

**Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District  
Lake Whitney Water Treatment Plant  
900 Whitney Avenue, Hamden**

---

**AGENDA**

**Regular Meeting of Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 4:30 p.m.**

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – August 12, 2020 meeting
3. RWA Resident Bee Keeper: V. Kay
4. Land Use Plan Amendment for modifications of the Procedure for Future Renewable Energy Resource Projects: T. Norris and A. Velasquez
5. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
6. Other land items
7. Volunteers to attend Regional Water Authority meetings on October 15, 2020, November 19, 2020, December 17, 2020 and January 21, 2021
8. Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at 4:30 p.m.
9. Adjourn

**\*\*** In order to comply with social distancing and stop the spread of COVID-19, the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority is requiring attendees to remain outdoors, keep a 6' distance and wear masks or face coverings. Driving together to the meeting is not encouraged.

In the event of rain, the meeting will be held remotely. For information on attending the meeting, via remote access and to view meeting documents, please visit <https://www.rwater.com/about-us/our-boards/board-meetings-minutes?year=2020&category=1435&meettype=&page=>. For questions, contact the board office at [jslubowski@rwater.com](mailto:jslubowski@rwater.com) or call 203-401-2515.

IN THE EVENT OF RAIN THE MEETING BE HELD REMOTELY. BELOW IS THE INFORMATION TO ATTEND VIA CONFERENCE CALL. PLEASE CONTACT JENNIFER SLUBOWSKI AT THE BOARD OFFICE AT 203-401-2515 WITH QUESTIONS.

**Topic: RPB Land Use Committee Meeting**

Time: Sep 9, 2020 04:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Meeting (*via conference call*)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 876 9923 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 408 638 0968 US (San Jose)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 810 7515 4307

Passcode: 245458

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcL5DUuXGy>

# SAFETY MOMENT

## September – Dog Bite Prevention

There are about 4.5 million people in the US bitten by dogs each year. Of those, 20 percent of bite victims require medical attention. Dog bites account for one third of all homeowners liability insurance claims. Please review the following Do's and Don'ts to help prevent dog bites.

### Do's

- Be suspicious of ALL dogs.
- Position yourself sideways and round out shoulders when greeting a strange dog.
- Keep eye contact soft and fleeting, look away frequently.
- Drop your hand to your side palm facing down. Let the dog walk into your hand.
- Remain calm if faced with an aggressive dog.

### Don'ts

- Approach a dog that doesn't approach you first, especially if sleeping or lying down.
- Reach over the dog and try to pet and touch them on top of the head.
- Stare at the dog, avoid direct eye contact.
- Use quick, jerking motions.
- Approach a strange dog near food, bones, or toys.
- Run away from a strange dog



**Tap**Into  
**Safety**



Regional Water Authority

Service – Teamwork – Accountability – Respect – Safety

Safety is a core company value at the Regional Water Authority .  
It is our goal to reduce workplace injuries to zero.

 Regional Water Authority

**UNAPPROVED DRAFT**

**Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District**

**Minutes of August 12, 2020 Meeting**

The regular meeting of the Land Use Committee of the Representative Policy Board of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District (“RWA”) took place on Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at Lake Bethany, 200 Hatfield Hill Road, Bethany, Connecticut. Chair Betkoski presided.

Present: Committee Members: P. Betkoski, P. DeSantis, B. Eitzer, R. Harvey, M. Horbal, M. Levine, G. Malloy, J. Oslander and J. Mowat Young

Authority: K. Curseaden

Management: A. Amendola, R. Gavrilovic, O. Kelly, T. Norris, C. Savory and J. Triana

RPB Staff: J. Slubowski

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

On motion made by Mr. Malloy, seconded by Mr. Eitzer, and unanimously carried the Committee approved the minutes of its July 8, 2020 meeting.

The agenda was reordered to accommodate members for a tour of the property.

At 5:35 p.m., Ms. Gavrilovic entered the meeting.

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

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
July 31, 2020	83	94	81	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
July 2020	3.27	4.14	3.68
Fiscal YTD (6/1/20 – 7/31/20)	5.60	8.70	7.43

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

Ricci/Moran property, Fenn Rd., Cheshire – The town closed on the property and conveyed a conservation easement to the Authority and the Cheshire Land Trust.

