

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

Location: Meet at Genesee Recreation Area located at 1825 Durham Road (Rt. 79) in Madison. (2.6 miles north of the intersection with Rt. 80 or about 2.9 miles south of the intersection with Rt. 148)

AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, June 10, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – May 13, 2026 meeting
3. Madison Slash Wall/CAES Experimental Area Update: J. Tracy and Casey Cordes
4. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
5. Other land items
6. Notification of Committee Chair Election in July
7. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, July 8, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.
8. Adjourn

Members of the public may attend the meeting in person. In the event of rain, the meeting will be held in person at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven. To view meeting documents, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/3ffzccnu>. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email to jslubowski@rwater.com.

SAFETY MOMENT

SUSTAINABLE GASTRONOMY DAY

June 18th has been designated by the United Nations General Assembly as Sustainable Gastronomy Day.

What is Sustainable Gastronomy?

Gastronomy is sometimes called the art of food. It can also refer to a style of cooking from a particular region. In other words, gastronomy often refers to local food and cuisine. Sustainability is the idea that something (e.g. agriculture, fishing or even preparation of food) is done in a way that is not wasteful of our natural resources and can be continued into the future without being detrimental to our environment or health.

Sustainable gastronomy, therefore, means cuisine that takes into account where the ingredients are from, how the food is grown and how it gets to our markets and eventually to our plates.

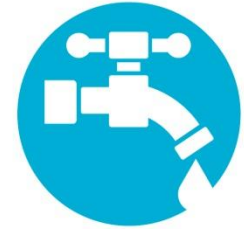
What can we do?

- Help reduce malnutrition in all its forms, cut food waste and improve nutrition
- Make *#NotWasting* food a personal resolution
- Promote green culture diets
- Promote clean energy for local restaurants
- Raise public awareness



Service – **Teamwork** – Accountability – **Respect** – Safety

Tap Into
Safety



Regional Water Authority

 Regional Water Authority

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
May 13, 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, May 13, 2026, at Route 42, Bethany, Connecticut. Chair Levine presided.

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

Committee Members Absent: P. DeSantis

RPB: R. Harvey, T. Clifford, and C. Havrda

Authority: M. Ricozzi

Management: V. Benni, J. Hill, J. Triana, J. Tracy, C. Cordes, J. Doyle, and J. Guimaraes

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. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its April 8, 2026 regular meeting and April 16, 2026 special meeting.

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (“RWA”) management provided an update on two USDA grants acquired by the RWA in recent years , which included:

1. The LSR Grant, which is funded by the USDA Forest Service, will provide funding of \$180,000 over the next three years and will be used for activities across approximately 7,000 acres surrounding Lake Gaillard. The grant will enable the RWA to manage an additional 5–10 acres annually, contributing toward its long-term goal of maintaining 100 acres of forest habitat for wildlife and invasive species control without the use of chemical treatments.

In addition, the grant also provides funding for seasonal personnel and the procurement of new equipment over a three-year period, thereby enhancing RWA’s capacity for ongoing land stewardship; and

2. The AMP Grant, which is funded by the USDA through the New England Forestry Foundation, will fund \$358,468, will be designated for the improvement of overall forest health and to enhance timber growth. Management practices include thinning and selective removal of trees to encourage the growth of desirable species. The program employs a combination of hand tools and targeted, environmentally responsible herbicide applications, to ensure safe and effective treatment.

Approximately 70% of project costs are funded through the grant, with the remaining portion covered by the RWA.

RWA’s use of grant funding will have a positive impact on regional environmental quality and ecosystem health. They will contribute to maintaining high water quality, support local wildlife and reduce the spread of invasive plant species by employing practical, science-based management approaches and incorporate modern technologies to effectively protect natural resources and provide benefits to the RWA district.

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
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 –	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
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	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.

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- 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.

There were no other land items to report.

The next regular meeting is Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

At 6:25 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Betkoski, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

Mark Levine, Chair

(R) – Attended remotely.

UNAPPROVED

Master Woodland Manager Program – October 18, 2025

Master Woodland Manager Program
Forest Ecology Field Tour – October 18, 2025
South Central CT Regional Water Authority, North Madison

CT Agricultural Experiment Station
Dept. Environmental Science and Forestry
Elisabeth Ward, Assistant Scientist
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Natural Resources, Forestry Division
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South Central Connecticut
Regional Water Authority
Casey Cordes, Forester II
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Cutting Methods Study – North Madison

A collaboration with:

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (North Madison),
White Memorial Foundation (Morris),
The Nature Conservancy (Bridgewater),
and NRCS-CT.

With financial support from:

Increasing Resiliency in Southern New England Oak (USDA Forest Service and The Forest Stewards Guild)
Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative (USDA Forest Service grant 20-DG-11094200-133)

PROMOTING DIVERSITY

A forest is an ecological system that includes soil, wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and wildlife as well as trees. Ecologically informed forest management promotes the growth of a diversity of trees capable of supporting other species in the ecosystem. This helps cultivate diverse habitats to ensure that varied vegetation and wildlife will endure.

PRESERVING EXISTING SPECIES

Preserving existing species is essential because species that disappear are gone forever. Active forest management helps grow healthy trees able to withstand pests, exotic invasive vegetation, and climate change that can damage or destroy individual trees - or even an entire species. Active management is essential to maintain oak

and aspen as keystone species in our natural landscapes.

PERPETUATING FORESTS

Natural replacement in forest communities is a succession of trees growing to take the place of those that die or are harvested. The way in which trees are harvested helps determine how quickly the forest regenerates and what tree species will thrive over time.

MANAGING WOODLAND PROPERTIES

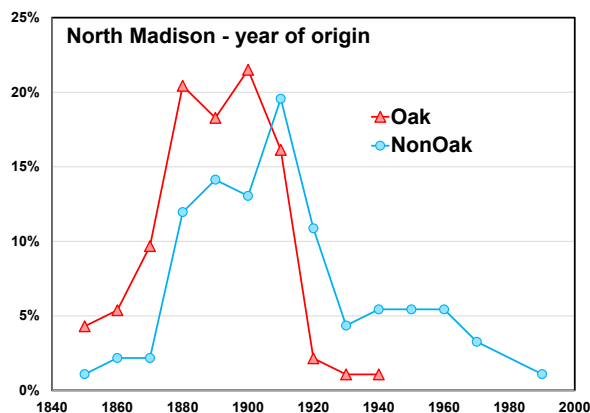
To make informed land management decisions, landowners need information about the trees in their woods and about the effects of different harvesting techniques. Having a range of treatment options available means landowners can choose a technique that meets their own objectives and maintains Connecticut's beautiful landscape, too.

ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

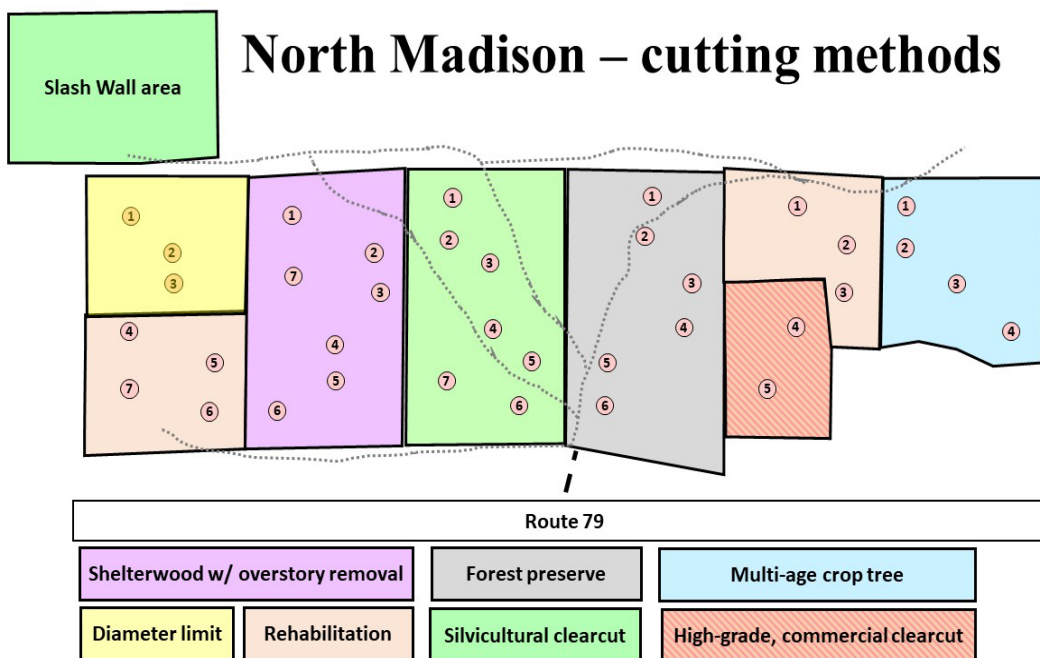
For over 40 years, the collaborative Cutting Methods Study has been an exceptional field laboratory for studying various forestry practices and their effects. Originally designed to compare and contrast the impact of distinct cutting practices on new regeneration, the scope of the research has expanded to changes in stand volume growth, aboveground carbon storage and sequestration, and more recently in a partnership with NRCS-CT – belowground carbon and soil property dynamics. In 2021, a new forestry management practice – slash walls – was established to examine the impact of deer browse.

