Representative Policy Board

Land Use Committee

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority

**Meeting Location*: Meet at gate on south side of Route 42, Bethany (Stretch of Rte. 42 (Cheshire Rd.) between Rte. 69 and Candee Rd. About .3 miles from intersection of Rte. 69 and .4 miles from the intersection with Candee Rd. about ¼ mile down the woods road. The area will be flagged.

AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, May 13, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – April 8, 2026 regular meeting and April 16, 2026 special meeting
3. Land Grant Update: Josh Tracy
4. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
5. Other land items
6. Next regular meeting Wednesday, June 10, 2026
7. Adjourn

*This is an in-person meeting. In the event of rain *ONLY*, the meeting will be held at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut. To view meeting documents, please visit https://tinyurl.com/3ffzccnu. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email at jslubowski@rwater.com.

SAFETY MOMENT

Tap Into Safety

Regional Water Authority

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 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

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 8, 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, April 8, 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), B. Eitzer(R), G. Malloy, and J. Mowat Young

RPB: R. Harvey, N. Campbell(R), C. Havrda(R), S. Iacuone(R), C. Mancini(R)

Authority: T. Cort(R) and M. Ricozzi(R)

Management: J. Triana and N. Smith

Staff: J. Slubowski

Chair Levine called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The Committee held a moment of silence in remembrance of Joseph A. Oslander.

Chair Levine reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

On motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its March 11, 2026 regular meeting.

At 5:36 p.m., Ms. Young entered the meeting.

Ms. Smith, the RWA's Natural Resources Analyst, provided an update of the 2025 Controlled Archery Deer Hunt which covered 4,327 acres across four RWA owned properties. She stated that the program, which began in 2009, was originated to reduce deer density, promote forest regeneration, and control erosion and the growth of invasive species.

Ms. Smith reported that the 2025 season included 246 applications, with 182 participants engaging in 10 days of scouting and 30 days of hunting, resulting in a harvest of 27 deer. North Branford had the highest harvest with 19 deer, followed by Prospect (6), Bethany (1), and Seymour/Ansonia (1).

Historical data shows a decline in total harvest numbers, which could be the result of a dry summer and/or acorn availability. Surveys collected showed an 88% return rate, with hunters logging a total of 5,616.25 hours across all properties. At the end of the season, hunters expressed gratitude for the opportunity, and no accidents or negative publicity were reported.

Committee members discussed risk, insurance, deer population studies, and participant data.

At 6:03 p.m., Ms. Smith withdrew from the meeting.

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

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
March 31	91%	90%	91%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
March 31	4.66	4.57	4.35
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	24.64	34.06	38.30

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

- Killingworth, Abner Lane Rd. (KI 6) – Killingworth Land Trust is still considering the proposal.
- Madison – correspondence with property owner of 14+/- acres.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. – Survey was updated. Public bid went out.

Forestry Update

- First person used rectrac to pay for their firewood permit.
- Corresponded with Chestnut Foundation members to discuss planting chestnuts in forest settings.

Recreation

- Held winter tree identification walk at the LWWTP with 15 attendees.
- Ordered two new boats for the fishing program.
- Received emails commenting on the Sugarloaf recreation area as requested in the newsletter.
- Met with Woodbridge Trail Master to discuss trails across our property.
- Three people were offered recreation positions and two accepted and followed through to orientation.
- Permit requests for two bass tournaments at Lake Saltonstall were submitted to DEEP.

	March		February	
	2026	2025	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,870	4,842	4,811	4,730

Special Activity Permits

- Hamden Fire Department (Chief Shelly Carter) – ice water rescue training refresher, Clark's Pond (3/16/26 thru 3/19/26).
- New Haven Bird Club (Patrick T. Leahy) – Maintain and monitor bluebird nesting boxes on 7 sites – Downes Road, Bethany, adjacent to Lake Bethany property and field below Lake Dawson dam, Woodbridge, farm field on Sperry Road and Lake Chamberlain below the dam, Lake Watrous and other properties – (3/12/2026 – 12/31/2026).
- Connecticut State Police K9 Unit (Mr. Ryan Cloukey and designees)-training K9 teams in the discipline of tracking, Lake Gaillard, (3/13/2026 – 3/13/2027).
- Connecticut Butterfly Association (Tom Kelly)-observation of area for West Virginia White (Pieris Virgenienis) butterfly, Reeds Gap Road, North Branford, (4/1/2026 – 5/1/2026).

- Connecticut Butterfly Association (Tom Kelly)-observation within Atlantic White Cedar Swamp, Cedar Swamp Road, Madison, (5/1/2026 – 6/1/2026).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - Madison, 752 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Contacted owner to check the property line.
  - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Murtha sent another email to the City Council Administrator. City staff replied that they would review the draft.
  - Seymour, EMS equipment at SWF (SE 1) – Executed new agreement with the Town for emergency radio equipment at the wellfield.
  - East Haven, Barberry Rd. fields (EH 9, 10, 11, & 13) – Met with more GreenVest staff about other possible projects to work on. GV installed the monitoring wells at Barberry Rd. Replied to question from abutter about the project.
  - North Branford, 217 Forest Rd. (NB 17) – Sent termination of license agreement to owners since they were selling the property.
  - North Branford, 171 Beech St. (NB 4A) – Abutter moved his truck to his property after being notified.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	1.2 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	1.2 acres

- Land Use Plan – LUP update was determined to be complete by the LUC and forwarded to the full RPB. RPB set the date of the public hearing. Notifications were sent to the papers, town clerks, and interested groups.
- Branford, 325 East Main St. easement – Executed the easement amendment and sent to the owners.
- Deer hunt – Lottery application forms were sent to prospective hunters for the 2026 season.
- Bethany, Green Haven/Rocky Corner development – Reviewed and commented on draft easement and survey. Met with representative of Sunwood Development to discuss the survey.
- New Haven, Sachem St. easement – Yale staff supplied a draft easement with their markups at the end of the month.
- Bethany, Downs Rd. status – Researched question about the status of Downs Rd. in Bethany for Engineering. After the NHWC constructed the new road, the town was responsible for maintenance, including the culvert.
- Forest fire tabletop exercise – Participated in tabletop exercise considering a forest fire on the Saltonstall ridge.
- Boundaries – Checked and remarked boundaries in Madison and North Branford.

Committee members commented on the importance of long-term investment in trail maintenance.

Chair Levine noted the following upcoming meetings:

a. Monday, April 13, 2026 at 5:00 p.m., hybrid *(Finance Committee regular meeting - review of FY 2027 Budget)*

b. Thursday, April 16, 2026 at 5:00 p.m., hybrid *(Jt. Special meeting LUC/Consumer Affairs Committee - review FY 2027 Budget)*

The next regular meeting is Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. The meeting will take place at a site location to be determined, and the committee will meet with RWA interns to receive an update on a land restoration grant.

At 6:30 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Eitzer and seconded by Mr. Malloy, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

_____
Mark Levine, Chair

(R) – Attended remotely.

Representative Policy Board
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District

Consumer Affairs Committee
Land Use Committee
Special Joint Meeting

April 16, 2026

Minutes

A special 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 Thursday, April 16, 2026 at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut and via remote access.