DePodesta and Hendrickson properties, Hamden/Bethany – Submitted additional form to DEEP for the Hendrickson property grant. DEEP asked for the certificate of title/title insurance for the DePodesta property.

Olin Powder Ponds property, Hamden – FMA approved discussions with Hamden Land Conservation Trust to assign the option to buy this property.

### Rental houses:

- Seymour, 59 Rimmon Rd. (SE 11) – Communicated with winning bidder. Their attorney asked for a mortgage contingency. We declined since it was not part of the bid. Signed P&SA.
- Hamden, 95 Ives St. (HA 13) and 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Worked on lot split application for Skiff St. Removed trees by the house and garage. Cleaned gutters and roof at Ives St.

### Forestry Update

- Guilford – West of Sugar Loaf ash salvage (GU 4) – 40% complete
- North Branford - Beech Street Softwood (NB 4) – 85% complete
- Killingworth - East Hammonasset Leaf Screen Thinning, (KI 4) - Contract not yet awarded.
- Hamden - Overstory removal and Tornado Salvage, (HA 36) – Not started yet
- Bethany – East of Lake Bethany hardwood (BE 18) – 70% complete.
  - CAES asked if they could use part of our property for the Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative. We agreed.
  - Met Jeff Ward (Chief Scientist, CAES) to install plots for regeneration measurement around the two upcoming slash wall harvests.
  - Door Tree, Hamden – Received the \$750 check from the state that the vandal was required to pay.
  - Completed forest inventories for Nathan’s pond and west of Silvermine Road in Seymour. Met with Operations staff to discuss installation of a tracking pad off of Silvermine Road in Seymour.
  - Assisted Environmental Planning department in transplanting wildflowers to our RWA pollinator gardens.

### Recreation

- Recreation permit holders – 5,583.
- Bill insert continued and will end on August 21.
- Started renting boats at Lake Saltonstall on July 14.
- Reinstated one of the revoked permits from last month. Talked to another permit holder whose brother has been noted as violating our terms with other people.
- License agreements signed with CFPA and NBLCT for each new trail. Fees were received and deposited.
- Cut back growth along some trails at Sugarloaf.
- Met with North Branford recreation staff about possible walks on our property.
- Dealt with many instances of swimmers in Lake Chamberlain. Conducted additional patrols.

### Special Activity Permits

- Native Plant Trust (formerly New England Wild Flower Society) – Jessa Finch, Michael Piantedosi survey for a population of a rare plant species, Northern Dropseed (*sporobolus heterolepis*) to see if still present in area, Beaver Head Swamp (Guilford), Totoket Mountain (North Branford), Lake Saltonstall (Branford), Mill Rock (Hamden) (07/14/2020-12/01/2020).
- Connecticut Bird Atlas-Karen Schnitzer, purpose of watching birds in order to gather data for the Connecticut Bird Atlas, Two Cornwall, Prospect, (07/17/20-07/17/21)
- CT Agricultural Experiment Station (Dr. Jeff Ward, et al) - General forestry and wildlife research, tick/Lyme Disease studies - Lake Gaillard, North Madison, Prospect, Seymour, Branford, Madison (07/22/2020 – 07/22/2021)

- UCONN and URI (Gail Reynolds, and designees) – Release biological agent, moth *Hypena opulenta* to help control the population of invasive plants black and pale swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum* and *V. rossicum*, Lake Gaillard, (7/28/20-7/28/21)

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - Agricultural fields – Licensees are having issues obtaining affordable insurance for the fields. Discussed other fields with one potential farmer. Contacted Hammarlund to get signed copy of the new hay agreement.
  - West Haven, Shingle Hill Tank site – WHPD extended agreement to use the site for their radio for another 5 years.
  - West Haven, Burwell Hill Tank site – Corresponded with Comcast about the extension of their ground lease.
  - Cell phone towers – Corresponded with two cell phone company representatives about potential sites.
- Invasive plants – Contractor started harvesting water chestnut at Furnace Pond. Mechanical issues postponed completion of the work by the end of the month. Flew drone to take photos and video of the operation. Met with UConn staff about potential biocontrol of pale swallowwort at Lake Gaillard. Inspected sites in Madison, Prospect, and Bethany for invasives. Cut invasives in East Haven and Bethany. Started second year of the Japanese stilt grass plots with herbicide in Prospect.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	~ 3.75acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	~ 1.5 acres