Dr. George Stephens (CAES) established the study in Bridgewater, Morris, and North Madison in the early 1980s and Dr. Jeffrey S. Ward maintained and monitored the plots during his tenure as CAES forest ecologist. Plot sizes ranged from 4-7 ac for each harvest method. Please note that the diameter limit and high-grading guidelines are not silvicultural treatments, but reflective of harvests common on private forestlands that prioritize resource extraction. All harvests were conducted as part of commercial logging jobs.

These areas provide you with an opportunity to see not just the immediate aftermath of a harvest prescription, but to take a journey through stand development history from recently harvested areas with new seedlings and stumps sprouts, through stands approximately 20 and 40 years old, to mature forests that arose on abandoned farmland ~125 years ago. Take time to not only see the trees, but to appreciate how the shrub and wildflower communities are shaped by forest disturbance, and to listen to how each forest community has its own unique bird and insect sounds.

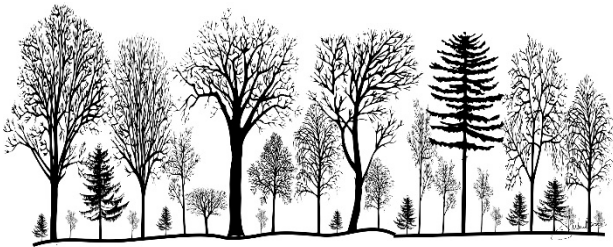


Most oaks originated between 1880-1910 as fields and pastures were abandoned. Other species also came in during this period, but in contrast with oak, have continued to become established through the present.



Note: circled numbers are sample plot locations





Unmanaged forest preserve

This stand was left as an unmanaged forest preserve to provide a standard of comparison against which the size, diversity, and rate of growth in the other plots can be compared.

However, there has been significant disturbance from non-native insects and diseases.

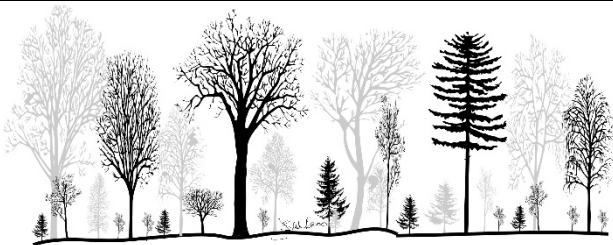
Emerald ash borer killed the ash by 2016 and *L. dispar* (Spongy moth) had killed most oak in the eastern end of the stand by 2018. Beech leaf disease is also likely to kill American beech.

Nature is taking its course unimpeded. As trees die or fall, they are left in the stand.

In the forest preserve, species that can tolerate growing in low sunlight such as maple, birch, and formerly beech are expected to predominate over time.

In woods without excessive deer browse damage, mountain laurel, maple-leaf viburnum, and Christmas fern will thrive.

A forest preserve supports wildlife such as the pileated woodpecker, flying squirrel, and Acadian flycatcher.



Multi-aged crop tree

Multi-aged crop tree management provides a regular source of income by harvesting five large sawtimber trees/acre every 20 years and cutting all poletimber trees (5-11" dbh) for firewood except for 10 new trees/acre that will grow into the future sawtimber.

1984, 55 crop trees per acre (oak, ash, sugar maple) of a range of sizes were left after the harvest. In 2000, five sawtimber trees per acre were harvested and approximately 10 new crop trees per acre were selected. All other trees > 5 inches dbh were harvested. In 2021, harvesting was limited to trees killed by gypsy moth.

The multi-aged crop tree approach leaves large timber trees mixed in with the smaller trees and shrubs, so the stand remains aesthetically pleasing throughout the harvesting cycle.

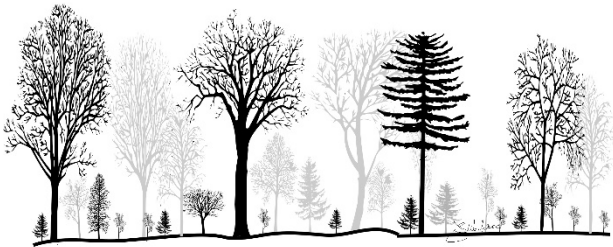
This method potentially creates stands with the greatest diversity. The patches of sun and shade allow more sun-demanding species such as oak and pine to grow intermingled with black birch.

Common shrub species include witchhazel, blueberry, and beaked hazelnut along with white wood aster.

American woodcock and white-breasted nuthatch are two birds characteristically attracted to this type of plot.

This method can produce a variety of long-term outcomes because the owner selects which species will be retained. For example, we have provided growing space for species that benefit wildlife such as shadbush and eastern red cedar.





Shelterwood method

Shelterwood management establishes regeneration with strong root systems, especially important for oak and pine, before exposing them to full sunlight.

First, approximately half of the upper canopy and all of the lower canopy trees are removed, leaving behind healthy and desirable trees that will produce seed. These residuals are removed in one or two cuts every 10 to 15 years, depending on the strength of the regeneration.

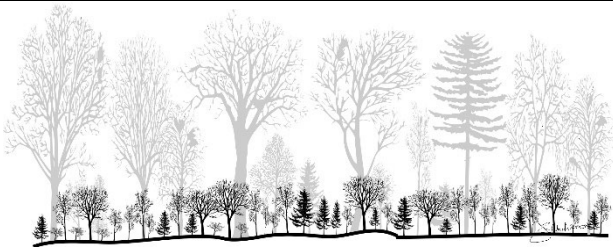
The initial treatment was completed in 1984 and overstory removal completed in 2000.

Trees in this stand are 25 years old.

The initial harvest produced an environment that supported a wide variety of wildlife including red-tailed hawk, Indigo bunting, and rabbits. Plants such as the wild geranium, sedges, and Canada mayflower often thrive in a shelterwood area. This method of harvesting can help maintain more oak in the forest.

A surprising benefit of shelterwood harvests is that the stands continue to sequester carbon and grow lumber at rates equivalent to unmanaged forests.

Species that benefit after the overstory removal phase are similar to those described in the clearcutting section immediately below.



Silvicultural clearcut

A silvicultural clearcut removes all trees with diameter > 2 inches in a single cut to promote the rapid establishment of a new stand. This provides the full sunlight needed by shade intolerant species such as aspen, cherry, tulip poplar and for rapidly growing oak stump sprouts.

All trees > 2 inches dbh were cut after a commercial harvest in 1984 and there has been no subsequent management.

The trees in this stand are 41 years old.

A silvicultural clearcut that removes all trees in a single harvest favors species that grow from dormant seeds in soil (e.g., blackberries, cherry), seeds that blow in the wind from far (aspen, goldenrod) and near (pine, tulip poplar), and species that produce vigorous stump sprouts (oak, red maple). Clearcuts and the overstory removal phase of a shelterwood are essential for our many species that only grow in sunlight including sumacs and raspberries.

