.
- STAY HOME when you are not feeling well.
- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

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
January 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, January 14, 2026, at the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut. Chair Levine presided.

Committee Members Present: M. Levine(R), P. Betkoski(R), P. DeSantis(R), J. Oslander, and J. Mowat Young

Committee Members Absent: B. Eitzer and G. Malloy

RPB: R. Harvey, N. Campbell(R), T. Clifford(R), J. DiCarlo(R), C. Havrda(R), S. Iacuone(R), and C. Mancini(R)

Authority: C. LaMarr(R) and T. Cort(R)

Management: V. Benni(R), J. Hill, A. Marotti, J. Triana, and K. Watsey

Staff: J. Slubowski

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

On motion made by Mr. Betkoski and seconded by Mr. Oslander, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its December 10, 2025 regular meeting.

At 5:32 p.m., Ms. Young entered the meeting.

Mr. Watsey, the RWA’s Director of Public Affairs, provided an update on the HazWaste Central 2025 season, which ran from May 17 to October 25. In 2025, the program served 6,588 households, marking a 13.5% decrease from 2024, due to rain on four of the first six collection days. The CESQG program, which allows businesses to dispose of hazardous waste by appointment, saw no requests in 2025 as businesses now directly contact Clean Harbors for disposal needs, generating no revenue for the program. The program services the RWA district customers and has satellite collections in Guilford, Orange, Woodbridge, Meriden, Fairfield, Milford, and Bethany, with Fairfield achieving a record-breaking collection of 820 households. The program operates on a cost-neutral basis, with all expenses covered by participating towns rather than RWA ratepayers. RWA initially fronts operational costs, which are reimbursed semiannually by the towns. Household participation is calculated in increments of 15 gallons or 20 pounds of collected materials.

Committee members discussed approved materials, invoicing, program promotion, and weather restrictions.

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

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
December 31	64%	75%	72%	None

Rainfall (inches)			
	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
December 31	2.91	5.15	4.14
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	16.56	25.69	27.10

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

- Cheshire – Corresponded with property owner of 20+/- acres.
- Cheshire, former Bis property (CH 5) – Supplied title insurance policy instead of the certificate of title. That was approved by DEEP and the AG. Provided updated map for DEEP to use in their monthly OSWA update.
- Hamden condemnations (HA 5A and HA 7) – DOT said that this matter would be delayed due to the town engineer’s comments about the survey.
- Killingworth, Abner Lane Rd. (KI 6) – Attended Killingworth Land Trust board meeting with members of the Madison Rod and Club.
- Killingworth condemnation (KI 8) – Received letters from DOT about taking part of the area and doing work on our property since they found deficiencies in the road/dam. They did not include information on compensation.

Rental houses:

- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Received schedule of work to be done by the Tarlowski’s from them.
- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. – Provided documents to Murtha to amend the deed and easement so they can be used in the public bid.

Forestry Update

- Met with a herpetologist to work out a protection plan for box turtles at the Lake Saltonstall slashwall harvest area.
- Continued to work with CAES researchers to propose diversifying the cutting methods study area to include a crop tree release element.
- Worked with maple tapper for certifying this sugarbush as bird-friendly habitat through a National Audubon program.

Recreation

- Bethany Horsemen reported damage to horse bridge #6. They repaired it.
- Downed tree at Lake Chamberlain was removed.
- Corresponded with Woodbridge Conservation Commission members about the Woodbridge Greenway by the gas line.

	December		November	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,813	4,787	4,840	4,838

Special Activity Permits

- New Haven Bird Club (Chris Loscalzo) - Annual Christmas Bird Count survey - Saltonstall, Whitney, Wepawaug, Maltby, Dawson, Glen, Chamberlain, Watrous – (12/20/2025).
- Dr. Chris Loscalzo (at request of CTDEEP) - Annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey - Lakes Saltonstall and Gaillard – (1/10/2026).
- Oxford EMS K9 Division-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)- Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, Lake Watrous and Lake Dawson (12/30/25-12/30/26).
- Oxford EMS K9 Division-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)- Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, RT 42 Swamp southeast of RT 42 Bethany; (12/30/25-12/30/26).
- Oxford EMS K9 Division-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)- Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, 20 Rimmon Road, Seymour (12/30/25-12/30/26).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Agricultural agreements – Continued correspondence with potential tenant of the Prospect fields. Contacted tenants about mowing the other fields in Guilford.
 - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Surveyor restaked the boundary according to his survey. Contacted abutter and he said he was engaging another surveyor. I replied that all evidence points to two straight lines.
 - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Emailed city staff again to find out the status of their review since they have not responded.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Branford and North Branford.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	2 acres

- Deer hunt – Post-hunt surveys are coming in. Hunters have until the end of January to respond.
- Bethany, Green Haven/Rocky Corner – Reviewed updated agreement from Murtha after their comments.
- Orange, Baldwin Rd. guy wire (OR 4) – Signed revocable license agreement for the guy wire to reach into our property.
- West Haven, 600 Derby Ave. – Yale New Haven Health attorneys asked us to review plans for additional development on the property where we hold conservation easements.
- New Haven, Sachem St. easement – Yale staff said that internal sign-offs have been approved and they expect to provide a red-lined draft soon.
- Boundaries – Checked and marked boundaries in Durham.

There were no other land items to report.

Chair Levine reviewed the upcoming Authority meeting assignment.

The next regular meeting is Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
January 14, 2026

At 6:00 p.m., the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

Mark Levine, Chair

(R) – Attended remotely.

UNAPPROVED

Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*) Management Update

Land Use Committee February 2026

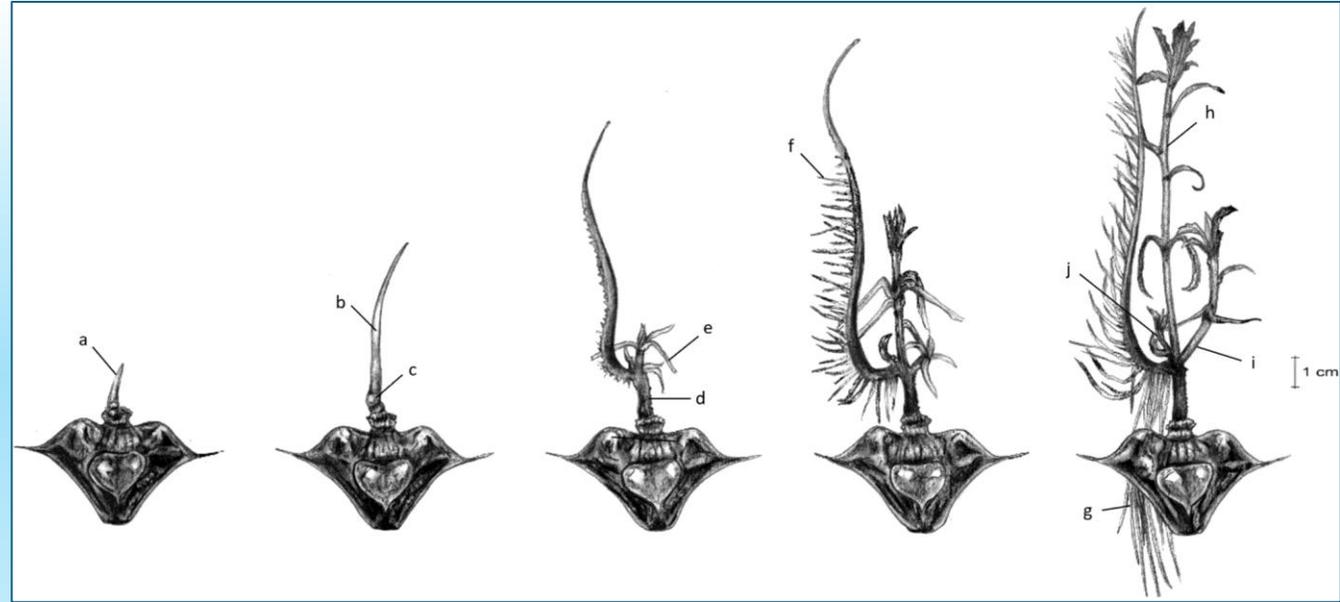
Joshua Tracy
Forester II

William Henley
Aquatic Resource Scientist



Overview

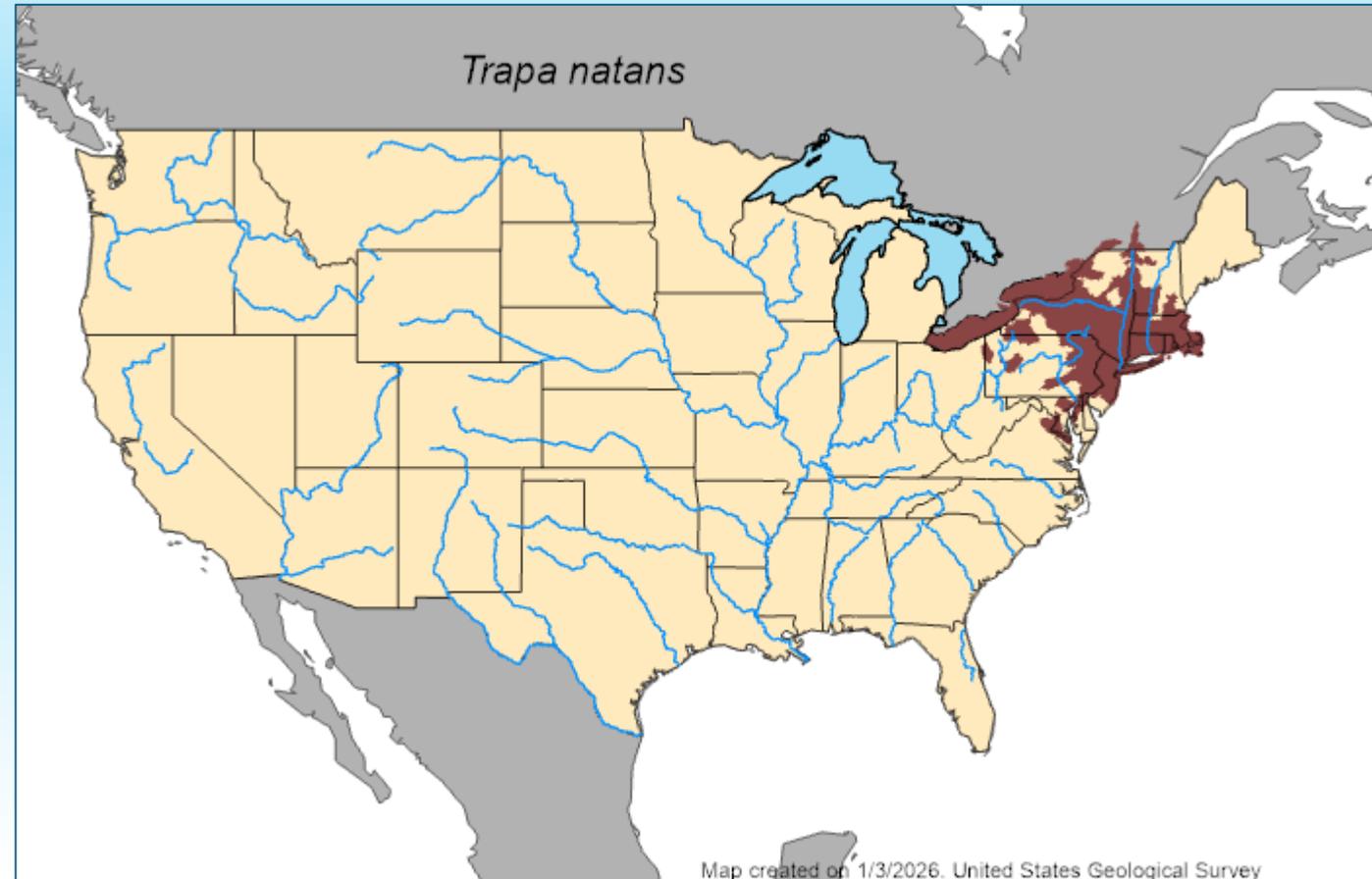
- Biology (quick)
- History (quick)
- Furnace Pond 2025
- Lake Whitney 2025
- Monitoring Efforts in 2026
- Management Efforts in 2026