- Deer hunt – Applications were received and processes so that hunters were assigned areas. Permits this year: North Branford 136, Bethany 25, Prospect 20, Seymour/Ansonia 8.
- Bethany, Simon property dam – Corresponded with contractor for the Simon dam about our operations and their work.
- Bethany, Green Haven/Rocky Corner development – Assisted CP&D with research in agreements and easements that are similar to this matter.
- Madison, Poole Rd. – Halloran reported that the down moved the boulders/rocks back to the road.
- Orange, Racebook Rd. – Land owner asked about the nature of the easement we have over their property. Spoke to them about the tunnel. They were interested in responsibility for trees.

Ted Norris, RWA’s Vice President of Asset Management, provided information on the Olin property in Hamden. He reported that the Hamden Land Conservation Trust (HLCT) is interested in obtaining an option, owned by the RWA, to ensure that the land will continue to be held as open space. He discussed the historical background, agreement details, condition of the property, and RWA’s position. Next steps would include a memorandum of understanding with HLCT to discuss the requirements.

Mr. Norris also provided an update on tree clearing on RWA property along Whitney Avenue. He met with the United Illuminating Company to view marked trees for clearing. After discussions, the RWA and UI came to a compromise to ensure that a low grade amount of brush would be cleared in the area.

At 6:10 p.m., Mr. Kelly entered the meeting.

Mr. Amendola, the RWA's Forester, provide an update on a timber harvest project at Lake Bethany, which included:

- Historical background
- Trees planted (European Larch)
- Age of trees
- Thinning process
- Goals
- Benefits
- Next steps



Ms. Gavrilovic, the RWA's Director of Capital Planning and Delivery, introduced Mr. Savoy, an RWA's Project Engineer, who provided an update on the drainage project at the dam on Hatfield Hill Road in Bethany, which included:

- System design
- Issues
- Age and depth of dam
- Inspections
- Timing of project



At 6:25 p.m., Mr. Levine withdrew from the meeting.

There were no other land items to report.

The next regular meeting of the committee is Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 4:30 p.m.

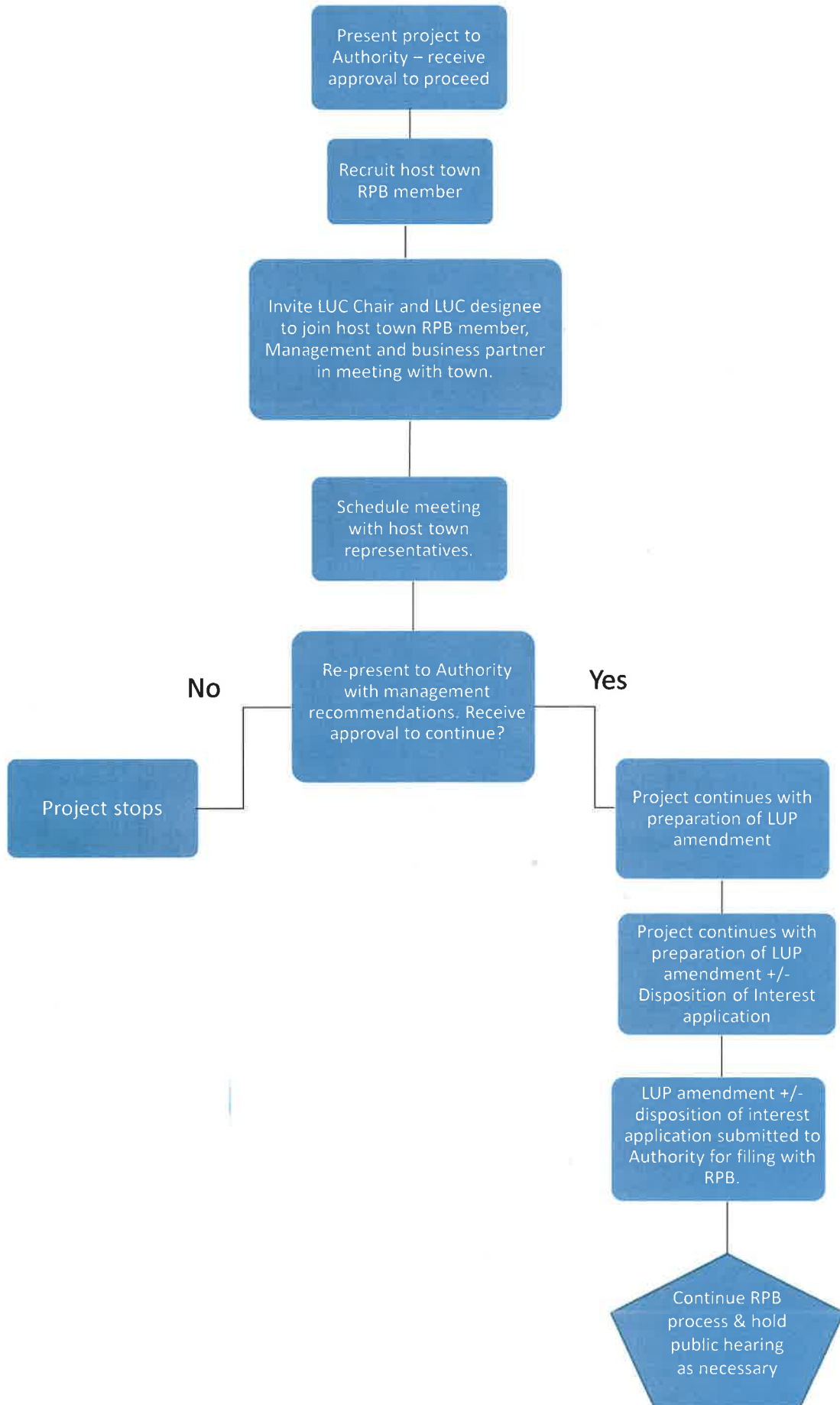
At 6:27 p.m., the meeting adjourned.