CAC Members present: N. Campbell, D. Allard(R), C. Havrda, M. Levine(R), G. Malloy, and B. Nesteriak(R)

LUC Members present: M. Levine(R), P. Betkoski(R), B. Eitzer(R), G. Malloy, and J. Mowat Young

CAC and LUC Members absent: P. DeSantis, S. Mongillo and R. Smith

RPB: R. Harvey(R), S. Iacuone(R), and C. Mancini(R)

Authority: D. Borowy(R) and C. LaMarr

RWA: S. Lakshminarayanan, R. Kowalski, P. Singh, V. Benni, J. Hill(R), and C. DelVecchio

Office of Consumer Affairs: Attorney Donofrio ("OCA")

RPB Staff: J. Slubowski

Ms. Campbell, RPB Consumer Affairs Committee chair, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. She reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

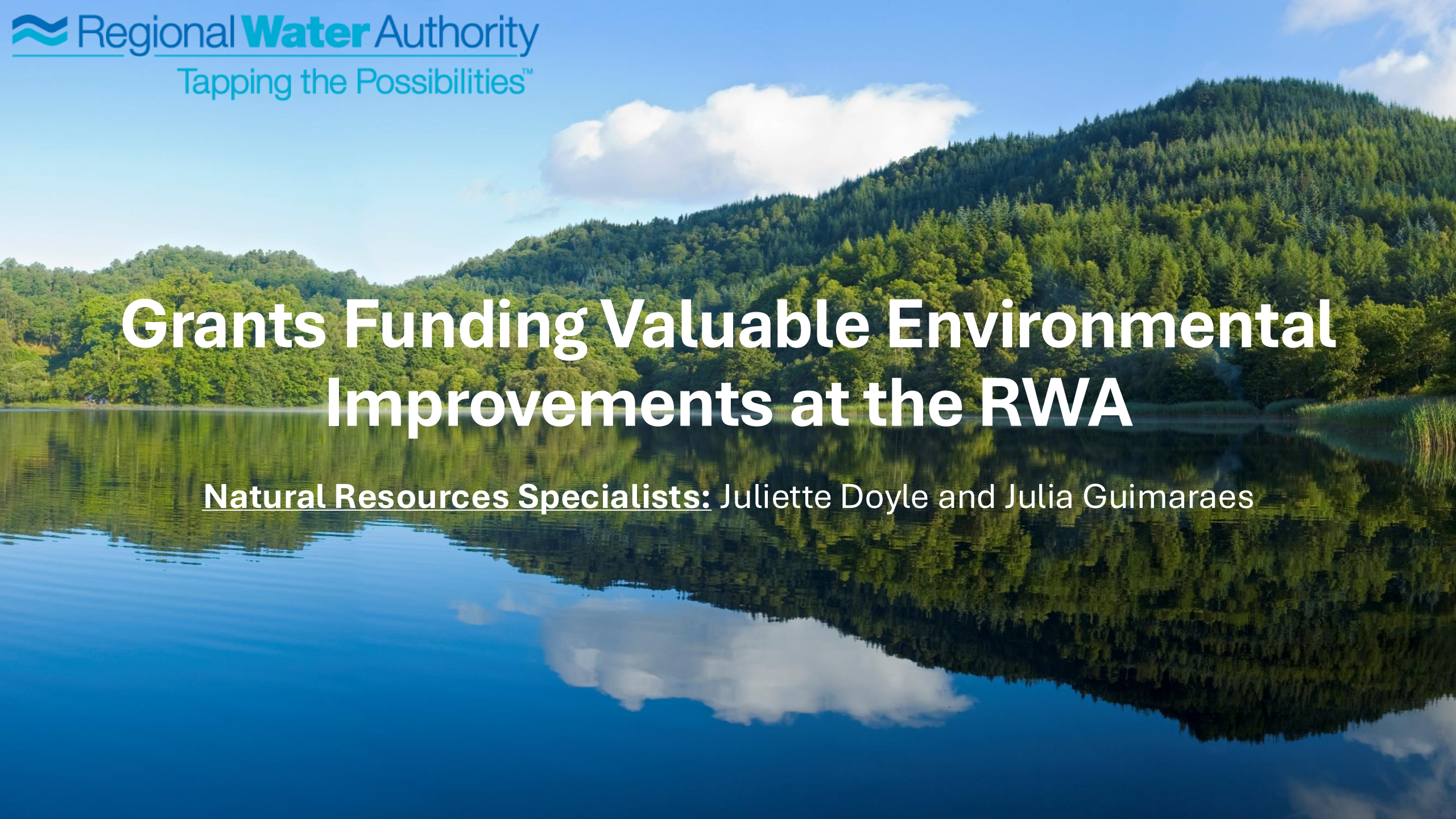
At 5:01 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Ms. Young, the Committee voted to go into executive session pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200(6)(E) to discuss matters covered by Section 1-210(b)(5)(B), pertaining to commercial and financial information. Present in executive session were CAC and LUC Committee members, RPB, Authority, RWA, OCA, and RPB staff.

At 6:29 p.m., the Committee came out of executive session. No votes were taken in, or as a result of executive session and the Committee meeting adjourned.

_____
Naomi Campbell, CAC Chair

_____
Mark Levine, LUC Chair

(R) = Attended remotely.

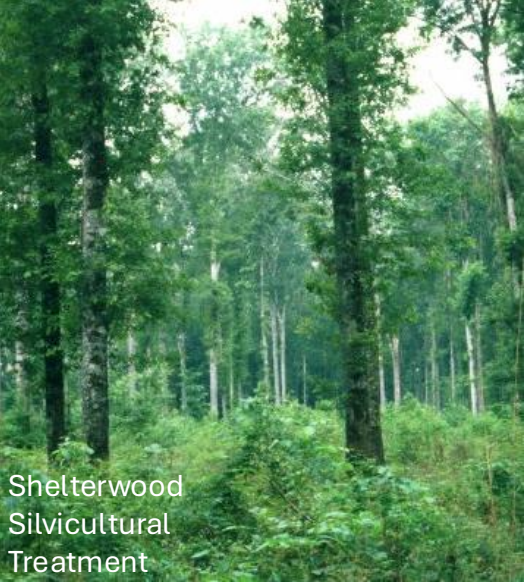


Grants Funding Valuable Environmental Improvements at the RWA

Natural Resources Specialists: Juliette Doyle and Julia Guimaraes

Overview and Goals of Grant-Funded Work

- Completing large-scale forest management at a **lower cost/acre**
- Addressing forested watershed health improves *water quality*, *forest ecology*, and *bird and animal habitat*
- 2 grants: **LSR** and **AMP**


Shelterwood Silvicultural Treatment


Little Brown Bat


Japanese Stiltgrass


Tree of Heaven


Common Mugwort

Landscape-Scale Restoration (LSR) Grant

"A Connecticut Landscape Restoration in Core Forest Areas for an Important Bat Hibernaculum"