Journal of Ecology, Volume: 112, Issue: 10, Pages: 2386-2420, First published: 19 July 2024, DOI: (10.1111/1365-2745.14372)

Trapa natans, Water Chestnut

- First introduced in 1870s to Potomac River
- Now found throughout the Northeast & Mid-Atlantic
- Native to Eurasia



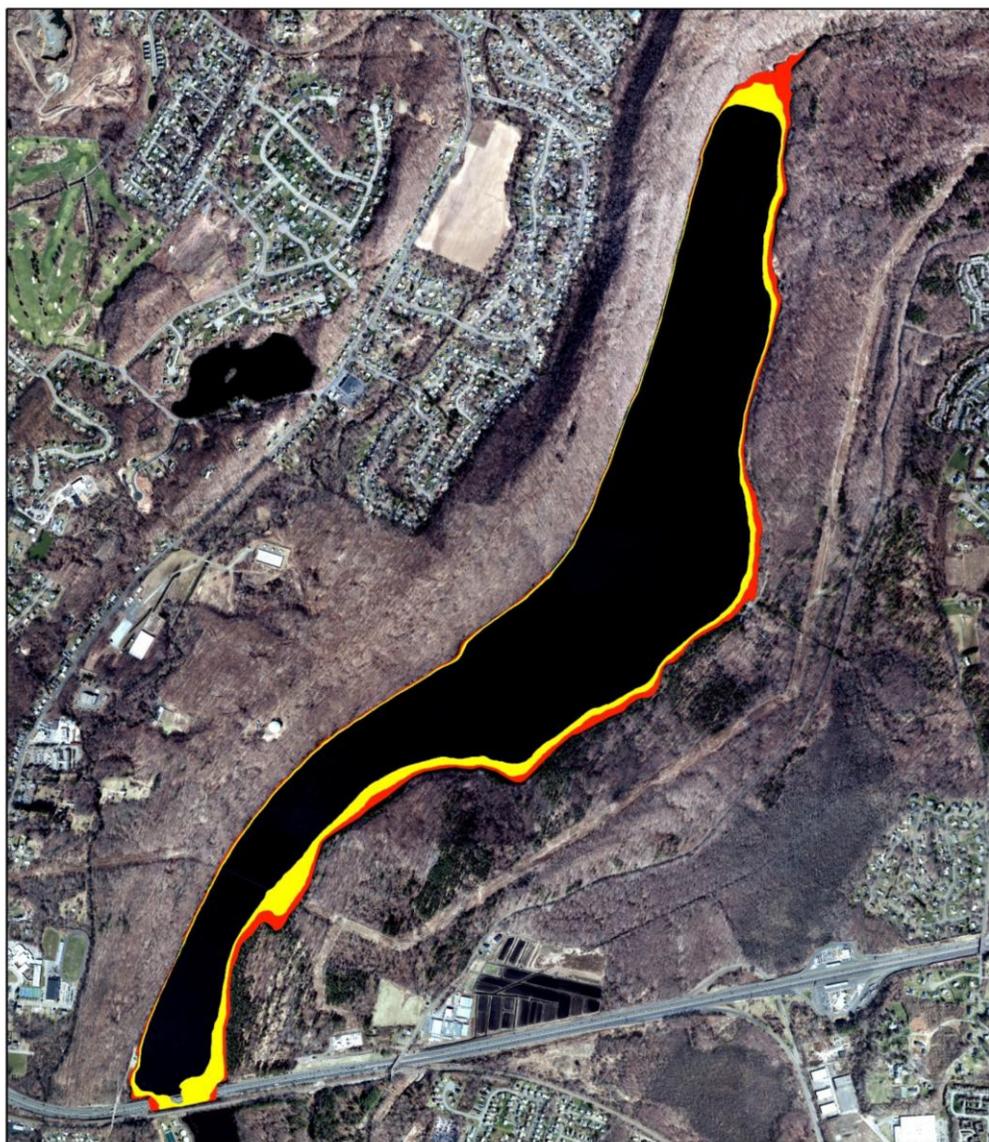
Implications

- Aggressive invasive aquatic plant
- Reproduces exponentially due to seed & growth habit
- Grows in impenetrable mats
- Limits light reaching benthos and reduces oxygen content
- Increased waterbody sedimentation



Implications

- Extreme impairment to Furnace Pond
- Concerns about spread to nearby waterbodies; e.g., Lake Saltonstall
 - Hydrologically connected
 - Primary waterbody
 - Recreational fishery
- Trapa currently found only in small numbers



Saltonstall *T. Natans* Risk Areas

23.4 acres high risk (depth <2.0 meters)
35.1 acres low risk (depth 2-4 meters)

Risk Level

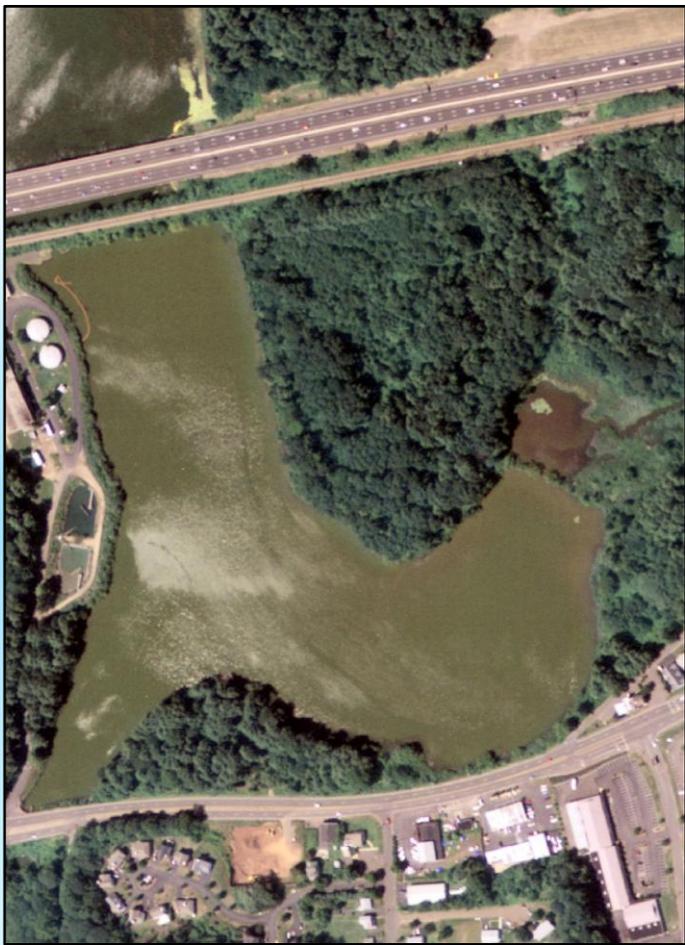
- High
- Low



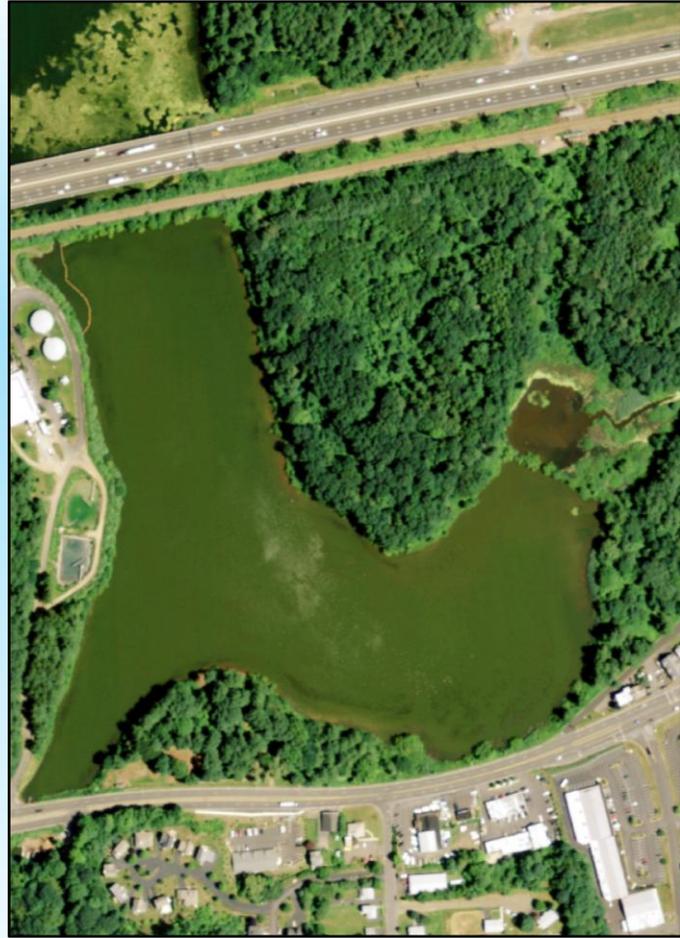
Meters
0 250 500 750

Regional Water Authority

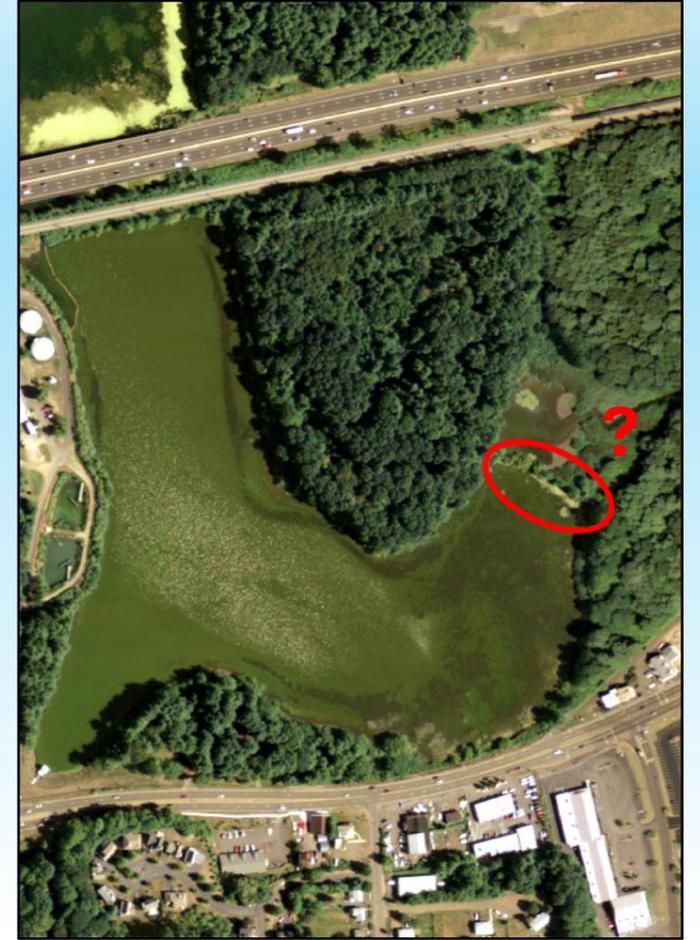
CT Orthophotography (2016) with extracted bathymetric contours.
Map intended for planning purposes only, contains no authoritative data.