Silvicultural clearcutting eventually leads to a forest with a higher proportion of tulip poplar, aspen, and oak.

Wildlife found after in the young forests that develop after a clearcut include Eastern bluebird, New England cottontail, bats, and fall migrants (including forest interior species) that fill up on the abundant seeds and insects before flying south for the winter.





Diameter Limit

Diameter limit cutting is the removal of trees above a specified diameter in a given area with little regard for future stand development. It is usually driven by economic goals and frequently results in a degraded stand.

While the prescription differed from high-grading (below) in that defective trees are removed and only the largest trees are harvested, the practice is not sustainable in our oak forests that have high deer densities for more than a couple of cutting cycles.

All oaks with diameters > 16” (14” for other species) were harvested in 1984. Cull trees were cut or girdled. Practice was repeated in 2000 and on half the stand in 2021. The remaining half will have a resiliency/rehabilitation treatment.

Diameter limit cuttings create smaller openings that do not provide sufficient light and space necessary to regenerate oak and tulip poplar. As a result, the regeneration is primarily of shade-tolerant species such as maple and beech.

Over time, diameter limit harvesting favors the growth of maple, beech, and birch as well as a shrubs and small trees that include hophornbeam, witch hazel, and also marginal wood fern.

This partial cutting practice with intermediate levels of sunlight can often encourage growth of invasive shrub species such as Japanese barberry, burning bush, and buckthorn – especially in areas with high deer densities.

The hooded warbler and red-bellied woodpecker are among the birds frequenting this cutting practice.



High-grading / Commercial clearcut

BEWARE

High-grading (a.k.a. commercial clearcutting) is not forestry, it is product extraction. Only the most profitable trees with commercial value are harvested with little or no consideration for future conditions. The result is a stand with little to no economic value and often low ecosystem services values because the hard mast species (oak, hickory) are eliminated.

All sound trees with diameters > 11” were harvested. Cull trees were not cut or girdled in 1984. In 2000, no trees were cut as volume was too low for a commercial harvest. In 2021, half the stand had same treatment as in 1984, and remaining half had a resiliency/rehabilitation treatment.

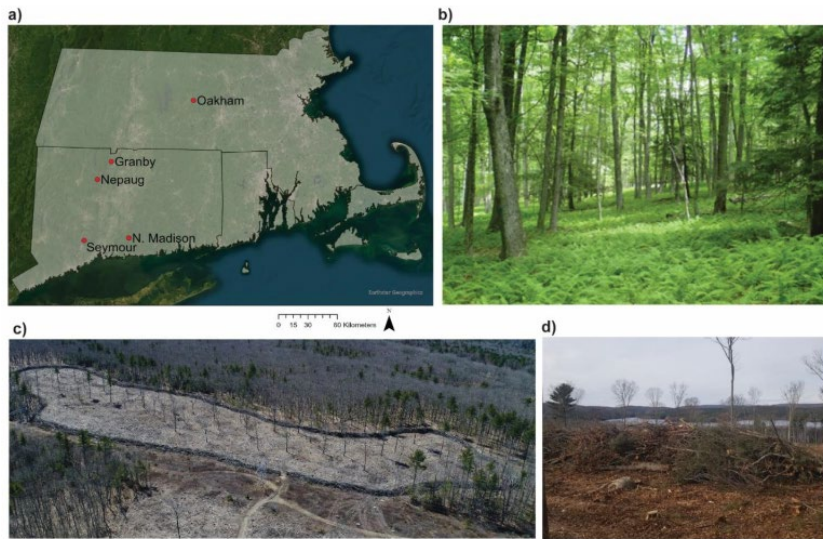
The look of a high-graded stand changes dramatically after the initial harvest. Initially, the stand was exposed to more light when the faster growing and larger oaks and hickories were removed. The smaller, often poor quality trees that remained began to grow rapidly and soon dominated the stand.

What vegetation develops after a high-grade depends on the intensity of the harvest, which in turns depends on the proportion of commercially valuable trees. Species similar to those in a clearcut may be found after a severe harvest, but the benefit is short lived as the residual trees grow rapidly and quickly cast the area back into shade.

As with the diameter limit cuts, non-native invasive species often benefit from high-grading.



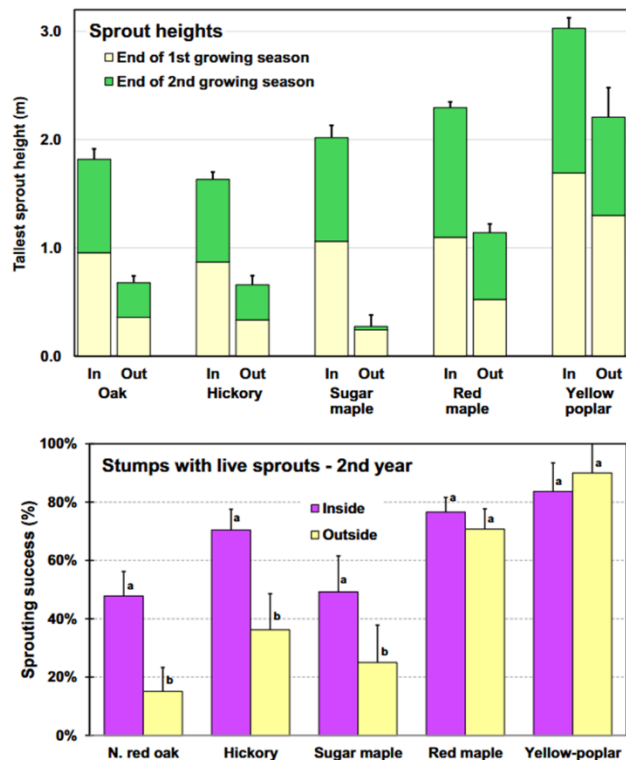
Slash Wall Regeneration Study



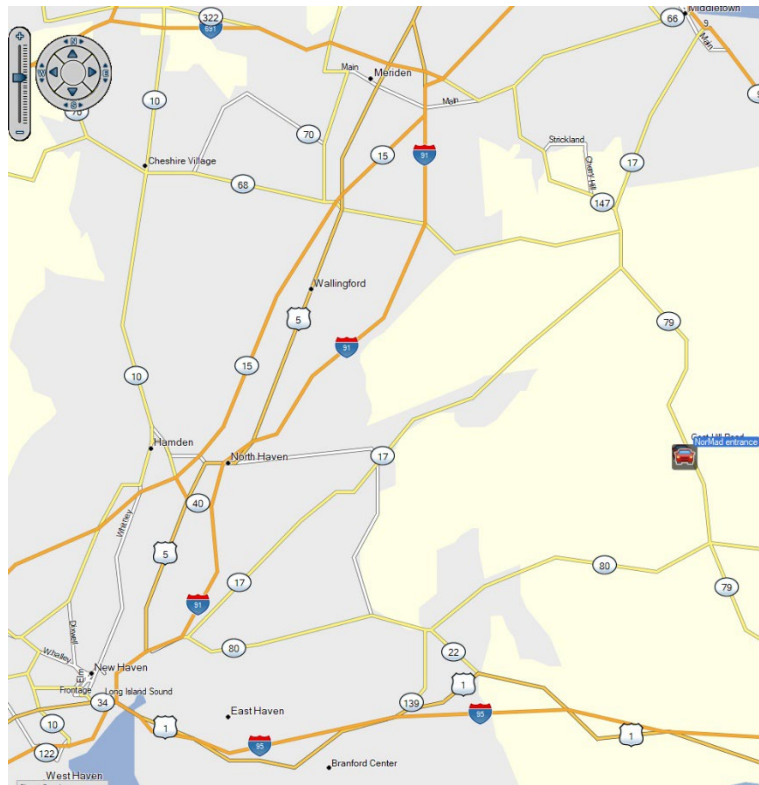
Slash wall study areas. (a) Shows the locations of the five study areas, (b) shows the lack of regeneration due to an overabundance of browse-resistant hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*) before the harvest and installation of the Nepaug slash wall, (c) is an aerial photograph of the slash wall in Oakham, MA, and (d) is close view of the Nepaug slash wall during construction. From Can. J. For. Res. 55:1-12 (2025) <https://doi.org/10.1139/cjfr-2024-0318>

Slash walls are a cost-effective alternative to deer fencing constructed out of low-grade logging material that aim to promote tree regeneration through white-tailed deer exclusion. North Madison is one of five slash wall study areas in Connecticut and Massachusetts that is being monitored by CAES scientists to study their effectiveness in protecting regenerating tree seedlings following forest harvests in areas with excessively high browse pressure. The hope is that the height of regenerating trees will surpass the browse line by the time the slash walls naturally degrade, which greatly limits maintenance costs.