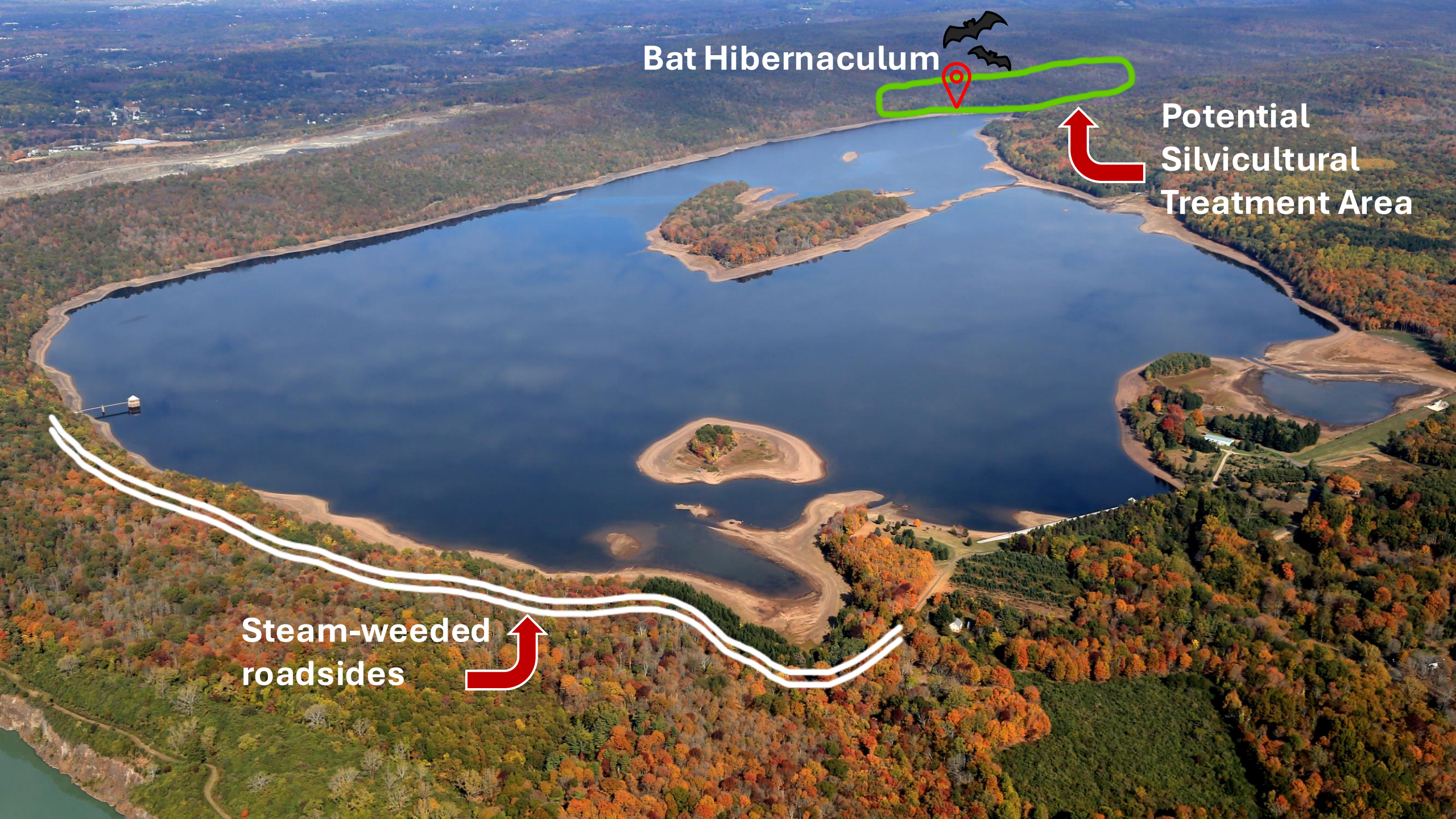
- Funded by USDA Forest Service
- Focusing on 7,000 acre forest around **Lake Gaillard**
  - Hosts an important bat hibernaculum for 3 species: Little Brown, Northern Long-Eared, and Tri-Colored
- **3-pronged approach**
  1. Invasive Plant Control (IPC)
  2. Bat surveys **done by DEEP Bat Program staff (separate federal funding)**
  3. Silvicultural treatments for bat foraging habitat
- Grant funding = **$180,000** ($60,000 per year over next 3 years)
  - Allows for additional 5-10 acres to be managed every year
  - Supports invasive plant control operations
    - Native plants support more insect biomass critical for bat population health
- **Our goal**: manage **100** acres of forest land through patch cuts/thinning for wildlife habitat, and treat **450** acres of forest land to control invasive plant species

Invasive Plant Control (IPC)

- Using Weedtechnic's Satusteam™ steamweeder
- 250°F saturated steam burns herbaceous invasive plants
- Longer lasting control than mechanical treatment, AND reduces herbicide use near important reservoirs and tributaries

The LSR grant funded the $40,000 steamweeder outright! (no cost to the RWA)