2006

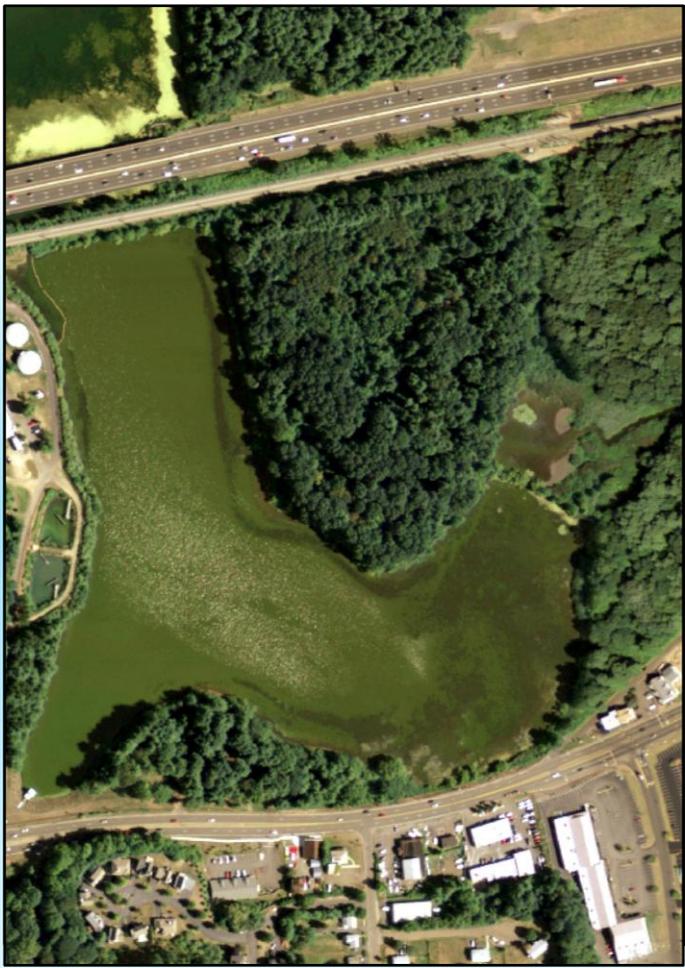


2008



2010





2010



2012



2014

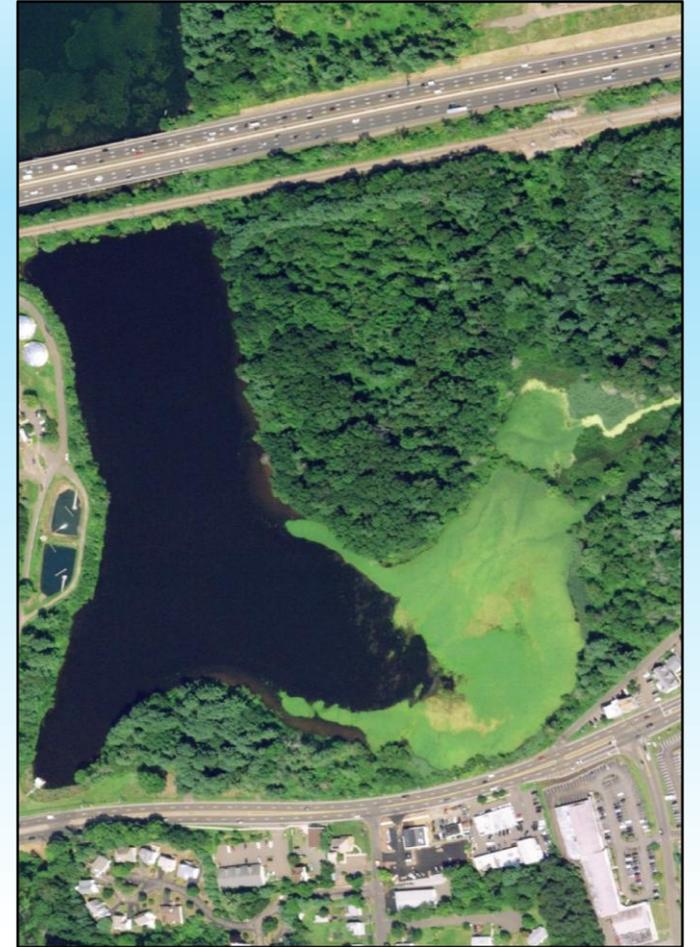




2014



2016



2018



Management Efforts

- Deployment of boom to prevent fragment spread
- Annual inspection of Lake Saltonstall to remove any individuals growing in waterbody





Management Efforts

- Annual mechanical harvesting efforts at Furnace Pond
- Aerial mapping efforts
 - UAS mapping of Furnace Pond to track management
 - UAS mapping of Pages Mill Pond (upstream) to assist watershed group with management efforts

2025 Monitoring Efforts



Lake Saltonstall
Trapa natans
(Water Chestnut)
Distribution 07/01/25

The survey located and mapped:
~39 Individual Stands,
all of which were removed from
the waterbody upon detection.
The most northern stand was
located ~2.6* miles from the
Furnace Pond culvert.

0.25
Miles



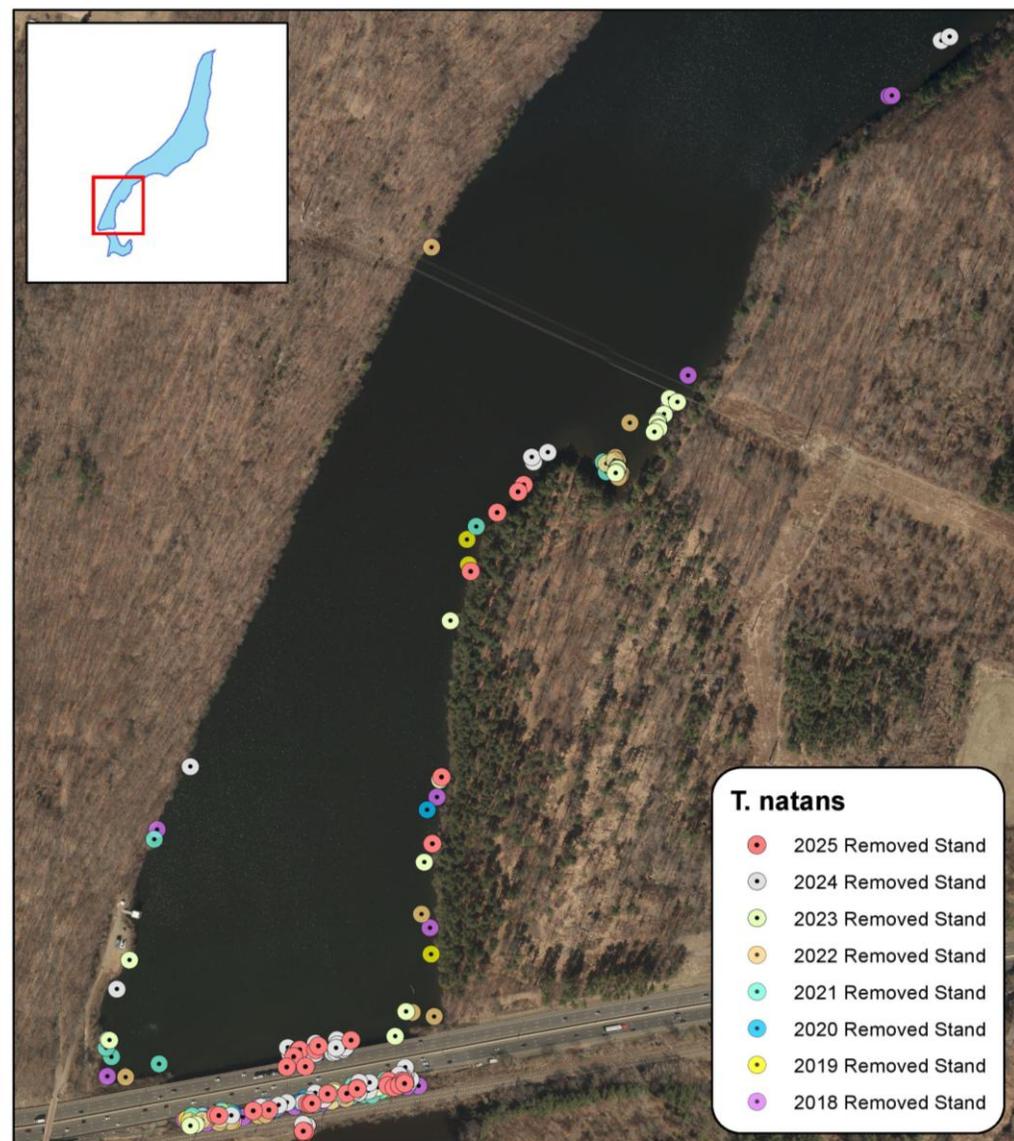
Regional Water Authority

Utilizes CT Orthophotography (2016). Map intended for
planning purposes only, contains no authoritative data.

- 39 individual plants or small groups of plants removed from Lake Saltonstall
- One individual at northern end of waterbody
 - Birds?
 - Diversion?