To date, data collected by scientists at CAES suggests that the slash walls are working. In a recent publication assessing the effects of slash walls on regeneration originating from stump sprouts (Ward, Ward and Barsky 2025), they found that red oak, shagbark hickory, and sugar maple sprouts all had a higher growth and survival rate inside the walls than outside. They have also been monitoring the effects of the slash walls on seed-origin regeneration. Preliminary data suggests that after three years, the density of tall (≥ 4.5 ft) seedlings is 40% higher inside the slash walls than outside and includes a higher proportion of oaks and hickories inside (6%, 184/ac) than outside slash wall (<1%, 10/ac). Non-native species also account for 7% of seedlings outside the slash walls but <1% inside.



North Madison Study Area
CT 79, North Madison, CT
Between CT 80 and CT 148
(N41.39358° W72.65019°)
Access only with SCCRWA
staff



Further reading:

Forest management in Connecticut [CT DEEP]

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/forestry/Why-manage-flyer/Forest_Mgmt_In_CT_Booklet-Web.pdf.

Managing forests for trees and birds in Connecticut: A guide to habitat assessments and silvicultural practices [Audubon Connecticut]

<https://ct.audubon.org/guide-to-managing-forests-in-ct>.

Forest Carbon: An essential natural solution for climate change. [UMass and UVM]

<https://masswoods.org/caring-your-land/forest-carbon>.

Northeast Forest Regeneration Handbook: A guide for forest owners, harvesting practitioners, and public officials. [CAES, UConn, UNH, Cornell]

https://extension.unh.edu/sites/default/files/migrated_unmanaged_files/Resource000222_Rep5266.pdf.

Northeastern Tree Planting and Reforestation. [Cornell and CAES] [https://cpb-us-](https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cornell.edu/dist/d/5957/files/2015/03/TreePlantingBulletin12-09-2hulv59.pdf)

[e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cornell.edu/dist/d/5957/files/2015/03/TreePlantingBulletin12-09-2hulv59.pdf](https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cornell.edu/dist/d/5957/files/2015/03/TreePlantingBulletin12-09-2hulv59.pdf).

Slash wall resources [Cornell, CAES, and collaborators]: <https://blogs.cornell.edu/slashwall/blog/>

<https://doi.org/10.1139/cjfr-2024-0318>



Precommercial crop tree release of white oak saplings

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES)

Jeffrey Ward (Jeffrey.Ward@ct.gov or jwcaes@gmail.com)

Elisabeth Ward (Elisabeth.Ward@ct.gov)

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA)

Casey Cordes (ccordes@rwater.com)

Joshua Tracy (jtracy@rwater.com)

John Triana (j triana@rwater.com)

Background: While oaks are the predominant canopy tree species over much of southern New England, obtaining oak regeneration is problematic throughout the region, especially white oak (*Quercus alba*) regeneration. Earlier research has demonstrated that precommercial crop tree release of northern red, black, and scarlet oaks saplings increases growth and persistence in an upper canopy position (Ward 2009, 2017). However, there have been no scientific studies examining whether early release also benefits white oak. As part of a USDA Forest Service grant to enhance regional oak resiliency, we will be establishing demonstration research study areas examining this question.

Objective: determine whether early release of white oak saplings increases survival, proportion remaining in a free-to-grow or better canopy position, diameter growth, and height growth over a five year period. If possible – study may be extended to a ten-year period as noted below.

Field Procedure: We located three (3) study areas in southern New England with at least 50 white oaks potential crop trees (PoCT) that are at least 2 m tall at the end of the 2020 growing season. Two study areas are located in Massachusetts on Massachusetts DCR lands and one in Connecticut on South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority lands. Minimum height is to ensure PoCTs are above typical deer browse height. The following measurements will be taken prior to treatment assignment and implementation: PoCT diameter (mm) at a permanently marked position 1.4 m aboveground, PoCT height (dm) of top and bottom of live crown to nearest dm (10 cm, ~4 inches), and PoCT canopy position (suppressed, intermediate/gap, upper canopy). Species and height (dm) of up to the four nearest neighboring trees interfering with PoCT growth were also recorded. Each tree was permanently identified with a numbered tag attached with a wire loop.

After initial measurements, each PoCT were randomly assigned to one of two treatments: control/no release or release. No competing/interfering neighboring trees will be removed for control treatment. For release treatment, all competing/interfering neighboring trees with crowns adjacent to the PoCT live crown were cut prior to leaf-out in 2021. PoCT diameter and crown class have been measured annually during the dormant season. Top and bottom of live crown will be measured at five-year intervals.

The study location in Bethany had a preparatory shelterwood harvest in 2007 on 76 acres that reduced stand basal area from 111 ft²/acre to 58 ft²/acre. The final overstory removal harvest was completed in 2012.



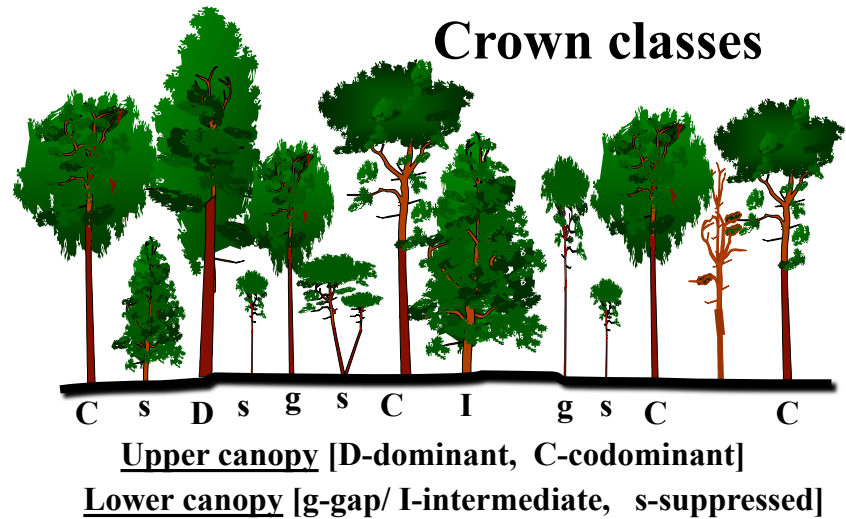
Dr. Ward recording stem data collected from an oak sapling.



Location of precommercial white oak crop tree plots on Regional Water Authority forestlands in Bethany, CT. Initial crown touching release study (green) established in 2020. Inverse cone release study (yellow) established in 2023.