---

Peter Betkoski, Chairman

# Appendix A

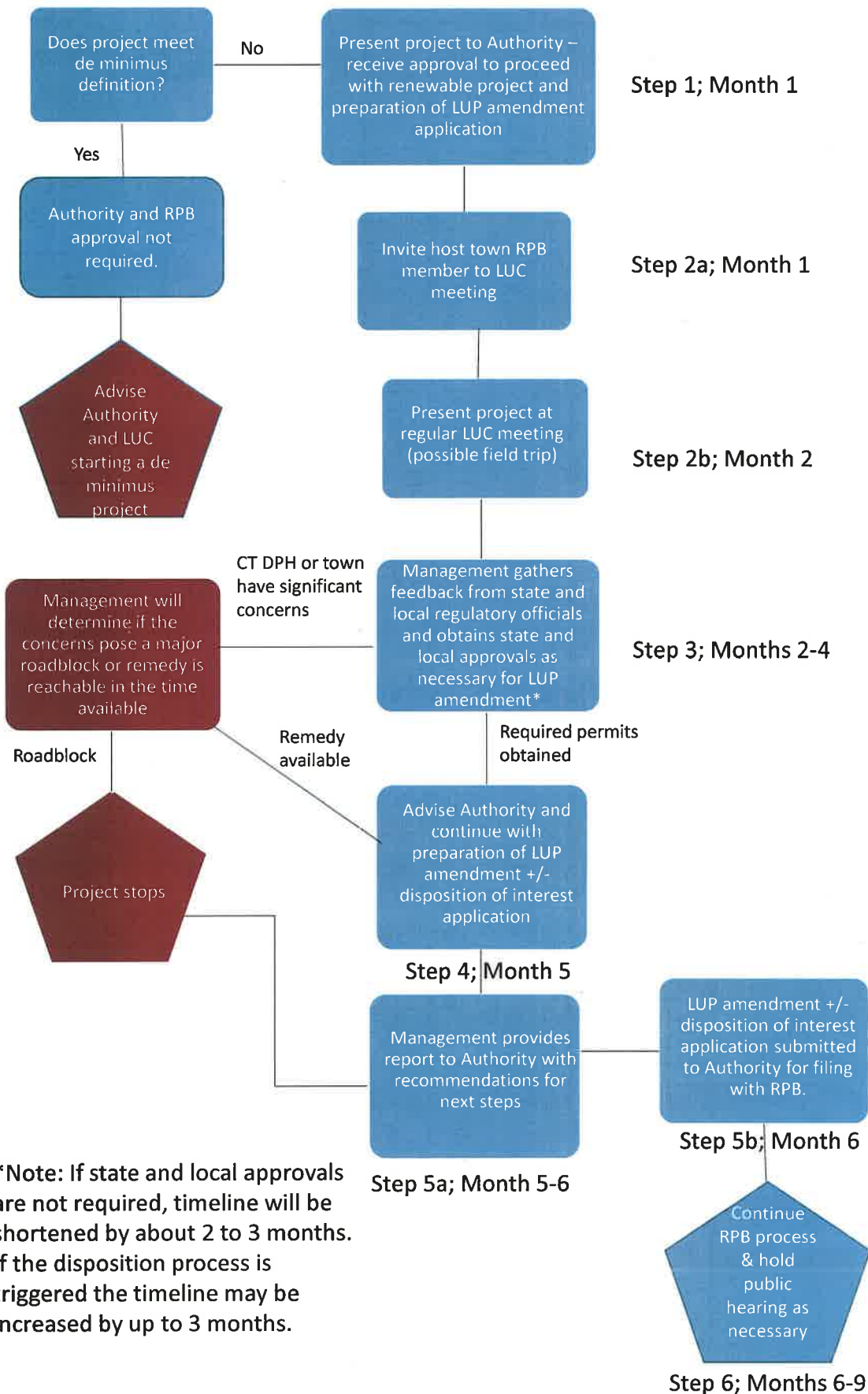
## 2011 Future Renewable Economic Resource Project Procedure