2025 Monitoring Efforts

- At southern end of waterbody, reduction in distribution and density of plants over prior years
- Secondary inspection later in July to ensure removal of all individuals



Lake Saltonstall
Trapa natans
(Water Chestnut)
Distribution 2018 - 2025

Survey results 2018 - 2025 showing individual stands and patches; which were removed from the waterbody upon detection. The northernmost stand was located ~0.70 miles from the Furnace Pond culvert in 2018, and ~0.42* miles in 2025

2025 Monitoring Efforts

Invasive Chestnut Control Locations 2025 Farm River, CT

- 1a. **Page's Mill Pond**
(motherload)
- 1b. 1 Mile of Farm River
below Page's Pond
2. Dean Heath
Farm Pond
3. Foxon Pond
4. Vaiuso Farm
Irrigation Ditches
5. Farm River at Rte. 1

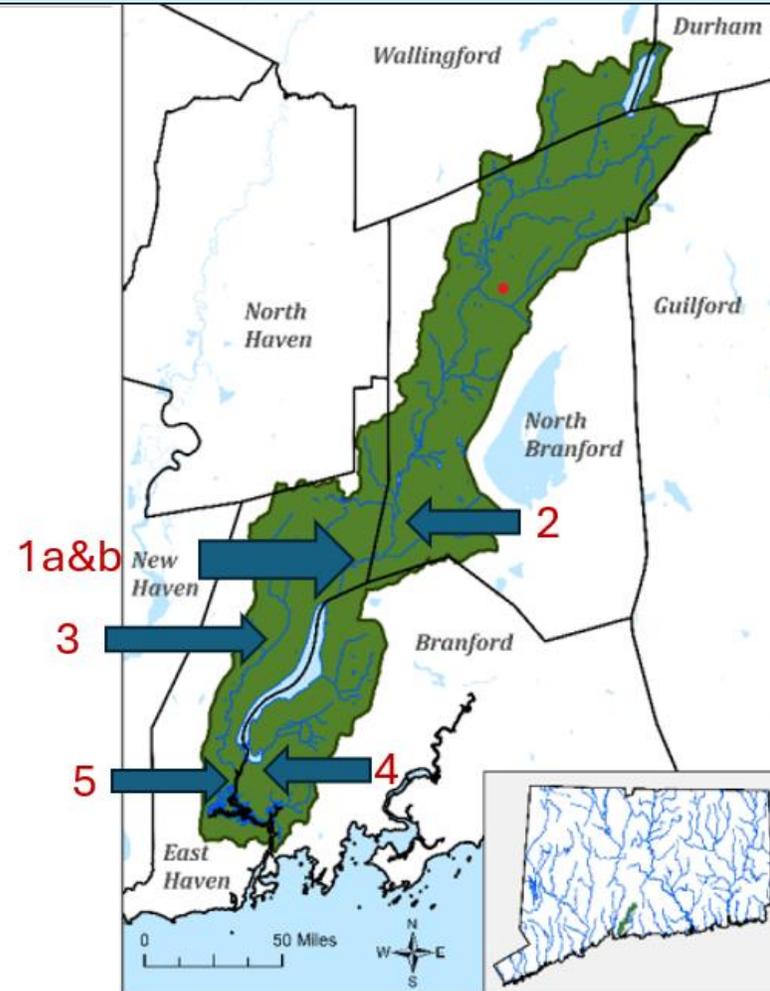


Figure 1-1. Farm River watershed

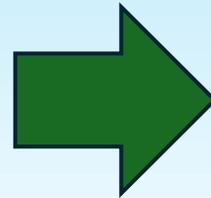
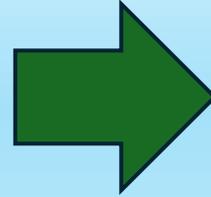
- Friends of the Farm River
- Conducting inspections and hand pulling across watershed
- Above and below Lake Saltonstall
- Report with findings shared by President
- RWA participation in mapping/inspection efforts

UAS Monitoring for Pages Mill Pond

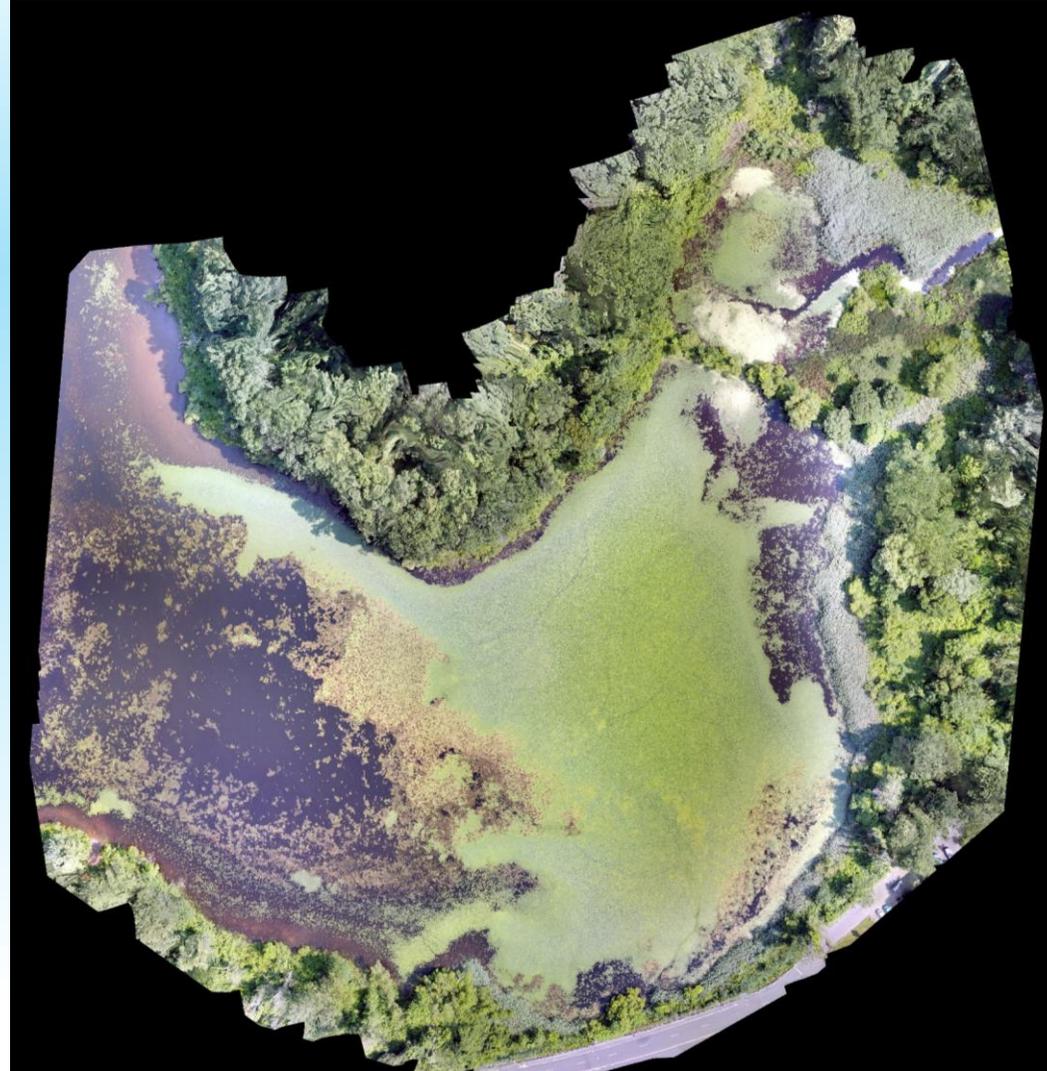
- Assistance to Friends of the Farm River
- Conducting active management to Pages Mill Pond
- Hand removal at other sites



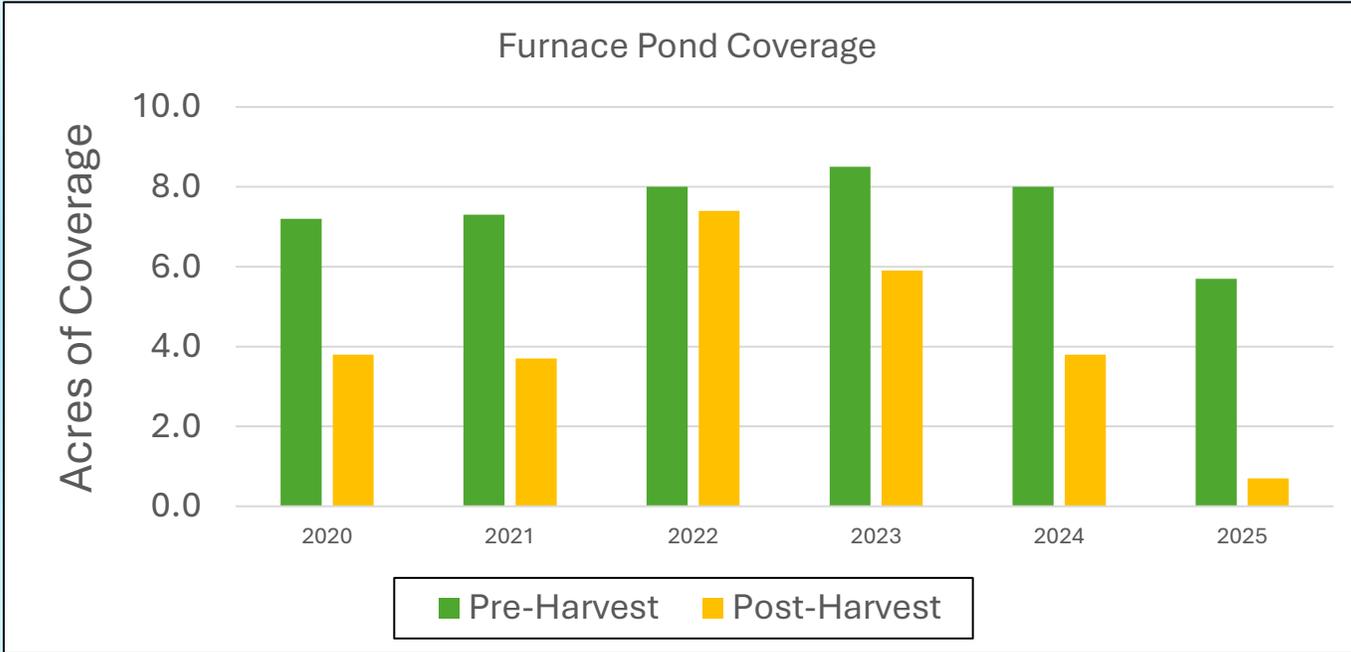
2025 Harvesting Efforts



2023 Baseline (“maximum”)



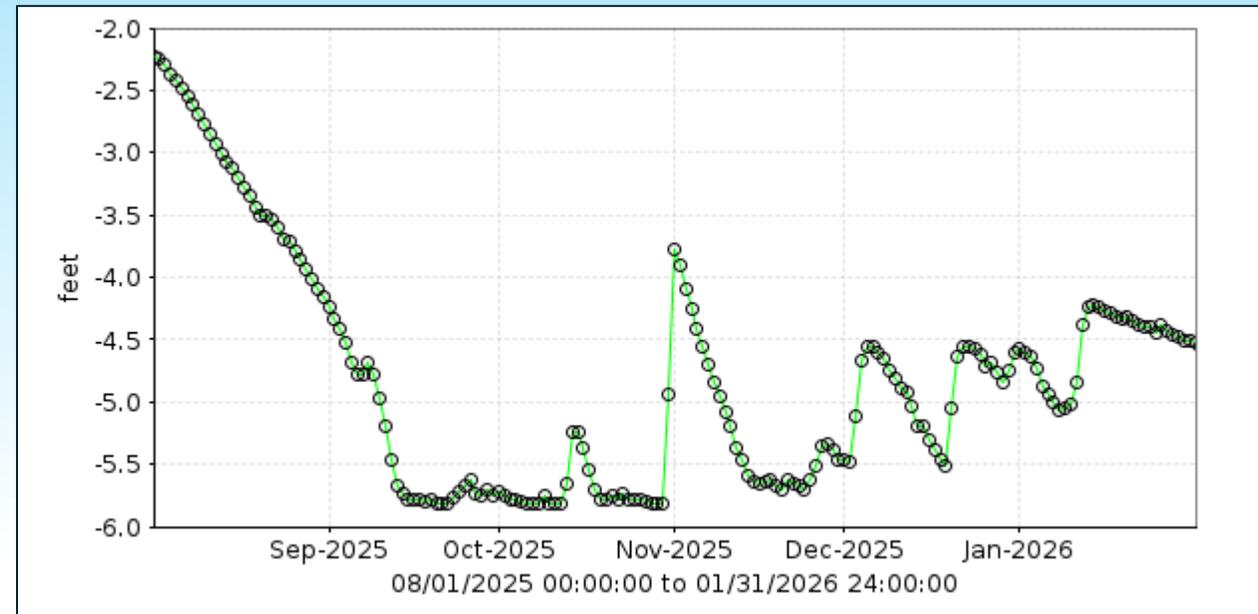
Project Progression



	Pre-Harvest	Post-Harvest
2020	7.2	3.8
2021	7.3	3.7
2022	8.0	7.4
2023	8.5	5.9
2024	8.0	3.8
2025	5.7	0.7