Number of white oak saplings at beginning of crown-touching release study in 2021

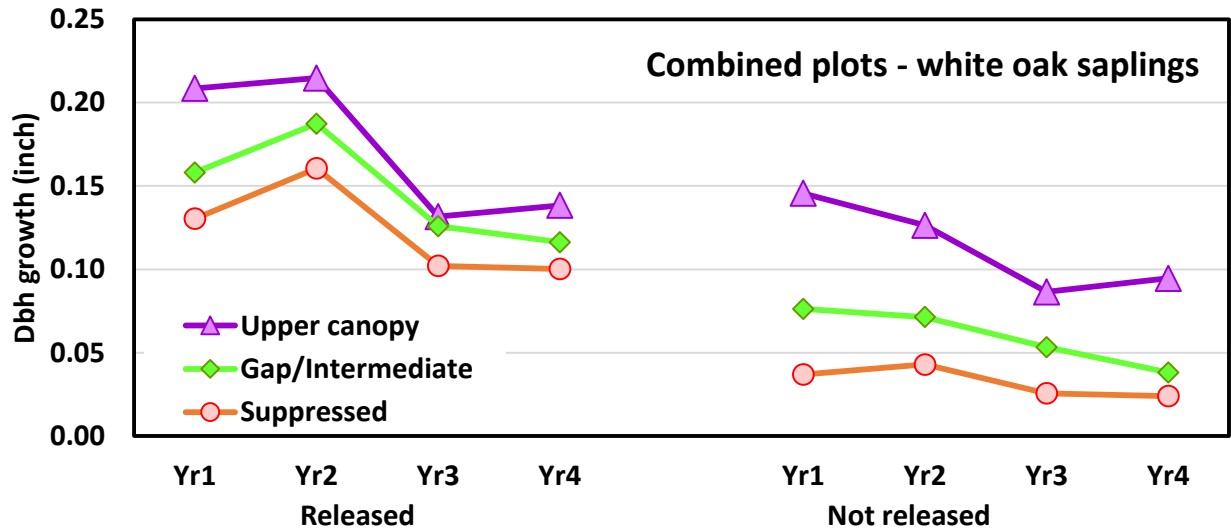
Initial canopy Position	Release	Unreleased control
Upper canopy	65	68
Gap	66	68
Suppressed	66	78
Grand Total	197	214



Crown touching release - Observations through 4th year after release

Note: no statistics are presented

Diameter growth: Crown tree release increased the diameter growth of white oak saplings relative to unreleased trees, especially for the first two years. The late freeze on May 17, 2023 damaged oaks much more than other species causing a shift in competitive advantage. Hopefully we will see a better diameter growth in year 5 (2025).



Even with the depressed growth in the 3rd and 4th year after release, crown tree release has increased diameter growth relative to those not released.

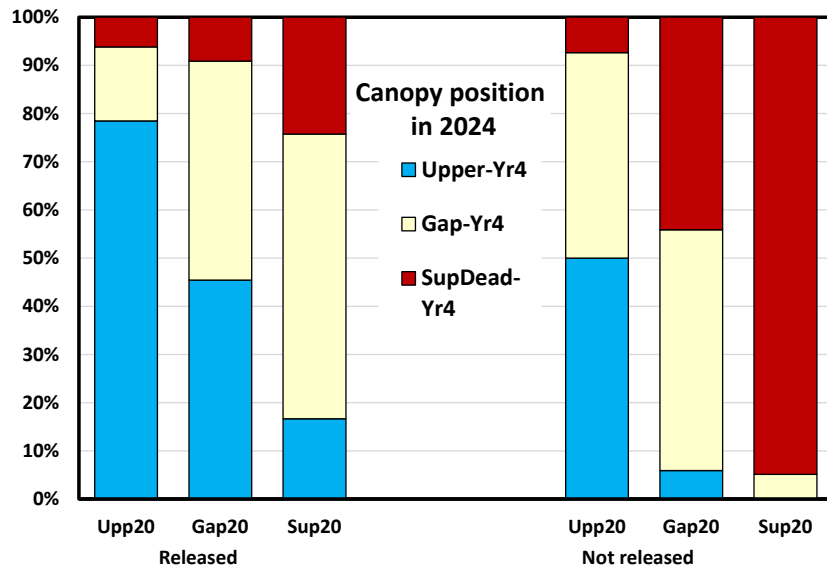
Cummulative (inches over 4 years)

	Released	Not released	Increase (%)
Upper canopy	0.69	0.46	51%
Gap/Intermediate	0.59	0.25	138%
Suppressed	0.49	0.14	251%
Combined	0.59	0.28	

Crown-touching release					
Plot	Subplot	Treatment Date	Number Released	Treatment Time	Minutes Per Tree
RWAbeth	Primary	4/14/2021	37	90	2.4
RWAbeth	Secondary	4/23/2021	39	120	3.1
DCRhubb	Primary	4/27/2021	40	75	1.9
DCRhubb	Secondary	4/27/2021	39	105	2.7
DCRoak	Secondary	5/6/2021	42	210	5.0
Inverse cone release					
Plot	Subplot	Treatment Date	Number Released	Treatment Time	Minutes Per Tree
RWAbeth	New	4/22/2024	29	300	10.3
OakHam	New	4/23/2021	22	720	32.7

Canopy position: Increasing short-term diameter growth is fine, but the long-term objective is increasing the proportion of white oak in the upper canopy of mature stands.

After four years it is clear that a higher proportion of released white oak saplings are in competitive (upper canopy) or potentially competitive (intermediate/gap) canopy positions than unreleased trees. Among stems that were initially in the upper canopy, nearly 80% remained in the upper canopy three years following release compared with only 50% of those not released.



For stems initially in intermediate/gap canopy positions, 45% of released stems were in the upper canopy compared with only 6% of unreleased trees. Another 45% were in an intermediate/gap canopy position and could potentially benefit from a second release.

Surprisingly, release also benefited white oak saplings that initially had been suppressed, though they definitely require a second release if they are going to persist through stand maturity.

Inverse cone release – An alternative release technique

While the crown touching release technique did increase the proportion of white oak saplings that remained in upper canopy positions, there was still a significant proportion that regressed into gap canopy positions where they were susceptible to becoming overtopped by neighboring trees. Prior to leaf-out in 2024, we began an alternative release study by cutting all competing trees within a 45° cone of the white oak crop trees. This more intensive method required cutting about twice as many competitors.



Future Work

Field studies: The question now is should there be a second release? Limited sample size in each pre-treatment canopy class precludes simply dividing each group in half and randomly releasing half. The alternatives are:

1. Do nothing and see what happens,
2. Do a second release of trees assuming the drop in 3rd year growth was an anomaly,

Data analysis: A general comparison between treatments of survival and proportion remaining in a free-to-grow or better canopy position will be assessed using procedures in Zar (2010, p 549-550). Logistic regression will be used to evaluate the factors influencing survival (S) and canopy position (CP). The full logistic regression model will be:

$$S/CP = 1/(1 + \exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1*SIZE_i + \beta_j*TREAT_j + \beta_k* LOCATION_j)) + \epsilon$$

where β_0 is the estimated intercept, $\beta_1 - \beta_k$ the estimated parameters; $SIZE_i$ are independent continuous independent variables DBH (initial PoCT diameter), HT (initial PoCT height), and COMPETE (sum of competitors heights); $TREAT_j$ is control vs. release (3 levels if study extended to 10 years); $LOCATION$ is dummy variable for study locations; and ϵ is the residual error term. Data will not be divided into model building and validation data sets because of small sample size.

A linear mixed effect models will be used examine individual tree diameter and height growth with treatment and initial canopy position as the fixed effects and study area as the random effect, i.e., trees nested within study site. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons will used to test differences among treatments.

Final products: In addition to brief annual reports, we will provide collaborators with a copy of all data collected. The final product will be a referred journal article on the influence of precommercial crop release on white oak persistence and growth. We will also make presentations at local professional conferences to keep natural resource professionals apprised of our findings. The assistance of collaborators will be acknowledged in all papers and presentation.

Notes: The tag and wire loop shall be removed by CAES at the conclusion of the study. CAES will be responsible for all measurements, treatment implementation, and providing data to study collaborators (though help is always appreciated). We may request the study site be available for field workshops with the participation and acknowledgement of study collaborators.

Ward, J.S. 2009. Intensity of precommercial crop tree release increases diameter growth and survival of upland oaks. *Canadian Journal of Forest Research* 39: 118-130.

Ward, J.S. 2017. Twenty-five year response of non-crop trees to partial release during precommercial crop tree management. *Forest Ecology and Management* 387: 12-18.

Zar, J.H. 2010. *Biostatistical analysis*, 5th ed. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ. USA.