during

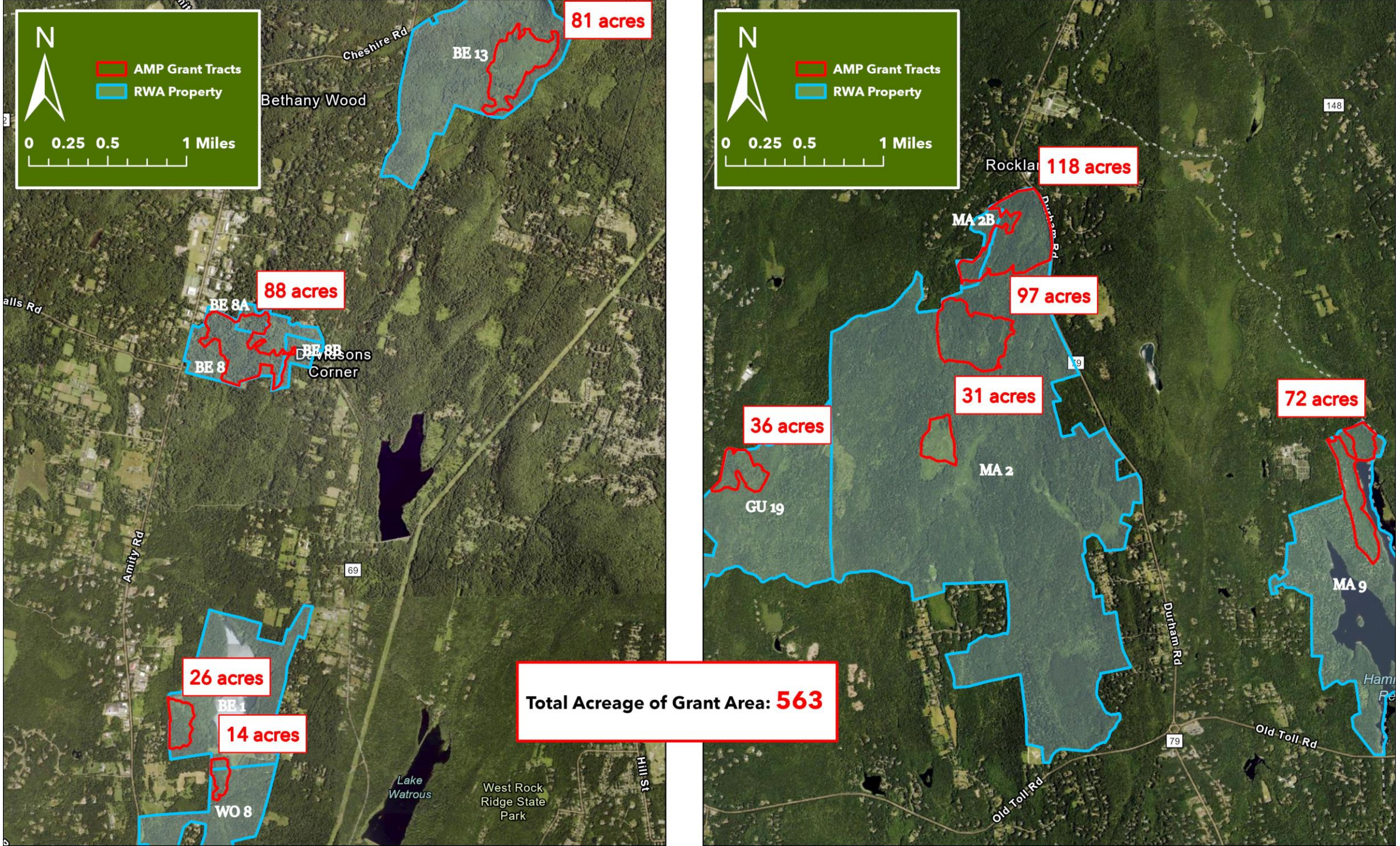

Bat Hibernaculum
Potential Silvicultural Treatment Area
Steam-weeded roadsides

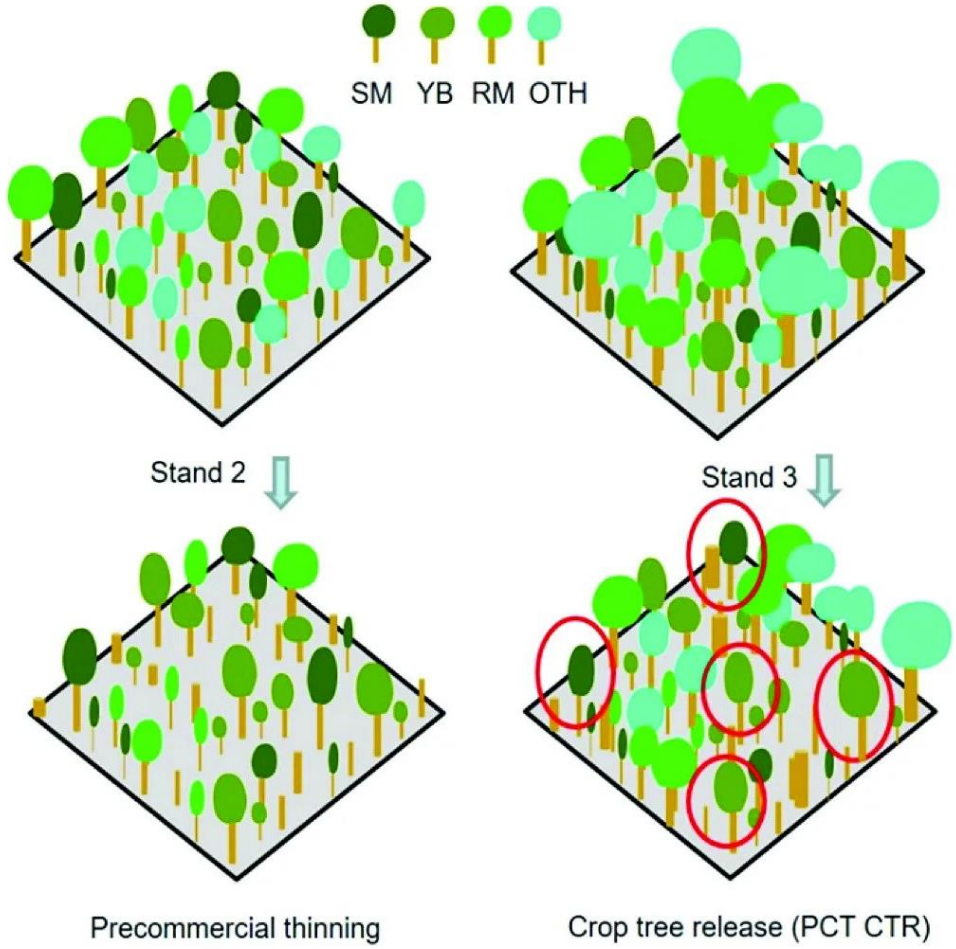
Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) Grant

- Funded by the USDA through New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF)
  - They want commercial landowners with > 5,000 acres under management to enhance timber productivity/forest health on their land
- **Cost Calculator:** for 511 acres @ $1,002.15 / acre = **$512,098.65**
  - Includes office planning, pre-practice inventory, implementing, post practice inventory
- Grant funding = **$358,468.60**
  - NEFF covers 70% of funds
  - RWA pays **$153,630.05** for foresters/techs/contractors
- **Our Goal:** improve forest ecosystem health and timber productivity for high water quality


White Oak


Sugar Maple


N
AMP Grant Tracts
RWA Property
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
81 acres
BE 13
Cheshire Rd
Bethany Wood
88 acres
BE 8A
BE 8B
BE 8
Davidsons Corner
Amity Rd
69
26 acres
BE 1
14 acres
WO 8
Lake Watrous
West Rock Ridge State Park
Hill St
Total Acreage of Grant Area: 563
N
AMP Grant Tracts
RWA Property
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
148
118 acres
MA 2B
Durham Rd
97 acres
79
31 acres
36 acres
MA 2
GU 19
72 acres
MA 9
Durham Rd
Old Toll Rd
79
Old Toll Rd



Crop Tree Release

- **Timber stand improvement** through pre-commercial thinning
  - **What?** In RWA's mixed hardwood forests, we favor a species composition that improves growth rates and future forest health
  - **Why?** Clearing smaller trees that grow around desirable species (i.e. oak, sugar maple) frees up canopy space and allows the desirable trees to grow larger
  - **How?** Pre-commercial thinning through targeted herbicide use (**hack & squirt/drill & fill**) = manual treatment without logging equipment
- **Restrictions**
  - Time constraint: 18 months to complete grant work
  - Migratory birds, bats: limited allowable cutting periods
    - Targeted herbicide preferable for wildlife protection!

Key Takeaways

- Grants such as LSR and AMP decrease the cost of labor to get valuable environmental work completed
  - From LSR: **$180,000**
  - From AMP: **$512,098.65**
- Positive changes to RWA's forests are harder to see in the short-term: we need to think about the long-term benefits that healthier forests will have on water quality
  - Changes that seem small have large downstream effects on RWA's water!

Regional Water Authority
Tapping the Possibilities™

May 13, 2026
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
April 30	90%	92%	94%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
April 30	2.10	2.76	4.24
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 – 4/30/26)	26.74	36.82	42.54

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

- Killingworth, Abner Lane Rd. (KI 6) – Submitted information to DEEP for them to assess the property and determine their potential interest in it.
- Madison – correspondence with property owner of 14+/- acres.
- Durham – correspondence with property owner of 6+/- acres.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9) – Bids due on May 4.
- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Reviewed updated plans for the house. Said that they could keep the garage up while working on the house, but would have to remove it afterwards to comply with impervious square footage requirement.

Forestry Update

- Met representatives of the Chestnut Foundation to discuss their planting seedlings in and around our timber sales.
- Organized tree planting events at Branford, Seymour, West Haven, and North Branford. Trained and supervised 67 volunteers, who donated 175 labor hours to tree planting efforts.

Recreation

- Held tree ID walk at Maltby Lakes with 12 participants.
- Held Forest Management Tour of the planned slash wall timber sale at Lake Saltonstall with 17 participants.
- Trout stocked at Maltby Lakes. About 550 per lake. One tagged trout from 2025 was caught by an angler.
- Docks were installed at Lake Saltonstall. Boat rentals began on April 25th.
- Investigated unauthorized trails in the Cedar Swamp area of Madison.