Optimistic 2026 Season

- Effective harvesting efforts in 2025 - most removal to date
- Extreme cold coupled with waterbody drawdown
- Dry conditions could hamper harvesting if they persist



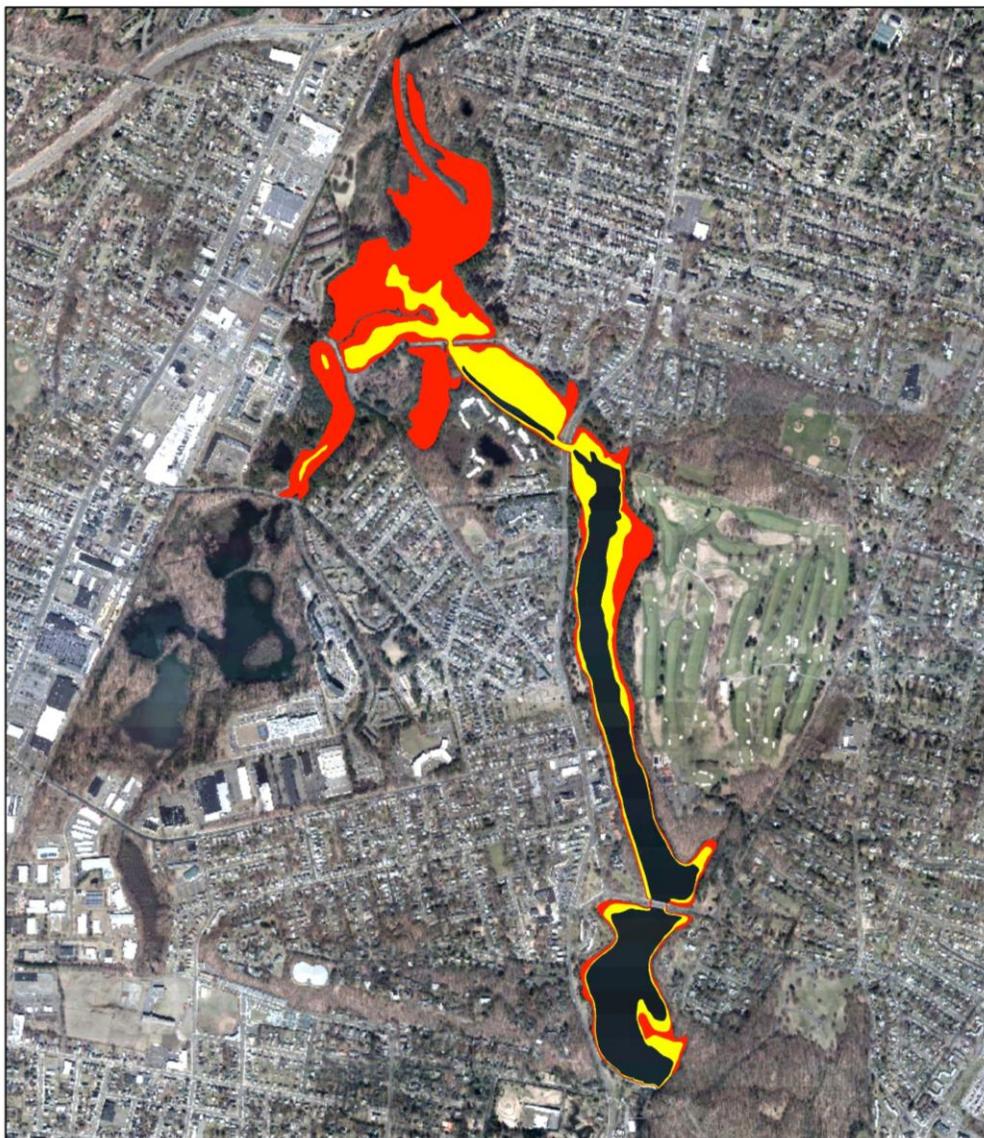
2025 Discovery in Lake Whitney



- Discovered on October 1st, 2025
- Upper basin accessible due to drawdown of ~2.0 feet
- Population size assessed and UAS mission conducted October 6th

Implications

- Significant portion of waterbody is “littoral” or shallow zone
- Flow through system promotes migration of plants to lower reaches
- Possibility for explosive expansion



Whitney T. Natans Risk Areas

73.7 acres high risk (depth <2.0 meters)
34.6 acres low risk (depth 2-4 meters)

Risk Level

High
Low



Meters
0 250 500 750

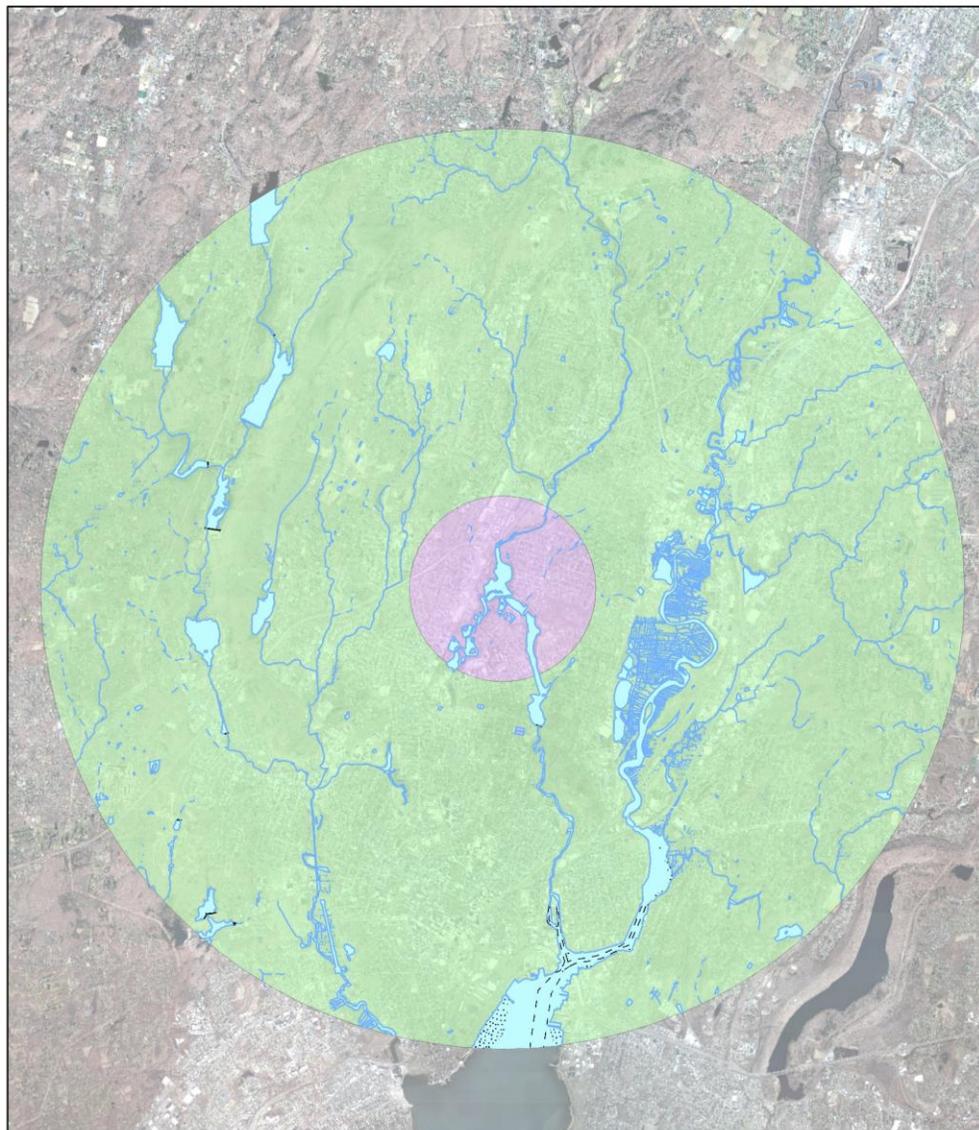
Regional Water Authority

CT Orthophotography (2021) with extracted bathymetric contours.
Map intended for planning purposes only, contains no authoritative data.

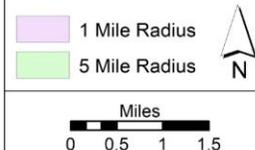


Implications

- Numerous nearby waterbodies, including several stewarded by SCCRWA
- 21 waterbodies within 1 mile of detection site (~195 acres)
- 316 waterbodies within 5 miles of detection site (~1,100 acres)