June 10, 2026
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
May 31	88%	98%	93%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
May 31	2.84	6.74	3.94
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	29.58	43.56	46.48

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

- Madison – correspondence with property owner of 14+/- acres.
- Durham – correspondence with property owner of 6+/- acres.
- Cheshire, Fenn Rd. easement – Emailed Town Manager and others about the OSWLA grant money.
- Woodbridge, Baldwin easement – Baldwin’s are in general agreement to grant an on-foot access easement to our land that is east of the Wepawaug River.
- Ansonia, 119 ½ Ford St. – Staff found Ford St. Tank site locked by the USFS. RWA Police found contact person who allowed our lock to go in sequence at the gate. Emailed two USFS contacts since it seems that they will be divesting themselves of the property. We have a 50-year easement for the tank plus an option to extend it for another 50 years. We are in year 33 of the original easement.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. – Bids were opened. Bayram’s had the highest bid of \$40,000.
- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Received update of the plans being negotiated between the owner’s and their potential buyer.

Forestry Update

- Installed 500 tree shelters around tree seedlings planted recently in Branford.
- Attended a roundtable with Senator Chris Murphy to discuss the US Forest Service’s planned reorganization and closure of Connecticut’s and New England’s research and outreach facilities and offices.
- Investigated sourcing mile-a-minute weevils for an infestation in Prospect.
- Inspected witch hazel harvesting and approved the removal and re-installation of timber mats at a new intermittent watercourse crossing.

Recreation

- Held forest ecology walk at Rt. 42, Bethany with 18 participants.
- Kids fishing derby was held at Maltby Lakes with 13 participants.
- The Water Wagon attended four events in May.

	May		April	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Permit Holders	5,106	4,979	5,037	4,974

Special Activity Permits

- (no permits were issued in May)

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Agricultural agreements – Talked to tenant interested in the Beaver Head Rd. field. Signed amendment of agreement with tenant for the field at Downs Rd., Hamden.
 - Madison, 752 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Abutter contacted us again about permission for Eversource to run the line after the conduits were moved. We repeated that we would not authorize anything until the matter was settled. Meeting between lawyers and surveyors was not attended by Anderson.
 - North Branford, 217 Forest Rd. (NB 17) – Signed license agreement with new owner for the encroachments over the property line.
 - Bethany, Hoadley Rd. (BE 17 & 18) – Abutter said they would remove the well pipe.
 - Madison, unauthorized trails (MA 2) – Sent letters to five abutters of the Cedar Swamp property about the unauthorized trails and some objects on our land.
- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford and East Haven. Assisted Connecticut Butterfly Association effort to eliminate garlic mustard off of Reeds Gap Rd., Northford. Sprayed invasive plants, including mugwort and swallowwort, at the Furnace Pond shoreline restoration project area. Contractor for barberry control at Gaillard.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	0.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	3.4 acres

- Land Use Plan – RPB approved the LUP update.
- New Haven, Edgerton Park wall (HA 1) – City, RWA, and beekeeper coordinated with the contractor.
- Deer hunt – Lottery for hunters was run. DPH sent approval for the amended permit for the deer hunt, extending the hunt period from October 9 to December 31.

Attachments

- May 11, 2026 - Meteorologists say this could be a historic year for El Niño. Here's what that means for CT – Hartford Courant
- May 14, 2026 - Spring bird migrations will reach their peak in mid-May in Connecticut – NH Register
- May 21, 2026 - US Forest Service considers closing 2 invasive insect labs in CT as part of national reorganization – CT Public Radio
- June 2, 2026 - CT to receive \$27M to find and replace lead pipes carrying drinking water – CT Public Radio
- June 4, 2026 - One thing Greenwich and Bridgeport have in common: lead pipes – NH Register
- June 4, 2026 - Connecticut proposes biggest endangered species update in a decade – NH Register

Upcoming Agenda Items:

July 2026 – ????

Meteorologists say this could be a historic year for El Niño. Here's what that means for CT

Hartford Courant | By Stephen Underwood | May 11, 2026

AccuWeather meteorologists say that it is increasingly likely that a rare "Super El Niño" may form over the eastern Pacific Ocean this month, bringing potentially a milder and drier year for much of the Northeast, increasing chances of drought and fire risk.

El Niño is a periodic warming of water in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean that can affect global weather patterns for months, according to Tyler Roys, senior meteorologist with AccuWeather. There have been 27 El Niños since 1950, with one happening on average every three to four years. The last one, a mild El Niño, happened from summer 2023 into early spring 2024.

The latest probabilities from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center indicate a 61% chance of El Niño developing this spring into early summer and a 25% chance of a very strong El Niño by the end of the year. Roys said that AccuWeather forecasts suggest there is at least a 20% chance this El Niño could become a "super El Niño," one in which ocean surface temperatures are at least two degrees warmer than average. The last Super El Niño occurred in 2015-16, Roys said.

"El Niño is the warming of the Pacific Ocean waters near the Equator," Roys said. "What we're looking for to declare a Super El Niño is water temperatures two degrees above the historical average. When you think about it, that doesn't seem like a lot, but when it comes to sea surface temperatures and historical averages, two degrees actually does happen to be a lot. We are anticipating that we will declare an El Niño later this month, and we may see a rare Super El Niño. The chance is higher this year."

Roys said that while El Niño's are rare, Super El Niño's are even rarer. There have been only five documented since 1950, including 2015-16, 1997-98, 1991-92, 1982-83 and 1972-73.

The stronger the El Niño, the greater the possible impact on global weather patterns, Roys said. In the northern part of the United States, including the Northwest through the Rockies and into New England, a strong El Niño year could bring a more dry and milder winter season. But a wetter winter usually is the result across the southern tier of states from parts of California and the Southwest to Florida and the Southeast, he said.

"Where we see the biggest impact is on the tropics. It increases the frequency of wind bursts and that impacts tropical storms, depressions, and major hurricanes. El Niño weakens tropical trade winds that usually flow east-to-west and can reserve them, impacting global weather patterns," Roys said. "In the Atlantic, this often means more sinking air and stronger winds, which usually result in a more quiet hurricane season."

Roys said is that in stronger El Niño years, the Atlantic rarely sees major hurricanes. Although, hurricanes are still possible, as several formed in the Atlantic basin in 2023-24 during the last El Niño year.

"The good side is we typically don't see a big impact on the Northeast until the fall and winter time," Roys said. "We start to see some impact of El Niño around the beginning of fall in September. During the winter months, there are usually less snow impacts and drier conditions. Perhaps some storms will be more mixed weather events with snow and rain. On average, winters tend to be more mild during strong El Niño years in the Northeast."

While the East Coast may get spared from a busy hurricane season, the wildlife threat will continue to persist, Roys said. Nearly the entire state of Connecticut is already in abnormally dry conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. The state's wildfire risk remains moderate, according to the state's Forest Fire Danger Report. But a strong El Niño year could mean dry conditions persist, even into the fall and winter months, creating hazardous fire conditions.

During El Niño years, summers often become hotter and more humid in the north, with higher frequencies of heavy rain events. But Roys said that those rain events often are quick and not sustained over several days, meaning moisture may dry out. But the possibility for more intense thunderstorms is greater this summer.

"We are forecasting that dry conditions will likely continue to persist through the summer," Roys said. "There are many factors at play and not just El Niño. We don't see drought conditions quickly disappearing looking at our long range models. We do see some possibilities for intense thunderstorms forming but not sustained rainfall events. We are predicting a drier first half of the summer season, which could have impacts on wildfire activity."

"Right now, leaves have not fully formed, meaning the sun is penetrating the forest floor. Dead leaves, twigs and brush make the forest ground potentially vulnerable to fires. That risk should lessen a bit once the trees have fully matured leaves," he said.

Spring bird migrations will reach their peak in mid-May in Connecticut

By Greg Hanisek, NH Register - Correspondent - May 14, 2026

The spring migration of [birds](#) washes across our region in a broad swathe that reaches its pinnacle in the middle of May.

What started as a trickle as early as the waning days of February builds into a cascade of songbirds, some settling into local breeding territories and others winging on to boreal forests far to the north.