	April		March	
	2026	2025	2025	2024
Permit Holders	5,037	4,974	4,870	4,842

Special Activity Permits

- CT DEEP (Christopher McDowell, Fisheries Biologist)-To assess the fish community via night boat electrofishing at Lake Saltonstall to assess stocked Walleye population on 4/14/26 – 4/30/26 and all species on 5/14/26 – 6/16/26. (4/14/26-6/14/26).
- Madison Land Conservation Trust-(Charles Shafer)-to hike the route unit MA 4A which is the parcel that includes part of Coan's Pond, end of Martleshamhead Road, Rockland, (10/31/26).
- Stephen Trumbo, Ph.D. (Dept. of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, UConn Waterbury) - Continue research on the behavior and ecology of burying beetles.- Off Route 42 (near the Cheshire-Bethany-Prospect line) just east of traffic light at Rt.69-Rt. 42 juncture (5/15/2026-9/30/2026).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
    - Agricultural agreements – Signed amendment to agreement with tenant on Sperry Rd. in Woodbridge to include blueberries.
    - Madison, 752 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Murtha contacted the surveyors and set up a meeting of both in May.
    - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Discussed comments to the draft agreement with Murtha. Murtha will convey our comments to West Haven staff.
    - Prospect, 2 Roaring Brook Rd. (PR 6) – Sent letter to abutter about brush debris on our property.
    - Bethany, Hoadley Rd. (BE 17 & 18) – Sent letter to abutter about a well pipe that was on our property and snaked through the road culvert.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	3.7 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	3.7 acres

- Land Use Plan – Public hearing on the Land Use Plan update was held.
- Bethany, Green Haven/Rocky Corner development – Answered questions from Sunwood Development staff about the sanitary easements that went over the property lines and the abandonment of wells.
- New Haven, Sachem St. easement – Sent comments on Yale's draft easement and met to discuss. Sent emails to Yale and City of New Haven staff about potential discontinuances of Cedar St. and High St.
- Arbor Day events – Coordinated tree plantings in Woodbridge and Orange.
- Killingworth, Kroupa Pond – DEEP sent notification of repairs and monitoring of the dam which is also Rt. 148.
- New Haven, Quinnipiac River crossing – Found files in the vault regarding deeds, easements and contracts for the 36" watermain crossing of the river. No easements were found on the west side of the river in Fair Haven.
- Milford, former BHC interconnection – Researched information on a historic interconnection between the NHWC and BHC systems in Devon and Stratford. The interconnection was only supposed to be temporary to help with a supply deficit in Milford during the early 1930's.

Attachments

- April 8, 2026 - Water conservation works, but climate change is outpacing it: Phoenix, Denver and Las Vegas offer a glimpse of the future – The Conversation
- April 10, 2026 - CT brush fire risk 'high' across state Friday, officials say – NH Register
- April 8, 2026 - State scientists seeing unseasonably high, ‘disconcerting’ tick activity in CT – CT Public Radio
- April 16, 2026 - Ticks are already surging in Connecticut, matching numbers seen in peak months – NH Register
- April 16, 2026 - It’s tick season in New England. Here’s how to stay safe. – New Hampshire Public Radio
- April 20, 2026 - Strict water use rules sweep the nation ahead of summer – USA Today
- April 26, 2026 - Hamden to replace Lake Whitney bridges in ‘serious' condition in $11 million project – NH Register
- April 30, 2026 - This Connecticut forest fire has a surprising goal: saving a rare species – NH Register

Upcoming Agenda Items:
June 2026 – ????

Water conservation works, but climate change is outpacing it: Phoenix, Denver and Las Vegas offer a glimpse of the future

The Conversation (website) - April 8, 2026

When a drought turns into an urban water crisis, a city's first step is often to limit lawn watering and launch a campaign to encourage everyone to conserve. It might raise water-use rates or offer incentives for installing low-flow devices.

While demand management techniques like these have had a lot of success in reducing water use, our new research suggests that they may not be effective enough in the face of climate change.

We looked at three cities in the Colorado River Basin – Phoenix, Las Vegas and Denver – to understand what each could do to increase demand management amid water shortages and how far those methods could go as temperatures rise and the Colorado River's flow weakens.

The results suggest the region needs to be thinking about bigger solutions.

Colorado River states' immediate challenge

The Colorado River provides drinking water to nearly 40 million people and irrigation for over 5.5 million acres of cropland. But it has experienced a significant drop in water availability in recent decades due in part to rising demand for water and a long-running megadrought in the Southwest.

To ensure that water is shared across boundaries, the seven states within the basin agreed to the Colorado River Compact in 1922, setting limits on water withdrawals from the river. Since then, the region has adopted additional rules, agreements and policies, collectively termed the "Law of the River." But despite this compact, which the states are renegotiating in 2026, the basin's water supply is shrinking.

Research shows that the region is likely to experience more intense, frequent droughts that last longer due to climate change, putting the water supplies for farms, people and energy systems at risk.

As researchers who study the impact of climate change on water systems, we wanted to see if demand management techniques could help under these intensifying conditions.

Getting people involved can change attitudes

Many demand management policies are reactive and only go into effect when sources run low.

These reactive policies can be successful during the scarcity period, but there is often a rebound effect: Water consumption can actually increase afterward.

We integrated survey data with a computer model of water availability and demonstrated that there can be long-term benefits to the local water supply if communities encourage positive attitudes toward conservation.

The survey focused on how people think about water conservation and climate change, drawing on a large body of research that shows people who care about the environment often take eco-friendly actions. Building off these ideas, we segmented the population into groups that shared similar views on water conservation and found that a large proportion of residents supported water conservation but weren't actively participating in conservation programs within their communities.

We then used the computer model to explore how changing attitudes, and subsequent conservation behavior, could affect water supplies under climate change.

When participatory demand management works

Our research shows that individual actions, when implemented by a lot of people, can measurably improve water supplies' reliability.

A great example of the benefits of long-term behavioral changes is Las Vegas.

Las Vegas is in many ways viewed as a city of excess; however, since 2002, the city has reduced its per-capita water use by nearly 60%, even as the population grew by more than 50%. It reached these savings through efforts to reduce seasonal irrigation, replace water-intensive landscaping and require new developments to be sustainable, along with the treatment and reuse of wastewater. Today, Las Vegas recycles nearly all of the water used indoors and returns it to Lake Mead.

Phoenix, another desert city, also runs successful conservation programs. These programs focus on converting grass lawns to desert-friendly landscaping and encouraging owners to fix leaks and install smart meters and low-flow devices. These programs led to a 20% reduction in water use over 20 years, while the population grew by about 40%.

Demand management is not always enough

These cities have shown that demand management can work, but there are limits on how much these techniques can do as water supplies dry up.

When we added projections of future climate change to our model, we found that conditions could lead to so little water being available that these demand management methods won't be able to keep up.

In other words, climate change may create situations where water supplies are still severely limited, even after people reduced their consumption by up to 25%.

For example, under a plausible, moderately high emissions scenario, Phoenix's available surface water supply was forecast to drop below the historical average by 2060. Even when we simulated higher participation in conservation programs, there was no noticeable change in the water availability, suggesting that any savings from reducing demand were counteracted by losses from upstream flow reductions. Encouraging people to use less water is a start, but there is a limit to how much people can conserve.

We found similar results in Denver under a moderate emissions scenario and in Las Vegas under a moderately high emissions scenario, indicating that even moderate climate change could lead to extreme scarcity conditions that are not manageable through demand-side changes alone.

What else cities can do

In these cases, it may be necessary to find other creative water sources, such as water reuse, desalination or limiting consumption in other sectors, such as agriculture or energy, to maintain the municipal supply.

These solutions, however, take time and money to implement. Desalination is incredibly expensive. A recently built desalination plant in Carlsbad, California, cost US$1 billion – four times the initial estimate.

Other solutions, such as reducing agricultural water use, require significant buy-in from local farmers and could result in producing less food.

Reducing the water consumed for electricity generation would require significant investment in renewable energy technologies that have lower water requirements than fossil fuels and nuclear energy.