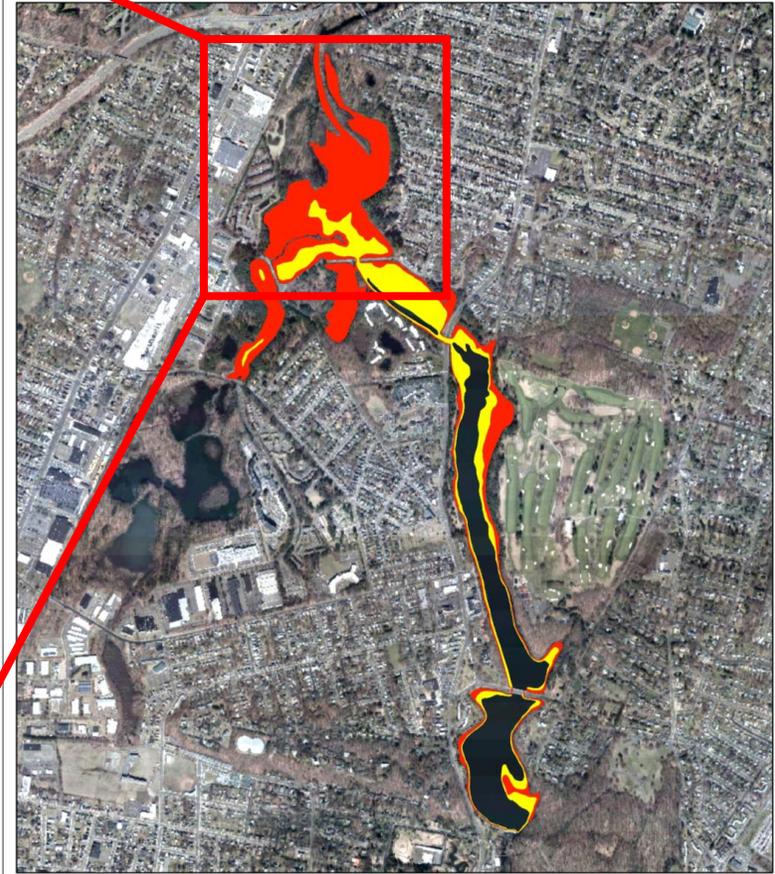
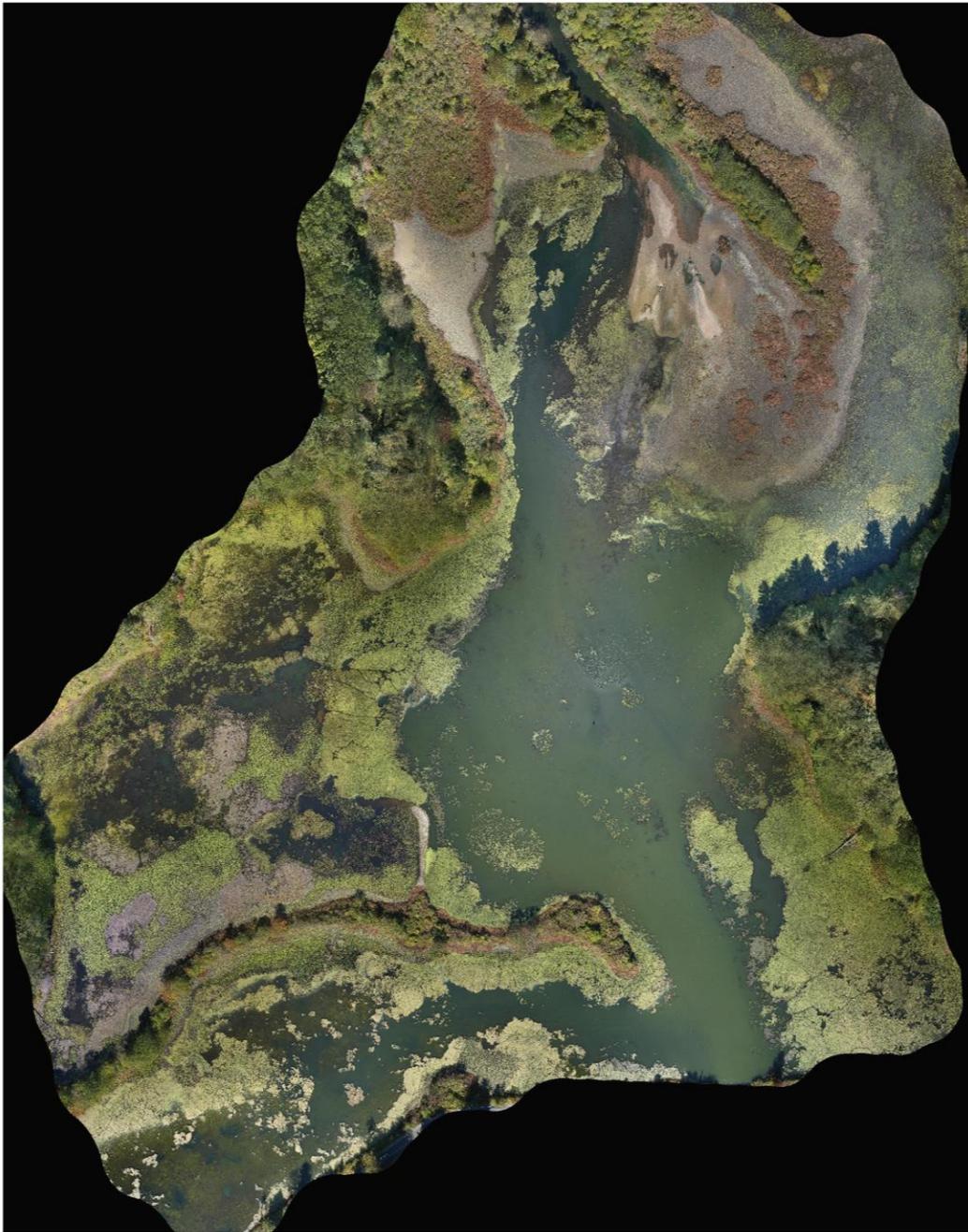


Whitney Spatially
Adjacent
Waterbodies



 Regional Water Authority

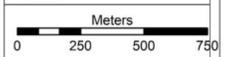
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Whitney T. Natans Risk Areas

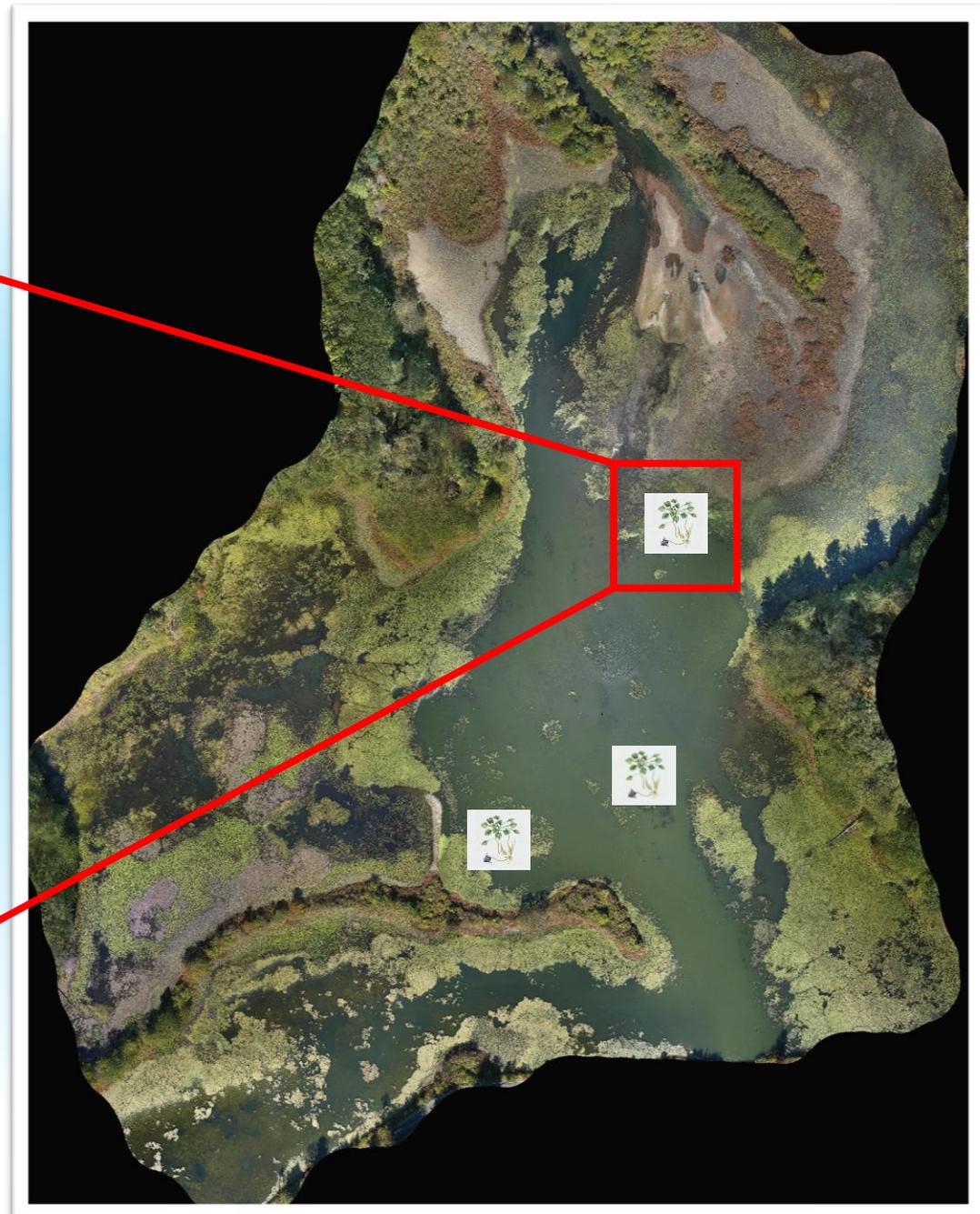
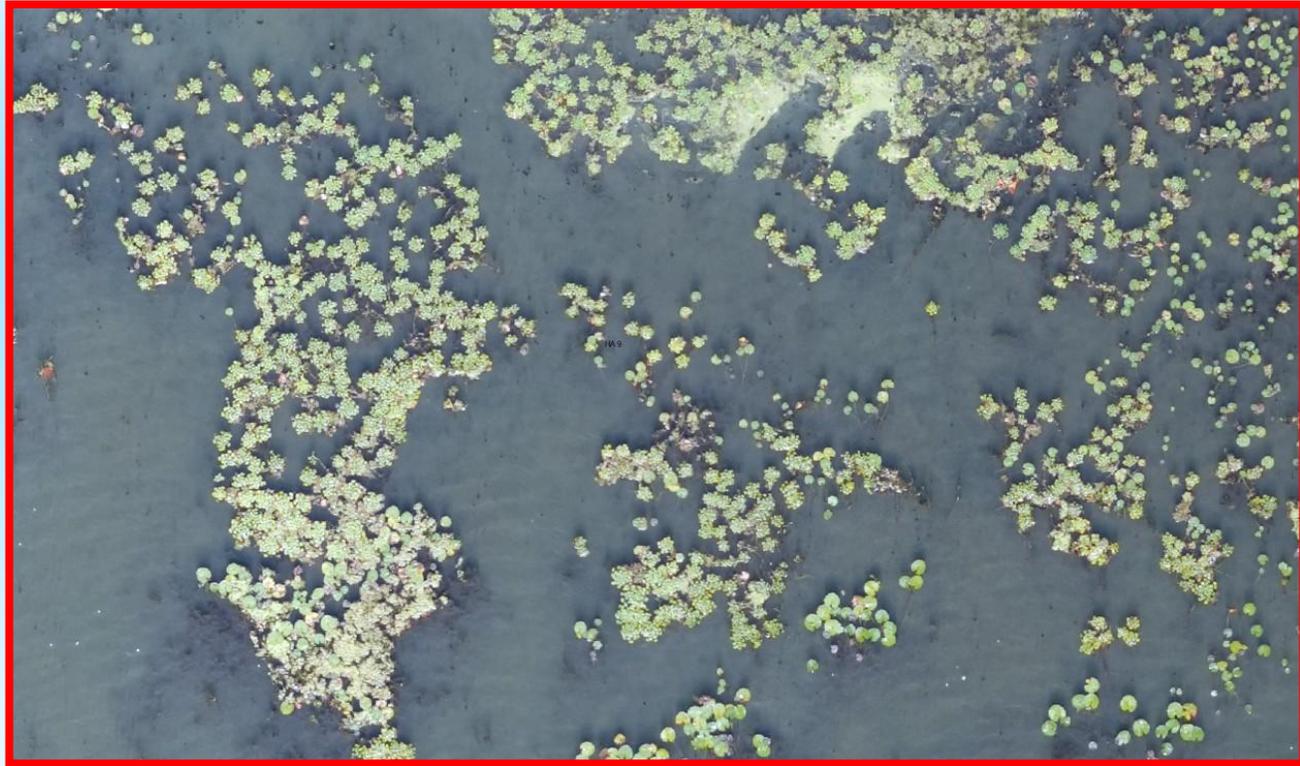
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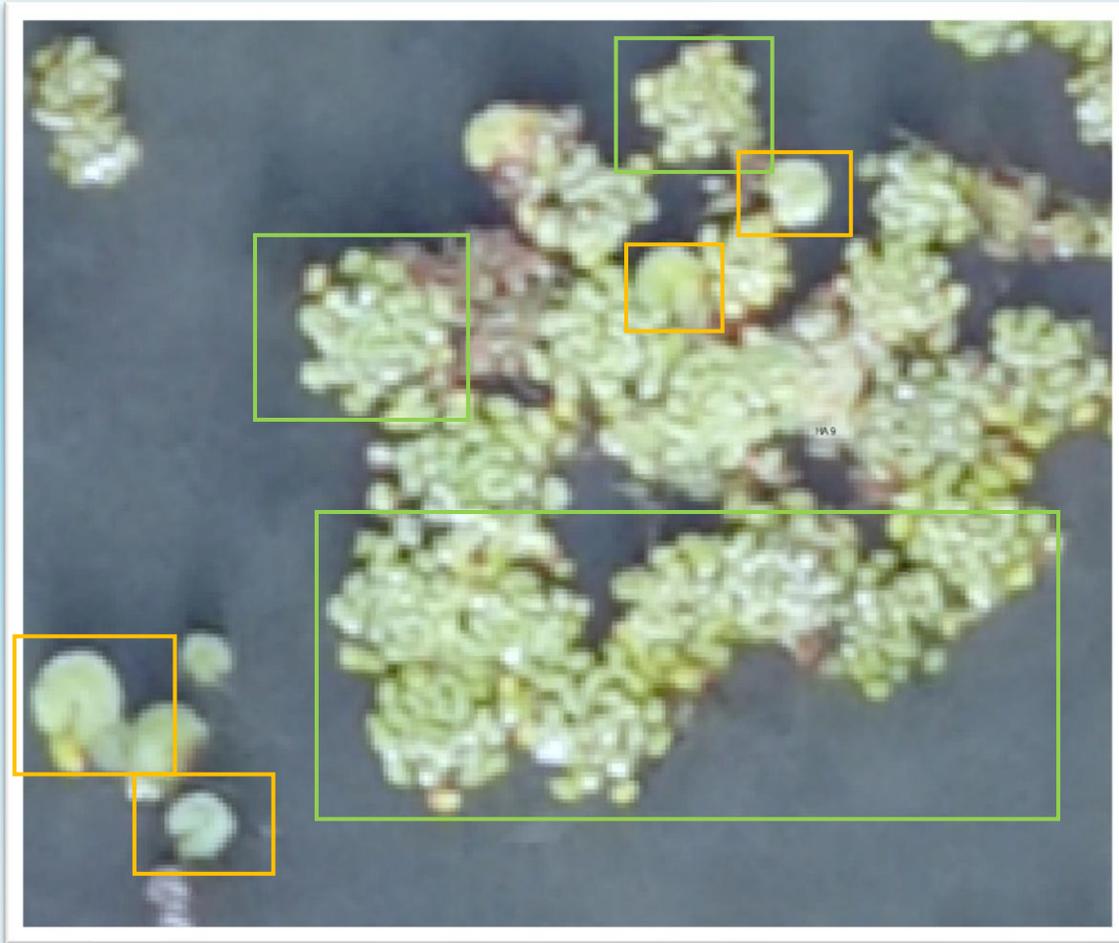
Risk Level
High
Low