**DRAFT  
Appendix B**

**2020 Procedure for Future Renewable Energy Resource Projects**



**\*Note: If state and local approvals are not required, timeline will be shortened by about 2 to 3 months. If the disposition process is triggered the timeline may be increased by up to 3 months.**

**September 9, 2020**  
**Land Use Committee Meeting**

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
August 31, 2020	75	87	74	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
August 2020	2.84	4.03	3.98
Fiscal YTD (6/1/20 – 8/31/20)	8.44	12.73	11.40

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

Hamden/Bethany, DePodesta and Hendrickson properties – Sent conservation easements for the Hendrickson property to both towns to be filed on the land records. Forwarded the Certificate of Title for the DePodesta property to DEEP. Responded to several questions they had.

Branford, Todd's Hill Rd development – Attorney for developer informed us that the owner will be donating the open space land to the Branford Land Trust.

Rental houses:

- Seymour, 59 Rimmon Rd. (SE 11) – Met buyers with their mortgage inspector to check out the house.
- Hamden, 95 Ives St. (HA 13) and 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Submitted application for lot split at Skiff St. Hamden Engineer had comments on the application.
- Orange, 499 Derby Ave. – Reviewed plans to convert the garage to a larger living space. We rejected the proposal.
- Madison, 760 Summer Hill Rd. – Spoke to owner about new shed that was on the property.

Forestry Update

- Guilford – West of Sugar Loaf ash salvage (GU 4) – 40% complete
  - North Branford - Beech Street Softwood (NB 4) – 85% complete
  - Killingworth - East Hammonasset Leaf Screen Thinning, (KI 4) - Contract not yet awarded.
  - Hamden - Overstory removal and Tornado Salvage, (HA 36) – Not started yet
  - Bethany – East of Lake Bethany hardwood (BE 18) – 70% complete.
- Marked timber harvests in two different areas; Seymour and Madison.
  - Coordinated with Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) to delineate and mark slash wall harvests and plots to monitor regeneration.
  - Worked with CAES to mark their current silvicultural experiment plots at Nathan's Pond (a 30+ year study).
  - Interviewed by multiple news crews about the storm damage (wind/salt) of tropical storm Isaias.

Recreation

- Recreation permit holders – 5,615.
- Bill insert ended on August 21.
- Boating continued at Lake Saltonstall with only one refusal to wear a mask due to religious objections.
- Held first walk since COVID period started. Nine people attended botany walk at Dudley Pond on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

- Had repeated problems with people vandalizing the lock and gate at Maltby Lakes.
- Spent much time cutting and removing trees from a tropical storm on August 4<sup>th</sup> and a tornado on August 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Reblazed white trails at Pine Hill.