While large-scale solutions like water reuse systems and desalination can be expensive, these costs might be necessary to maintain adequate water supply in the region, because simply encouraging people to use less won't be enough.

CT brush fire risk 'high' across state Friday, officials say

By Liz Hardaway, NH Register - Staff Writer - April 10, 2026

A brush fire on Lamentation Mountain on the Berlin/Meriden line in 2024 burned about 100 acres. All counties in Connecticut are under a "high" brush fire risk on Friday, according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Hearst Connecticut Media

All of Connecticut is at a “high” forest fire danger level again on Friday, according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

“People need to obey local laws regarding open fires, carefully dispose of hot charcoal , and completely extinguish smoking materials,” the agency said on its website.

The high fire risk designation also means any brush-burning permits residents obtained from local authorities no longer are valid if the burning is within 100 feet of woodland or grassland, according to DEEP.

The state is in the midst of its traditional spring fire season, which runs from mid-March through May, according to DEEP. The agency said that, after the snow melts, deciduous trees are bare and the sun heats and dries grass, leaves, twigs and other flammable material found in the forest, which can fuel a quick-spreading fire.

On Wednesday, even though the risk of brush fires was not high, there were two reported brush fires in the state, DEEP data shows. Both were in Litchfield County, data showed: one in Canaan and the other in Kent. The Canaan fire burned about one-tenth of an acre of private land near Under Mountain Road. The Kent fire occurred on two-tenths of an acre of town-owned land near Skiff Mountain Road.

State scientists seeing unseasonably high, ‘disconcerting’ tick activity in CT

Connecticut Public Radio | By Chris Polansky - Published April 8, 2026

Scientists at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station say ticks are off to a fast start this year. “On Monday, we received over 100 tick submissions,” said Dr. Goudarz Molaei, a research scientist and medical entomologist who runs the Experiment Station’s Tick Testing Program. Molaei’s lab receives ticks that were found attached to Connecticut residents and submitted via local health departments, and then tests them for pathogens. The service is free of charge.

“Usually when we receive over 100 tick submissions per day, that indicates that we are at peak tick activity,” he said. “That usually occurs in the months of October and November or in May and June.”

“Despite our expectation, or public expectation, that the past rather cold winter would put some dent on tick populations, we are not seeing that,” Molaei said. “This time of the year, considering this is just the beginning of higher tick activity and we haven't reached the peak, this number is quite disconcerting.”

Molaei said the tick samples are also testing positive for Lyme disease at a higher-than-average rate of 40%.

“We are comparing that 40% to the average prevalence of infection in ticks for the past couple of decades, or longer than that, which is about 32%,” Molaei said. Molaei said the reasons for the upticks in activity and infection rates are complex, but that climate change is playing a role.

“Temperature, humidity, vegetation, habitat type: all of these are changing as the result of climate change,” Molaei said. “We do see the impact of, or influence of, all these factors in tick population, and, further, in the prevalence of infection.”

Molaei said the most common species of tick around the state are black-legged “deer” ticks and American dog ticks, but that invasive lone star ticks, Gulf Coast ticks, and longhorned ticks are also present, particularly in the coastal areas of Fairfield and New Haven counties. “These ticks are capable of transmitting their own suite of pathogens,” Molaei said.

Dr. Jason White, director of the Experiment Station, said Connecticut residents who spend time outdoors should be sure to take precautions. “Using tick repellents when hiking or camping and conducting tick checks remain the best ways to reduce the risk of contracting tick-borne diseases,” White said.

“Connecticut residents are also encouraged to submit ticks they have removed from their bodies to our laboratory for species identification and testing,” he said. “This allows them to make informed decisions concerning diagnosis and treatment in consultation with their healthcare providers.”

Ticks are already surging in Connecticut, matching numbers seen in peak months

Data shows a significant increase in tick submissions from Connecticut residents and healthcare facilities over the past 15 years.

By Annie Xia, - NH Register April 16, 2026

During a brief visit to Bridgeport in 2022, scientist Goudarz Molaei left with 800 ticks attached to his coveralls.

Dr. Molaei, who runs the state's tick-testing program, sought out the ticks on purpose. Thousands of people in Connecticut, however, find themselves unintentionally attracting ticks each year. This April, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station received over 150 tick submissions from residents and healthcare professionals — matching numbers normally seen during the peak spring months of May and June.

Where ticks have been reported.

"I don't remember pulling off any ticks," said Dr. Megan Linske, speaking about having grown up playing in the woods of southern Connecticut several decades ago. She now supervises the state's Active Tick Surveillance Program. "Nowadays, I feel like people pick them up just walking to their mailbox."

The tick population has increased for various reasons, Linske said. Warmer temperatures play a role, as does the abundance of hosts like mice and deer. While ticks are often affiliated with wooded areas and tall grasses, they have also been found to thrive in places with fewer plants such as Connecticut's coast.

In addition to seeing more ticks, new tick species have appeared over the past decade that weren't previously observed in Connecticut. One of them — the lone star tick — is associated with people developing alpha-gal syndrome, a food allergy that causes allergic reactions to red meat.

The number of reported ticks has increased in Connecticut over the past decade

Not all ticks are infected, and even infected ticks won't sicken humans immediately. Ticks that carry pathogens generally need to be attached to the body for 24 to 48 hours before transmitting diseases like Lyme disease. Precautions against ticks include conducting thorough tick checks, using tick repellant and tucking pant legs into socks to minimize exposed skin.

If any ticks are found on the body, Molaei advises Connecticut residents to submit the arachnids to the state's Tick Testing Lab or save them at home. If a person or a pet develops symptoms after being bitten, health care providers may want information about when the tick was found and the species.

For several decades, Connecticut has experimented with strategies to manage tick populations, from spraying pesticides in residential backyards to treating animals with anti-tick chemicals.

But in her 14 years of studying the parasite, Linske still has one unanswered question.

"People are like, 'Oh, well, they've got to be a food source or something,'" Linske said. "'Like, if we got rid of all the ticks, there'd be some kind of ecological repercussion, right?' I have yet to figure out what that ecological repercussion would be."

It’s tick season in New England. Here’s how to stay safe.

New Hampshire Public Radio | By Mara Hoplamazian - Published April 16, 2026

Shyloh Favreau is known as the tick person among his friends. And in the last couple of weeks, the calls have started coming in.

“It can be a really stressful moment when you realize you've been bitten by a tick,” he said. “The most important step, if you find a tick on you, is to remove it safely and as soon as possible.”

Favreau manages diagnostic services at the University of New Hampshire Extension. He said the lab, which tests ticks for pathogens, has seen a significant increase in submissions since the beginning of April – a normal uptick for this time of year.

“Tick season is well underway in New Hampshire,” he said. “Ticks become active when temperatures rise above 40 degrees.”

As tick season gets underway, preventing bites becomes more important. Ticks don’t jump or fly – they crawl upwards. So wearing long pants, tucking pant legs into socks, and wearing light-colored clothing can help protect skin and make ticks more visible.

Narrow-nosed tweezers are good for removing ticks. And once you’ve removed a tick, Favreau said, it’s important to clean the bite with soap, water, and rubbing alcohol.

If you want to test the tick, put it in a Ziplock bag and send it to a lab. The UNH Extension tick testing lab and others, like the non-profit BeBop Labs, can test for things like the pathogen that causes Lyme disease, which has increased in New Hampshire over the last forty years.

Kaitlyn Morse directs BeBop labs. She said this time of year, she receives hundreds of ticks every week.

“The most important thing is doing your tick checks…and using the appropriate pesticides on your clothing,” she said.