Regional Water Authority

CT Orthophotography (2021) with extracted bathymetric contours.
Map intended for planning purposes only, contains no authoritative data.





Esri Image Analyst tool

- The Deep Learning toolset contains tools that detect specific features in an image and classify pixels in a raster dataset.
- The classification and pattern recognition tools perform regression analysis and prepare segmented rasters for use in creating classified raster datasets.

Management Planning



- Prepare boat launch on Lake Whitney Upper Basin
- Conduct UAS mapping for targeted removal
- More native biomass than Furnace Pond
- GOOD – not fully established yet

Management Plan

- Perform targeted mechanical harvesting
- Anticipate only a few days to remove all plants
- More expansive than can be “hand pulled” but not extensive
- Utilize amphibious vehicle due to shallow nature of upper basin



An aerial photograph of a golf course green. A light-colored, sandy path runs diagonally from the top left towards the bottom right. The green is surrounded by dark green grass. The text "Thank you! Questions?" is overlaid in the bottom right quadrant of the image.

Thank you!
Questions?

**February 11, 2026
Land Use Committee Meeting**

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
January 31	65%	76%	77%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
January 31	2.12	0.72	3.56
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 – 1/31/26)	18.68	26.41	30.66

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

- Cheshire – Corresponded with property owner of 20+/- acres.
- Cheshire, former Bis property (CH 5) - Received check for OSWA grant. Title company filed the CE's on land records in Cheshire and Prospect.
- Hamden condemnations (HA 5A and HA 7) – DOT staff sent updated surveys. Re-executed deed and sent to DOT.
- Killingworth, Abner Lane Rd. (KI 6) – Killingworth Land Trust indicated a lack of interest based on incorrect assumptions of how the deal would work. Briefed our proposal again for reconsideration.

Rental houses:

- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Owner reported that they have yet to start the variance application for since they were still working on an A2 survey of the property.
- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. – Compiled material for the public bid.

Forestry Update

- Coordinated with timber harvester about clearing the area of the new North Branford tank.
- Completed marking timber for the Saltonstall slash wall harvest. Collaborated with herpetologist about allowing access/egress for box turtles.
- Inventoried two sugarbushes for the Bird Friendly Maple program, and created habitat management plans.
- Worked with the New England Forestry Foundation and Farm Service Agency (FSA) to enroll forest stands with FSA to ensure eligibility and compliance with USDA environmental protection programs.

Recreation

- Held New Year's Day hike at Lake Bethany with 6 people.

	January		December	
	2026	2025	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,833	4,775	4,813	4,787

Special Activity Permits

- Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station-(Ms. Susanna Kerio, Assistant Agricultural Scientist)-research for management of chestnut blight, Bethany (Hilldale Rd.); Madison (Genesee Recreational Area, Goat Lot Rd., Durham Rd.); Guilford (Goat Lot Rd., Durham Rd.); other possible locations on RWA lands with American chestnuts; (1/6/2026-12/31/2026).
- Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station –(Joseph Barsky) continuation of existing forest research studies, remeasurement of vegetation and sampling of ticks for vector-borne diseases. Seymour Slash Wall, Hosley Brook, Bethany RT. 42, Nathan’s Pond, Lake Chamberlain, Lake Gaillard; (1/1/2026-12/31/2026).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Agricultural agreements – Signed new license agreement to use the fields in Prospect. Sent consent form to Sperry Rd. field tenants to apply for a grant to install a fence around the field.
 - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Abutter refused to agree with our survey. Preparing title report for an adversarial case.
 - East Haven, Barberry Rd. fields (EH 9, 10, 11, & 13) – Sent proposal for a smaller footprint.
 - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Murtha sent email to West Haven about the expired agreement.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford.

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

- Deer hunt – Post-hunt surveys due date is February 6.
- West Haven, 600 Derby Ave. – Reviewed proposal from YNHH and did not encroach upon open space area. Environmental Planning to track when the application goes before land use boards.
- Land Use Plan – Submitted draft letter and resolution to Authority to add to their February agenda.
- Armory St. PS – Responded to an information request regarding an art installation at the pump station in the 1890’s.

Attachments

- January 7, 2026 - Get the chopper: Blade-dangling helicopter slices and dices CT tree limbs to keep power flowing – CT Public Radio
- January 20, 2026 - Era of ‘global water bankruptcy’ is here, UN report says – The Guardian
- January 15, 2026 - EPA Proposal Could Redefine How States Review Federal Water Permits – Water Online website
- February 3, 2026 - Water restored to customers after water main break in North Haven – WTNH
- January 28, 2026 - Could CT legislators force polluters to pay for climate change? – CT Public Radio

Upcoming Agenda Items:

March 2025 - Whitney Water Center update

Get the chopper: Blade-dangling helicopter slices and dices CT tree limbs to keep power flowing

Connecticut Public Radio | By Áine Pennello - January 7, 2026

If you've ever lost power during a storm, you've probably seen utility crews clearing tree branches from power lines. But what if you swapped out the person in the bucket truck for a helicopter carrying a giant row of saws?

For the next two weeks, Eversource is chartering a low-flying helicopter that's giving a new meaning to the nickname "chopper."

Outfitted with a long aluminum wire, this helicopter carries a dizzying (and somewhat alarming) array of eight rotating saw blades. The blades dangle under the helicopter, cutting trees along a transmission corridor stretching 12 miles from East Haddam to Middletown.

"It's pretty impressive and cool to see," said Daelon Carnelli, a climbing foreman, who cuts down trees close to residential homes.

Unlike Carnelli and his colleagues, helicopters can access remote, hard-to-reach areas where utility companies build transmission wires. The lines carry 115,000 volts of electricity from power plants to substations and, eventually, homes.

"This is the backbone of our system," said Kathy Ferrier, Eversource's supervisor of vegetation management. "If a problem happens on the transmission, it can affect the distribution system."

Cue the chopper

On a cold, recent morning, Carnelli stood by Eversource's giant transmission lines in Middletown, waiting for a helicopter.

"Here he comes," Carnelli said. The helicopter emerged in the distance, flying low and slowly, the saw blades suspended below it.

"I've seen it tons of times. It still makes me smile every time I see it," he said.

The saw beam is carefully maneuvered by a pilot who sticks his head out the helicopter, moving it back and forth, slicing off tree branches that are within 25 feet of the transmission lines.

The actual saw consists of a beam with eight circular blades all oriented to create vertical cuts. The contraption is suspended on an aluminum wire.

"These are young [trees] so that means they're easy to cut through," Ferrier said.

The helicopter makes quick work of cutting down the limbs, saving climbing foreman like Carnelli and his colleagues time and trouble.

"What he's done this morning, we'd be here a couple days, close to a week," Carnelli said.

Helicopters are also helpful in icy, slippery conditions that can make trees and access roads leading up to the transmission lines hard for crews to navigate.

"We're eliminating risk to our climbers and our tree workers so they don't have to climb every tree and work in these harsh conditions," Ferrier said. "Cold and icy weather puts a lot of stress on the worker."

Eversource has been using helicopters at various spots around the state to cut tree branches near remote transmission lines since 2020.

While the helicopters aren't used in heavily populated areas, Ferrier said there is some concern from people who live near the transmission lines.