Special Activity Permits

- Milford Police Department (Lieutenant Luke Holder and designees) – Police dive training, Maltby Lakes, (8/17/20)
- C. Thomas Paul – (Permit renewal) Conduct research on American Indian and pre-Columbian culture as related to the Hammonasset Line - Killingworth, Madison and Guilford (6/26/2020-6/26/2021).  
**REVISION:** A professor from the University of Washington may come to RI and CT on September 4<sup>th</sup> – September 11<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Jim Feathers who has an Optically Simulated Luminescence lab at the school. The test is to determine how long a rock or soil has been out of the sun light. A stone sample is taken 1” in OD about an inch down. A soil sample is taken a few inches down, about 7 oz. in size. The sample or samples (1 or 2 samples) will be taken on the Hammonasset Line in Madison.

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - Agricultural fields – Executed license agreement with Urbano for use of the Sperry Rd. field for Christmas trees. Tanev supplied his certificate of insurance to hay the fields in Prospect, Bethany, and Woodbridge. Discussed other fields with three potential farmers.
  - Hamden, Skiff St. – Sent draft agreement to neighbor to potentially park his employees’ vehicles at the house.
  - North Haven, Davis Rd. (NO 9A) – Issued letter to abutter about pet grave on our property.
- Invasive plants – Contractor completed harvesting water chestnut in Furnace Pond. Established second hardware cloth plot for Japanese knotweed in the West River area. Collected more data on herbicide plots in Prospect. Treated invasives in Bethany and East Haven. Conducted drone flights at Furnace Pond and Lake Menunketuc.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	~1.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	~5 acres

- Deer hunt – Check station volunteers were selected and contacted.
- Durham, Vasel driveway easement – Corresponded with Vasel’s attorney about settling the matter of the driveway easement.
- Land Use Plan – Worked with Communications staff to post the Land Use Plan amendments online with the full plan.

Attachments

- August 19, 2020 - Preserving Fenn Road Property Was Ricci’s Top Priority – Cheshire Herald
- September 3, 2020 – Severe Drought Conditions Increase in CT – CT Post
- August 19, 2020 - Randall Beach: It’s come to this, in a good way – NH Register
- August 24, 2020 - Leaves are changing earlier than usual this year due to drought, tropical storm damage – WTNH
- 

Upcoming Agenda Items

October 2020 – Lake Saltonstall

## Preserving Fenn Road Property Was Ricci's Top Priority

August 19, 2020 - by John Rook, Herald Staff

John Ricci knows virtually every square inch of his now-former land.

Touring the area with him is both an education in history and a study of everything from geology to dendrology. Passing by a rock formation or a tall tree, Ricci will pause to explain a few interesting factoids about each.

"You can see why I didn't want to let this just go?" he says, the twinkle in his eye obvious as he surveys the land he knows so well.

On July 31, the Town of Cheshire announced that it had purchased more than 45 acres of land from Ricci Construction, located off of Fenn Road. The property, which was secured with the help of both the Cheshire Land Trust and Regional Water Authority for a price of \$675,000, will be open to the public for passive recreation — another area for residents to walk, hike, and immerse themselves in nature.

The land itself has a rich history. Originally settled by Benedict Ives, he and another brother built homes adjacent to one another and created a route that eventually became Cook Hill Road. It is believed that an old, skinny cedar tree that still stands near the front entrance of the property may have served as a flag pole, one that dates back to the time of George Washington and the founding of the country.

The old, historic home that once stood on the property is now gone, but one can still see its outline in the open field at the front of the land. A few steps away, nature takes over — a world of massive trees and rock formations, easily accessible and walkable for anyone so inclined.

According to David Schrumm, a member of the Cheshire Land Trust, the process of purchasing the land began over a year ago, after Ricci, owner of Ricci Construction, contacted him and suggested that he might have some property of interest to the CLT.

Schrumm immediately reached out to Ricci, and could tell "he had a real connection to the land" the moment the two began discussing it.

Originally, Ricci, who bought the land in 2017, had planned to essentially retire and farm the meadow off to the right of the property. However, after discussions with his family, it was decided that would not be the practical thing to do.