This population involves thrushes, vireos, orioles, tanagers, buntings – but most of all [warblers](#).

These avian gems, flashes of color and bursts of song, get most of the human attention, and considering that more than 30 species can be found in Connecticut in May it's not hard to understand why.

Although most of the local breeders are associated with our hardwood forests, species diversity spreads into an array of habitats.

Pine warblers, appropriately named, concentrate on eastern white pines. Prairie warblers and blue-winged warblers require shrubby fields. Common yellowthroats include wetlands in their nesting sites. Black-throated green warblers haunt the shady hemlock glens.

Among the long distance migrants are a group of species generally known as "spruce warblers." Specifically these include Cape May, blackpoll and bay-breasted warblers, all nesting in the spruce and fir forests of Canada and northern New England.

As comely as they are, these fast-moving birds are not easy to see as the trees come into full leaf. To fully appreciate their presence requires some effort to recognize their songs.

There is a lot to learn about the warblers, but to fully comprehend the abundance of May, birders have to get out of the woods and head to the coast as well. At the same time that songbirds hit their peak, shorebirds are doing the same.

This is the time when sandpipers, plovers and others waders reach their peak plumage. Dunlins, short-billed dowitchers and black-bellied plovers display a special beauty at this time of year. Finding them requires visits to shoreline hot spots such as Milford Point, Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison and Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington.

The best time to see them is when high tides flush many out of the salt marshes and they concentrate on beaches above the tide line.

If the timing of the tides proves convenient, a full day combining songbirds in the early morning and shorebirds on a later high tide can produce the highest number of species available to be seen in our state in a single day.

US Forest Service considers closing 2 invasive insect labs in CT as part of national reorganization

Connecticut Public Radio | By [Áine Pennello](#) - Published May 21, 2026

The U.S. Forest Service is considering closing 57 of its 77 research labs across the country, including two in Connecticut. Both labs focus on managing invasive insects — like spongy moths, spotted lanternflies and Asian long-horned beetles — to prevent trees from dying.

The move is part of [a national restructuring plan](#) to save money by consolidating labs into regional facilities. But scientists and advocates worry the closures will delay the agency's ability to respond to invasive insects in the Northeast and hinder field research in local forests.

"I think it's ridiculous," said David Mikus, a retired lab technician who worked at the Forest Service's labs in Connecticut for 45 years.

"When you do research like this, you travel to the places where these problems are. Well, if your lab is centrally located in the country, I think it makes it harder to send a group of researchers out to where these problems are. It puts up a barrier on doing this kind of research," he said.

What the proposal would do

The U.S. Forest Service has two Connecticut facilities it's considering closing — a research lab in Hamden and a quarantine lab in Ansonia.

If the closures do happen, they would take place in phases over the coming year and staff would be relocated to one central office in Warren, Pennsylvania, [according to a map](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"These are proposed closures, nothing is final," said a USDA spokesperson in a statement, noting the relocation does not mean work on invasive insects is going away.

"The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research footprint," the spokesperson said. "Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country."

But experts say the labs in Connecticut are already in a prime location to catch invasive insects accidentally brought into the United States from other countries via shipping ports.

When the Asian long-horned beetle was discovered in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 2008, scientists from the U.S. Forest Service in Connecticut were able to breed the insect in its quarantine lab in Ansonia for further research.

Scientists have historically worked to manage invasive insects by breeding hundreds of them in Connecticut's quarantine lab, along with hundreds of predator insects that feed on them.

Mikus recalled summers when Connecticut scientists would "get these trailers and take them out to these forests and people would live there" to gather leaves and insects.

"If our lab is closed, how are we going to respond so quickly to a problem like this and try to get ahead of it as much as we can?" Mikus asked. "More trees will die."

Invasive insects expected to kill more than a million trees in the US by 2050

Across New England, insects are now responsible for almost a quarter of tree deaths, [according to a new study from the University of Vermont](#). Meanwhile, across the country, [invasive insects are expected to kill 1.4 million trees by 2050](#).

"We've hit a turning point where dead and dying trees are going to become a more common feature of our landscape, which, you know, unless you're a woodpecker, you aren't going to be excited about," said Anthony D'Amato, professor of silviculture and forest ecology at the University of Vermont and a co-author on the study about insects and tree deaths in New England.

The Connecticut labs also worked to develop viruses to kill invasive insects and helped to slow the spread of the spongy moth, said Zander Evans, executive director of the Forest Stewards Guild who did doctoral research at the Connecticut labs in the early 2000s.

"I remember spongy moth so thick in the playground that you'd give up and go home," Evans said.

"That's less common now because of the work folks in the Hamden lab [did] identifying this virus, which curtails their growth," he said.

"It's this kind of work that is really painstaking, requires lots of training, but is really irreplaceable."

CT to receive \$27M to find and replace lead pipes carrying drinking water

Connecticut Public Radio | By [Áine Pennello](#) - June 2, 2026

Connecticut is set to receive \$27.4 million from the Environmental Protection Agency to find, remove and replace lead pipes that bring drinking water into peoples' homes.

Also known as lead service lines, the pipes are more likely to be found in homes built before 1986, according to the EPA.

Highly acidic water or water without a lot of minerals can cause lead pipes to corrode, leaching lead directly into drinking water. Lead is a toxic metal that can be harmful to adults and especially children, even at low levels.

There is no safe level of lead in drinking water, according to the EPA.

CT could have 8,000 lead service lines with majority in lower-income areas

While there are 4 million lead service lines in the United States, according to the agency, it's unclear how many lead service lines are in Connecticut.

Data from the Connecticut Department of Public Health, [gathered by the Connecticut Mirror last year](#), suggests there could be as many as 8,000 lead services lines bringing drinking water to homes, apartments and some schools in the state.

A majority of those lines are suspected to be in lower-income, environmental justice communities with higher populations of Black and Hispanic people, including Bridgeport, Willimantic, Middletown, New London and Waterbury, according to the Mirror.

But higher-income areas may also have lead service lines. Greenwich is suspected to have approximately 1,500 lead service lines, according to the Mirror.

Lead exposure in adults can lead to increased blood pressure, hypertension, decreased function in the kidneys and reproductive issues, according to the EPA. Children may experience behavior and hearing problems, slowed growth and anemia.

How to tell if your pipes are made from lead

Lead in drinking water is not visible and cannot be tasted or smelled, but there are ways to tell if your service line, usually found in your basement, is made from lead.

First, check with your local water company. Public water utilities in Connecticut have been checking pipes for lead and notifying residents since 2024 to comply with EPA guidelines. Utilities like [Aquarion Water Company](#) and [Connecticut Water Company](#) have created digital maps where customers can enter their address and find out what material their service line is made from.

If you're still unsure whether you have lead pipes, there are [two tests](#) you can do, according to the EPA. First, grab a penny or key and scratch the pipe. If you see a soft, gray mark, that could indicate you have a lead service line. Secondly, see if a magnet will stick to the pipe. Magnets will not stick to lead.

What happens next

EPA funding will go directly to Connecticut through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

"Every family in New England deserves safe, clean drinking water, and tackling lead exposure remains one of the most important public health challenges we face," said EPA New England Administrator Mark Sanborn in a statement.

"New England has some of the oldest infrastructure in the country, and this funding will help communities make critical infrastructure upgrades to reduce lead exposure and protect families for generations to come," he said.

One thing Greenwich and Bridgeport have in common: lead pipes

By [Luca Powell](#), Staff Writer - June 4, 2026

It's been more than 50 years since the passage of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the law that expanded the government's power to monitor American water systems. It has been another 12 years since the water crisis in Flint, Mich., and three years since the federal government began its renewed push to remove lead pipes across the United States.

Countless Americans — and thousands in Connecticut — still drink water that flows through lead pipes.

That's a testament to the scale of the problem (especially in Midwest states like Illinois and Ohio) but also to the difficulty and expense required to dig up the millions of lead pipes that crisscross the United States. Last week, the state of Connecticut [received \\$27.5 million](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help in that effort.