"We do a lot of outreach. We let people know about the project, we send letters, we go door to door, we let them know," Ferrier said.

"They want to just make sure that it's safe, and when it's occurring. I think people just like to know what's happening."

Carnelli joked that the helicopters might one day put him out of a job.

"Times are changing. There's cheaper, safer ways to do things now, I guess," Carnelli said. "I'm sure we cost a little less than jet fuel."

Era of 'global water bankruptcy' is here, UN report says

Overuse and pollution must end urgently as no one knows when whole system might collapse, says expert

Damian Carrington Environment editor – The Guardian - 20 Jan 2026

The world has entered an era of “global water bankruptcy” that is harming billions of people, a UN report has declared.

The overuse and pollution of water must be tackled urgently, the report's lead author said, because no one knew when the whole system could collapse, with implications for peace and social cohesion.

All life depends on water but the report found many societies had long been using water faster than it could be replenished annually in rivers and soils, as well as over-exploiting or destroying long-term stores of water in aquifers and wetlands.

This had led to water bankruptcy, the report said, with many human water systems past the point at which they could be restored to former levels. The climate crisis was exacerbating the problem by melting glaciers, which store water, and causing whiplashes between extremely dry and wet weather.

Prof Kaveh Madani, who led the report, said while not every basin and country was water bankrupt, the world was interconnected by trade and migration, and enough critical systems had crossed this threshold to fundamentally alter global water risk.

The result was a world in which 75% of people lived in countries classified as water-insecure or critically water-insecure and 2 billion people lived on ground that is sinking as groundwater aquifers collapse.

Conflicts over water had risen sharply since 2010, the report said, while major rivers, such as the Colorado, in the US, and the Murray-Darling system, in Australia, were failing to reach the sea, and “day zero” emergencies – when cities run out of water, such as in Chennai, India – were escalating. Half of the world's large lakes had shrunk since the early 1990s, the report noted. Even damp nations, such as the UK, were at risk because of reliance on imports of water-dependent food and other products.

“This report tells an uncomfortable truth: many critical water systems are already bankrupt,” said Madani, of the UN University's Institute for Water, Environment and Health. “It's extremely urgent [because] no one knows exactly when the whole system would collapse.”

About 70% of fresh water taken by human withdrawals was used for agriculture, but Madani said: “Millions of farmers are trying to grow more food from shrinking, polluted or disappearing water sources. Water bankruptcy in India or Pakistan, for example, also means an impact on rice exports to a lot of places around the world.” More than half of global food was grown in areas where water storage was declining or unstable, the report said.

Madani said action to deal with water bankruptcy offered a chance to bring countries together in an increasingly fragmented world. “Water is a strategic, untapped opportunity to the world to create unity within and between nations. It is one of the very rare topics that left and right and north and south all agree on its importance.”

The UN report, which is based on a forthcoming paper in the peer-reviewed journal *Water Resources Management*, sets out how population growth, urbanisation and economic growth have increased water demand for agriculture, industry, energy and cities. “These pressures have produced a global pattern that is now unmistakable,” it said.

In some of the world's most densely populated river basins, including the Indus, Yellow, and Tigris-Euphrates, the rivers were periodically drying up before reaching the ocean. “In many basins, the ‘normal’ to which crisis managers once hoped to return has effectively vanished,” the report said. Lakes were also shrinking, from Lake Urmia, in Iran, to the Salton Sea, in the US, and Lake Chad. Wildlife suffered as well as people, as humans “steal” water from nature, Madani said.

The over-exploitation of groundwater was causing cities to subside around the world, with Rafsanjan, in Iran, sinking by 30cm a year; Tulare, in the US, by about 28cm a year, and Mexico City by about 21cm a year. Jakarta, Manila, Lagos and Kabul were other major cities affected. Among the most visible signs of this water bankruptcy, the report said, were the 700 sinkholes peppering the heavily farmed Konya plain in Turkey.

Cities, such as Tehran, Cape Town, São Paulo and Chennai, had all faced day zero water crises, the report noted, while the number of water-related conflicts around the world had risen from 20 in 2010 to more than 400 in 2024.

Humanity was also slashing the amount of water available by destroying natural stores, such as wetlands, and polluting waterways. Wetlands equal in size to the entire European Union had been erased in the past five decades, the report said.

The report calls for a fundamental reset of how water is protected and used around the world. This would include cutting the rights and claims to withdraw water to match today's degraded supply, and transforming water-intensive sectors, such as agriculture and industry, via changes in crops, more efficient irrigation and less wasteful urban systems. The report emphasises support for communities whose livelihoods must change.

“Water bankruptcy management requires honesty, courage and political will,” said Madani. “We cannot rebuild vanished glaciers or reinflate acutely compacted aquifers. But we can prevent further losses, and redesign institutions to live within new hydrological limits.”

Tshilidzi Marwala, UN undersecretary general, said: “Water bankruptcy is becoming a driver of fragility, displacement and conflict. Managing it fairly is now central to maintaining peace, stability and social cohesion.”

The challenge of sustainable water management around the world was very real, said Prof Albert Van Dijk, at the Australian National University who was not part of the UN report, although, he added, he preferred the description of collapse, or systemic failure, over bankruptcy.

A recent water report led by Van Dijk highlighted the increasingly erratic climate. “Increased variability is as much a problem as scarcity,” he said. “Sometimes there’s more water available overall, but it increasingly arrives in bursts, at the wrong place and at the wrong time. This makes management genuinely harder. For example, dam reservoir levels need to be kept low to mitigate floods but high to ensure supply during droughts.”

Dr Jonathan Paul, at Royal Holloway, University of London, said: “The report lays bare humankind’s mistreatment of water [which] threatens the viability of ‘the water cycle’ as a concept.

“The elephant in the room, which is mentioned explicitly only once, is the role of massive and unequal population growth in driving so many of the manifestations of water bankruptcy,” he said. “Addressing this growth would be more useful than tinkering with outdated, non-inclusive, and top-down water resource management frameworks.”

EPA Proposal Could Redefine How States Review Federal Water Permits

By Riley Kleemeier - Water Online Website – January 15, 2026

The U.S. EPA has proposed a revision to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, a move that could significantly reshape how states exercise authority over infrastructure projects that may affect water quality.

Section 401 gives states and tribes the power to confirm or deny whether an infrastructure project will comply with applicable water quality standards before any licensing or permits can be issued.

The proposed rule would revise both the timing and scope of Section 401 water quality certifications. It reinforces a maximum one-year deadline for states and authorized tribes to act on a certification request, and eliminates the practice of withdrawing and resubmitting requests to extend review timelines. The proposal also narrows the definition of “water quality requirements” to specific provisions of the Clean Water Act, such as effluent limits, water quality standards, and toxic pollutant controls.

The rule’s intent is to return Section 401 “to its clear statutory boundaries,” said Administrator Lee Zeldin.

While the EPA and many other industry groups maintain that the proposal will reduce permitting delays and help critical infrastructure projects move forward more predictably, some environmental organizations and state officials strongly oppose the rule.

“This latest proposal would strip states and Tribes of their right to protect their waterways from health harming pollution,” the League of Conservation Voters wrote. “It will make our waters dirtier and our families sicker at a time when healthcare costs are already going up for millions.”

In contrast, many manufacturing groups celebrate the proposal. “Too often, the vaguely worded Section 401 has been used as an excuse to block critical infrastructure and trade projects,” said Jay Timmons, president of the National Association of Manufacturers.

The public comment period is now open, giving stakeholders 30 days to weigh in before the EPA finalizes the rule, expected later this spring.

Water restored to customers after water main break in North Haven

by: William Gonzalez – WTNH - Feb 3, 2026

NORTH HAVEN, Conn. (WTNH) — Water has been restored to customers early Tuesday morning after a water main break in New Haven.

The water main break happened around 3 p.m. Monday in the area of Ridge Road and Westview Road.

Water was restored to customers around 2:30 a.m., according to the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority.

According to a post on the North Haven Police Department’s Facebook page, officers were at the scene Monday assisting.

The break affected about 75 customers, the RWA said.

Could CT legislators force polluters to pay for climate change?

Connecticut Public Radio | By Áine Pennello - January 28, 2026

Environmental advocates gather at the capitol building in Hartford on January 28, 2026 to demand fossil fuel companies pay for climate disasters through a climate superfund.

Environmental advocates rallied at the state Capitol on Wednesday, demanding fossil fuel companies pay the price for the effects of climate change in Connecticut.

They're calling on lawmakers to create a climate "superfund."

The legislation would force fossil fuel companies that emit significant amounts of greenhouse gases to pay money. That money would then be distributed to help towns and cities upgrade their infrastructure and prepare for flooding and extreme weather.

It's an idea that's become law in neighboring New York and Vermont – but the notion isn't without its detractors – similar pushes have failed in the Connecticut General Assembly before and climate superfunds have been subject to federal lawsuits.

Jackie Trimble Shapiro, who braved the cold weather to protest with dozens of others, said the conversation around climate change needs a new level of urgency.

"We are burning up our planet," she said. "I don't know if we've already reached the tipping point. I'm just praying that we haven't."

Advocates noted how climate change is impacting communities across Connecticut through air quality and extreme weather events – both of which can have dangerous health consequences.

Kendall Keelen, staff attorney with the Conservation Law Foundation, said those costs add up.

"It's not fair for Connecticut's families and small businesses to keep paying the price while these companies that are responsible for it continue to make millions off of damages," she said.

State Rep. Steve Winter co-sponsored a house bill aimed at the same end last year.

'A feel-good policy with real world consequences'

The Connecticut Energy Marketers Association (CEMA) is fighting back against the superfund, saying it would drive up energy prices for Connecticut residents, who already pay some of the highest electricity rates in the country.

"You cannot impose billions of dollars in new costs without raising prices. Anyone supporting this proposal is supporting higher electric bills, higher heating costs and higher prices at the gas pump," CEMA president Chris Herb said in a statement.

"This is a feel-good policy with real world consequences. It would do nothing to change the climate, but it would do real harm to working families, seniors and small businesses," Herb said.

State Rep. Steve Winter, a Democrat who co-sponsored last year's House bill, said fossil fuel companies can afford to bear the costs.

"I don't think Connecticut taxpayers should buy into that argument," Winter said.

"Those huge multinational and national companies are getting revenues from around the world and around the country and they won't be forcing all of those costs back onto Connecticut residents and taxpayers. They'll be distributing those costs throughout all of their operations."

Sena Wazer, megaphone in hand, leads the crowd down to the Legislative Office Building to engage in a letter writing campaign.

A push this legislative session

Affordability is a "critical concern and will remain a north star," during any discussions on creating a climate superfund this legislative session, said State Rep. John-Michael Parker, Democratic co-chair of the state's environment committee.

He said the House plans to take up a bill on the topic during the upcoming legislative session kicking off Feb. 4.

But he acknowledged the scale of the legislation and lobbying power of fossil fuel companies could make passing it difficult. A similar measure died in the state legislature last year.

"It's a very heavy lift and often bills that are a heavy lift like this take multiple years," he said. "The most important thing to me this session is that we're continuing the conversation."