Blacklegged ticks, which are smaller than dog ticks, can be harder to spot, but they are the predominant carriers of disease, Morse said. Those ticks are about the size of a sesame seed, and young ticks are about the size of a poppy seed.

Research from Dartmouth shows half of adult blacklegged ticks in the Northeast carry the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, according to data going back to 1989.

Strict water use rules sweep the nation ahead of summer

Doyle Rice Jeanine Santucci - USA TODAY - Updated April 20, 2026

A coast-to-coast drought affecting over 60% of the United States has prompted dozens of states and localities to impose water-use restrictions ahead of the summer, limiting lawn watering, car washes and other nonessential uses while urging conservation across homes, businesses, agriculture and data centers.

Dry enough for you?

With drought stretching from coast to coast, water restrictions are already in effect in many states even before the thirsty summer season begins. Indeed, more than 61% of the nation is now in a drought, the highest percentage in nearly four years, according to the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor.

In all, 45 of 50 states are enduring drought, with only Alaska, North Dakota, Michigan, Connecticut and Rhode Island completely drought-free.

At the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center there, staff members are promoting reusing water from sources like humidifiers, leftover tea and water from boiled eggs, the Corpus Christi Caller Times, part of the USA TODAY Network, reported. Staff are hand-watering plants two to three times per week.

One Arizona town is warning its residents could officially run out of water by July, Fox10 reported. Kearny, Arizona, home to about 2,000 people, is asking residents to conserve by 30%, meaning no car washes, watering your lawn or filling your pool. And if possible, shorter showers and fewer laundry days.

As drought conditions persist, cities and states around the country are implementing water restrictions and suggestions, from taking shorter showers to rules on how to wash your car. States impacted by recent drought regulations include Colorado, the Carolinas, Virginia, Texas, Florida and others.

Towns across the nation add rules on watering lawns, washing cars

In the Carolinas, people are learning to live with new water restrictions as drought conditions worsen, WSOC-TV Charlotte reports. On April 16, Charlotte Water announced it will implement voluntary restrictions on nonessential water use, such as watering your lawn or washing your car.

WSOC-TV said, "Water companies are asking customers to do their part in response to extreme drought conditions impacting much of the area. With little rain in the forecast and warmer temperatures ahead, these restrictions will be in place until further notice."

As severe drought conditions continue to persist across Colorado, many cities and municipalities have declared water restrictions to preserve limited water supplies, Colorado Public Radio said in an online report. Most are at least recommending voluntary restrictions, which generally include limiting outdoor watering, while others have enacted mandatory water restrictions, including fines, such as Denver Water. This comes after the worst snowpack on record ever for the state.

Caroline County, in eastern Virginia, announced April 16 that effective immediately, restrictions would be in place for residents who get their water from the public water system. Residents and businesses will have to use their automatic irrigation systems only on alternating days because simultaneous use has been overloading the county's water storage and treatment capacity.

In Corpus Christi, Texas, one of the communities in the state conserving water, officials implemented stage 3 water restrictions, which are enacted amid "urgent" drought conditions. Residents can't water their lawns – except on designated days every other week using drip irrigation, handheld hose or small bucket. They must also cover their pools when not in use and can only use five gallons of water in buckets to wash their cars.

Sarasota County, Florida, said its enforcement of lawn-watering violations is stepping up as well. The county usually gives warnings, but starting April 17, no warnings will be given before citations are issued.

Drought rules impacting local businesses

In Raleigh, North Carolina, starting on April 20, the city of Raleigh will implement water restrictions for residents and businesses due to an ongoing statewide drought. Raleigh officials said the drought rules will include restaurants serving tap water only upon request. Hotels, motels and other accommodations will ask guests staying more than one night to reuse towels and sheets rather than washing them each day.

How long will restrictions last? "No idea," Raleigh Water Assistant Director Ed Buchan told the News & Observer. "Unless we get some miracle rain in the next couple of weeks, we're going to stay in stage one [restrictions]."

Several Florida communities are requiring water conservation of their residents or businesses. In Sarasota County, aesthetic fountains can run up to only four hours per day. Restaurants are serving water only on request.

Here's how you can help conserve water

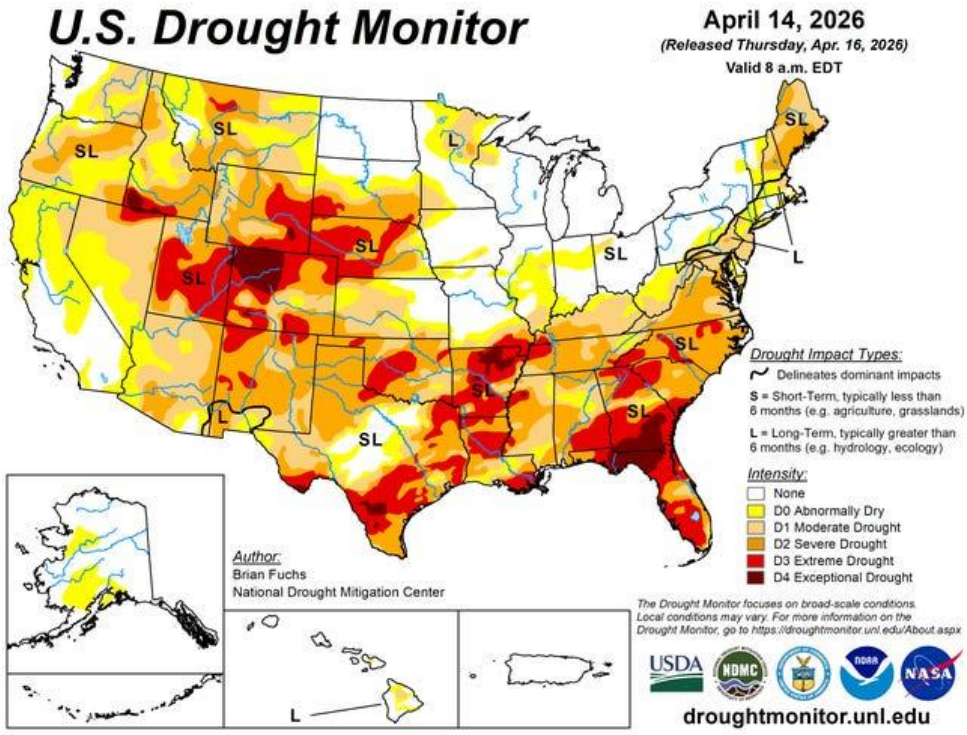
Here is a sampling of some water-saving tips. Find more at Ready.gov:

Before a drought:

- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it. For example, use it to water your indoor plants or garden.
- Fix dripping faucets and check all plumbing for leaks.
- Choose appliances designed for greater efficiency and performance.
- Plant drought-tolerant or native grasses and plants.
- Position your sprinklers to avoid paved areas.
- Cover pools and spas to reduce water evaporation.

During a drought:

- Take short showers instead of baths. Turn on the water only to get wet and lather and then again to rinse off.
- Avoid letting the water run while brushing your teeth, washing your face or shaving.
- Operate clothes washers only when they are fully loaded or set the water level for the size of your load.
- If your lawn does require watering, do so early in the morning or later in the evening, when temperatures are cooler.
- In extreme drought, allow lawns to die in favor of preserving trees and large shrubs.
- Use a commercial car wash that recycles water. If you wash your own car, use a shut-off nozzle that can be adjusted down to a fine spray on your hose.



Farms, AI data centers are among big water users

In Oregon, farmers, ranchers and some communities will face water restrictions this summer, experts told the Capital Press. “This is going to be a much shorter irrigation season with the water that’s available,” said Matt Warbritton, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service supervisory hydrologist.