More records pinpointing the exact locations of pipes are entering the public sphere, the result of an initiative that began under President Joe Biden aimed at tightening drinking water rules and replacing every lead pipe in the U.S. The new rules require every water utility to achieve that latter goal within a 10-year period beginning in 2027.

Connecticut's issues with lead pipes are relatively minor. The state has just under 8,000 lead conduits, plus an additional 4,200 lines made of a type of steel that also needs to be replaced. Galvanized steel, the EPA has determined, absorbs and releases lead from connected plumbing lines.

That's around 12,200 lines in Connecticut that have been flagged for replacement, or about 2.5% of the total lines linked to water utility companies statewide.

Connecticut ranks 36th in prevalence of lead and galvanized pipes

States like Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan have a much heftier problem on their hands. Illinois, for example, has more than 450,000 lead or galvanized pipes, putting it first nationally. According to reports from water utilities in the state, 18% of all service lines contain lead. Most of those lines are in Chicago, where the problem is so severe that the EPA authored a special carve-out, [giving the city double the allotted time](#) to comply with the new federal rule.

Connecticut's problems appear to be mostly concentrated in two towns — Greenwich and Bridgeport — according to the EPA's data and a separate map produced by Aquarion. Aquarion is one of the state's largest water utilities and serves both towns. A spokesperson for the company told CT Insider that Greenwich has more than 1,400 pipes in need of replacement, while Bridgeport has at least 2,800.

These figures remain estimates. Connecticut's water companies have indicated that the composition of more than 200,000 pipelines is "unknown." The companies have reported around 520,000 pipes overall; it's not clear how many others might also be made of lead or galvanized steel.

Bridgeport operates a lead prevention program, one focused on another common source of lead: paint. Older homes were often constructed with lead paint that, over time, can chip and peel. This is particularly hazardous for children, who ingest the sweet-tasting chips. Measurements of lead levels in children's blood across the state show higher concentrations in poorer towns.

Towns with lower median incomes have seen higher levels of lead in children's blood

The state tracks levels of 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood because that level has been shown to affect IQ and concentration.

The pipe problem isn't confined to the cities mentioned above. The Regional Water Authority that serves the City of New Haven reports around 2,000 pipes, mostly galvanized steel, that need replacement. There are only around 20 actual lead pipes in their service area, their figures show, though that includes a lead pipe running in the street next to Milford Town Hall.

Meanwhile, the Waterbury Water Department reported just 1,000 lead pipes still in service, and New London's Department of Public Utilities reported around 500.

The presence of lead pipes doesn't necessarily mean that lead, which has been shown to stunt brain development in children, is poisoning your drinking water. For decades, American water systems have added chemicals to prevent water from corroding the pipes through which they run, reducing or eliminating leaching.

Water utilities also test their own product. For the past six years, Aquarion's Bridgeport water treatment plant hasn't exceeded the health threshold, [according to EPA records](#).

Aquarion, like every other utility in Connecticut, has until 2037 to come into compliance with the EPA's new rules. If you aren't interested in waiting 11 years, [you can have your home's water tested](#) much sooner.

Connecticut proposes biggest endangered species update in a decade

By [Austin Mirmina](#), Staff Writer - June 4, 2026

For the first time in a decade, Connecticut is proposing a sweeping update to its [list of endangered, threatened and special concern species](#).

The update, which was delayed five years by the COVID-19 pandemic, would move species such as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon into lower-risk categories, reflecting [decades of successful conservation efforts](#), while increasing protections for others in decline, [including the saltmarsh sparrow](#).

Every five years, the [state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection](#) reviews its list of endangered, threatened or special concern species and determines whether species should be added, removed or reclassified based on the latest scientific data and expert feedback. The review, required under Connecticut's Endangered Species Act, was [last completed in 2015](#).

This year's [proposal](#) includes about 100 changes, roughly half of which would add, remove or reclassify species based on their conservation status. The rest involve scientific name changes.

Among the most notable changes is a proposal to move the bald eagle, peregrine falcon and [American oystercatcher](#) – three [bird species](#) once on the verge of extinction – from threatened to special concern. State wildlife biologists say the move highlights the birds' [dramatic recovery in Connecticut after years of conservation efforts](#).

Once common in North America, bald eagles became extremely rare in the 1960s, driven to the brink by habitat loss, illegal hunting and [exposure to the pesticide DDT](#), which weakened eggshells and caused nesting failures.

But the species has [made a remarkable comeback in Connecticut](#). The state had just 15 active bald eagle territories in 2007, according to [DEEP](#). By 2017, that number had climbed to 55. By 2022, biologists documented 82 active territories that produced 101 chicks, DEEP reported.

Experts say the recovery was driven by the federal ban on DDT, as well as habitat protections such as nesting buffers and seasonal trail closures that help prevent disturbances during breeding season.

Connecticut classified the [bald eagle](#) as endangered on its first list of endangered, threatened and special concern species in 1992, later downgrading it to threatened in 2010 due to an [increase in nesting pairs](#).

"The bald eagle has been quite a nice success story, not just in Connecticut but nationwide," said Robin Blum, a DEEP wildlife biologist and supervisor of the agency's Natural Diversity Data Base.

The peregrine falcon, another bird of prey, suffered an even steeper decline than the bald eagle.

The species was a [regular nester in Connecticut](#) from the 1860s to the early 1900s, according to [DEEP](#). But like the bald eagle, its populations were devastated by the toxic effects of DDT. By 1975, the entire population of peregrines in the Eastern U.S. had disappeared from that region, DEEP reported. On its website, DEEP calls the scale and speed of the species' decline "one of the most remarkable events in recent environmental history."

After the population crash, wildlife agencies worked to reintroduce peregrine falcons to the East Coast, DEEP notes. While Connecticut didn't participate in those efforts, it [benefited from them](#). In 1997, a pair of peregrines nested atop the Travelers Tower skyscraper in downtown Hartford and produced three chicks. Leg bands showed the falcons had flown from a recovery project in New York.

Not all of the proposed changes to the state's endangered species list reflect population gains. The saltmarsh sparrow, a coastal bird whose salt marsh habitat has been [degraded by development and sea-level rise](#), would move from special concern to threatened.

"They're just running out of places to nest successfully," Blum said.

Five species would be newly listed as endangered, according to the proposed changes. They include the amphibious Atlantic Coast leopard frog and four plant species: *Alopecurus aequalis* (shortawn foxtail), *Polygala nuttallii*, *Verbena simplex* (narrowleaf vervain) and *Arethusa bulbosa* (dragon's mouth).

The Atlantic Coast leopard frog is one of Connecticut's most recently documented amphibian species. Researchers [confirmed it as a distinct species in 2014](#), and it wasn't documented in Connecticut until five years later, according to Blum.

"This was not a case of a single leopard frog species being split into two, but rather it was documentation of species occurrence that had not been previously made," she said. "This species has vocalizations and behaviors that are distinct from other leopard frog species."

Because so few have been found in Connecticut, experts recommended listing the frog as endangered, Blum said.

Endangered and threatened species receive a strict set of protections under the Connecticut Endangered Species Act, which was passed in 1989.

Under the law, activities that could disrupt endangered or threatened species require review by DEEP. Blum said the protections can affect everything from transportation projects to private developments that use state funding.

A common example is the restrictions placed on construction during bird nesting season.

"If we have a listed bird and a project wants to cut down trees that the bird is known to nest in ... we would instruct them that they have to wait until the nesting season is over to ensure they're not interfering with reproduction," Blum said.

The proposal also would formally remove the Eastern cougar from the list. The species, a type of mountain lion, had long been classified as extirpated, meaning it was [believed to no longer exist in Connecticut](#).

Blum said [reports of Eastern cougars](#) were [once common](#) but have dwindled in the age of smartphone cameras.

"If you can't get a good picture of something in Connecticut, it's probably not there," she said, adding there is [no evidence of a cougar population in the state](#).

DEEP will hold a virtual public hearing on the proposed changes June 17 at 5 p.m. The public can submit comments through June 30 using the [Connecticut eRegulations system](#).