He added the stage was set for more prolonged and severe wildfires.

Larry O’Neill, Oregon state climatologist, told the Capital Press that grim conditions could serve as a call to action for policymakers, especially if economic impacts stack up. “This isn’t a garden variety dry year,” added O’Neill. “Basically, this is a test of our resiliency to a change in the snowpack and water supply.”

Drought can have a devastating impact on agriculture, which uses nearly half of all U.S. freshwater "withdrawals" – about 47% – mostly for crop irrigation, making it the nation's largest water-using sector, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Meanwhile, high tech data centers are also a big source of water use. Estimates show a single large data center can use up to a billion gallons of water a year, or as much as 2.7 million gallons a day during peak summer heat, according to WRAL-News in Raleigh.

"That's similar to the daily use of some entire towns and enough water to fill hundreds of swimming pools," WRAL said.

Artificial intelligence data centers are occasionally bound to local water restrictions, but in much of the country, they run with few limits even during water shortages. This is because most water and drought rules were enacted prior to the demand for AI-scale cooling.

Hamden to replace Lake Whitney bridges in 'serious' condition in $11 million project

By Brian Zahn, Staff Writer - April 26, 2026 – NH Register

HAMDEN — Two deteriorating bridges over Lake Whitney — rated by the state as being in "serious" condition — need to be replaced.

According to town documents, the total estimated cost of the project is $11.1 million, but state funds will cover the costs of construction while the town will fund the design phase.

The selected engineering consultant, who will oversee a public input and design process, received unanimous approval from the Legislative Council's Engineering, Development and Municipal Planning Committee but still needs a final OK from the full council on Monday.

As part of the $887,883 contract, SLR International Corporation would manage a public engagement process and subsequent design work for the replacement of the Waite Street and Mather Street bridges, which intersect over Lake Whitney

"The things that we valued were the community engagement strategies, designs that align with the town's Complete Streets Policy and environmentally-sensitive design practices," said Town Engineer Stephen White, who noted he recused himself from the bidding process because of a conflict of interest.

White said the town will take on no new debt to fund the contract.

Eileen O'Neill, a resident of the area, said she participated in a public input session about plans to rebuild the bridges in 2008 and neighbors shared their desire to preserve the area as "an urban-surburban forest area, which actually is a jewel to that part of Hamden and for those neighborhoods, for people to get out into nature."

"The priorities to us were that we have a woonerf-style shared roadway design for walkers, runners, bicyclists, birders, photographers," she said, referencing a Dutch design concept in which urban spaces are accessible to pedestrians that inspired the design for the planned redesign of nearby New Haven's Long Wharf Park.

Council member Sarah Gallagher, D-4, asked about whether there are plans to preserve the wildlife in the area as well as the drinking water collected by the Regional Water Authority.

"I really want to see with this project, we don't end up with a mega bridge that changes the feel of the area," she said, adding that she heard from many residents that during the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic that they took advantage of the bridges to experience nature locally.

White said he imagines the bridges featuring a mixed-use recreational path, but the final project will be dependent upon what the design team develops.

White said the expected timeline for construction, once that phase begins, would be two to three years. According to documents submitted to the council, Waite and Mather Streets will be closed during their respective bridge replacement projects, but only one roadway will be closed at a time.

This Connecticut forest fire has a surprising goal: saving a rare species

By Austin Mirmina, Staff Writer - April 30, 2026 – NH Register

VOLUNTOWN — Waist-high flames crept across a 1-acre clearing Wednesday morning in Pachaug State Forest, steadily chewing through sticks, leaves and other woody debris in their path.The fire was set by state forestry crews to clear leftover scraps from a recent timber harvest and create the kinds of bare conditions that pitch pine – a once-common tree species in Connecticut that officials say is now rare and at-risk – needs to regenerate.

By torching the forest floor, crews aimed to prepare the soil for pitch pine seeds to take hold and eventually grow, while also knocking back white pine and other trees that compete with pitch pine in Connecticut's largest state forest.

"We're hoping to prep the site in the best way we possibly can to get as much pitch pine as we can," said Michelle Auclair, a forester with the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, which conducted the controlled burn.

Pitch pine, recognizable for its chunky, alligator-like bark, used to be more common in Connecticut, thriving on sandy soils across the southeastern part of the state and along the coast, said Olney Knight, a DEEP fire control officer who oversee Wednesday's operation.

But housing and development have displaced much of that habitat because those same sandy areas are ideal for building, Auclair noted. Today, pitch pine forests are considered one of Connecticut's 13 imperiled ecosystems.

The land where Bradley International Airport now sits in Windsor Locks was once abundant with pitch pine, she said, adding that pockets of the species can still be found nearby.

Auclair said Cape Cod in Massachusetts "has a lot of pitch pine as well, but here in Connecticut, we only have a few strongholds left, and Pachaug is one of those places."

Pitch pine relies on disturbance to survive, Auclair said. Its cones are sealed with pitch and need high heat – often from fire – to open and release seeds. Without that, and without major weather events such as storms or wildfires to "take out the competition," the species struggles to regenerate.

"One of the reasons why we're so passionate about perpetuating this system in particular is because it's not able to self-perpetuate," Auclair said. "Left under normal circumstances, the white pine will outcompete the pitch pine and (Pachaug) will just transition to being a predominantly white pine forest."

The effort to restore pitch pine actually began last year, when a contractor hired by DEEP cleared about 20 acres of white pine and other competing species. The cut trees were chipped, sent to a plant and turned into a renewable energy source, officials said.

On Wednesday, 15 members of DEEP's forestry division returned to burn the remaining "slash" – branches, limbs and other woody debris left behind from the logging work.

Wearing helmets and sunglasses – but no masks – a crew of five or six workers used drip torches to ignite the edge of the 1-acre plot. Working in pairs, they walked the perimeter, marked by a bulldozed dirt path, and set two parallel lines of fire around the site. Then they lit another line farther inside the clearing to guide the flames inward. "You can steer fire with fire," said Steve Gramola, who was part of the ignitions team and also works as a DEEP carpenter.

As the burn intensified, the flames climbed several feet high, spreading evenly across the site. Thick plumes of smoke rose above the still-standing trees. At one point, a narrow column of flame – a "fire whirl," according to the burn leader Rich Schenk – twisted above the blaze. He said it was caused by uneven heating at the surface. Nearby, other crew members stood ready with hoses in case they needed to put out spot fires that jumped the bulldozed line. One worker was stationed in a tracked utility vehicle equipped with a water tank. Knight described the operation as a carefully coordinated "dance." After about an hour, the flames died down, leaving behind a heavily charred, smoldering forest floor. Patches of green remained where the fire burned less intensely, forming what Knight described as a "burn mosaic."

The burn was something of a test for the forestry team, which is more accustomed to igniting fast-moving fuels like grasses than the heavier material found in Pachaug. All in all, the fire burned better than crews expected.

The operation was one of several prescribed burns DEEP has done across the state this spring – from inland sand barrens in Windsor to oak savannas in Lyme and dry grassland in Mansfield.

DEEP officials say fire is an important habitat management tool used to eliminate invasive species, open up areas for rare habitats and remove excess fuel that can contribute to larger wildfires.

Wednesday's burn initially was supposed to cover all 20 acres of cleared forest, but officials scaled it back, saying a burn of the whole area would take too much time and wasn't necessary. Tiny pitch pine seedlings could begin sprouting as soon as this summer. "This is going to be a pretty neat ecosystem," Knight said.