"My wife and son said, 'Dad, no way,'" recalled Ricci, with a laugh.

So Ricci had a choice: Develop the land or look for a way to preserve it.

"As a developer I know, once you develop the property, that's it," said Ricci. "I didn't want that."

As a young man, Ricci worked the farm on Fenn Road and can fondly remember taking breaks relaxing in the river that runs through the property. After purchasing it himself, Ricci developed an even closer relationship to the land, setting up cameras around the property that allows him to monitor different wildlife that make a home of the 45 acres.

He has seen a black bear, numerous deer, what Ricci refers to as an "alpha coyote," a red fox and even a rare grey fox. Perhaps his favorite area, however, is overlooking a ledge towards the back of the property, where Ricci states a number of owls congregate to hunt rodents below.

Ricci has nicknamed the area "Owl Hallow," and has spent many an evening watching the owls below.

"It's just such a beautiful spot," he said.

Early in August, The Cheshire Herald had a chance to tour some of the property with Ricci and Schrumm. Open and easy to traverse, the land would seem to be ideal for the casual hikers interested in exploring all the plant life and unique features available.

One of the more interesting landmarks on the property is a huge rock formation — the remnants of a glacier that carved its way through the area millions of years ago.

The rock is unique not just for its size but also for its likely connection to Native American tribes that called Cheshire home. Its perfect location for viewing the night sky, plus some carved-out portions of the rock's topside, has many convinced that it was a prime spot for Native American gatherings.

Nearby, a row of what are known as "turtle stones," commonly used by Native Americans, all point due south, indicating that those who used the stones did so as a directional tool. There are even some spots where both Ricci and Schrumm believe collections of stones may indicate an old burial site for Native Americans.

All along the property, there are reminders of the past. Old cedar posts still have small pieces of barbed wire connected from when the area was used as pastures for cows. Rock walls can be seen all over, and in one area four huge, old trees stand only a few feet from one another, which indicates to Ricci that they were planted at one point by the property's owners to perhaps honor new additions to the family.

For those interested in trees, there are numerous varieties to admire: From red and white oak to beech trees. And when the rain falls, the river flows along the edges of the property.

For the Land Trust, adding the Fenn Road acreage is important to preserving as much open space as possible. A part of what is commonly referred to as the greenbelt corridor in Cheshire, the Mill River bisects the land and the 185-acre DeDominicis Property borders it.

“To get this land is really important,” said Schrumm. “The Land Trust exists to protect open space, and this is beautiful open space.”

No specific hiking paths have been established as of yet on the property, although old horse-and-wagon trails already exist. When the land is officially open to the public, however, both Ricci and Schrumm hope residents take advantage.

“I am so glad we are going to keep the land the way it is,” said Ricci. “That’s been the goal.”

## **Report: Severe drought conditions increase in CT**

By Jim Shay – CT Post - September 3, 2020



This map shows dry and drought conditions in Connecticut as of Sept. 1, 2020. The darkest shade of color shows severe drought conditions. Light brown areas show moderate drought conditions. Yellow shows abnormally dry conditions and the area in white shows no dry conditions.

Severe drought conditions have expanded into southeast Connecticut, according to a Drought Monitor report released Thursday.

About 32 percent of the state has severe drought conditions, including most of Hartford and Windham counties, and northern Tolland County.

Since last week’s report, the eastern half of New London County now has severe drought conditions. Among the effects in severe drought conditions are smaller crops yield, hay is growing slower, trees are brittle and susceptible to insects, water quality is poor; groundwater is declining and irrigation ponds are dry.

Rainfall totals for the year are running between 4 and 9 inches below normal, according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center.

A moderate drought exists in western New London county, northern Middlesex county, southeast Hartford County, southern Tolland County and northeast Litchfield County.

Helped with rainfall from last Thursday’s strong thunderstorms, there was some improvement since last week’s report. Among the rainfall totals from the Aug. 27 storms were Clinton, 1.50 inches; Wallingford, 1.24 inches; Meriden, 1.16 inches; Niantic, 0.95 of an inch; and Monroe, Essex and Seymour, 0.90 of an inch.

On Wednesday, moderate showers brought measurable rainfall to Litchfield County with nearly 2 inches in Salisbury, 1.87 inches in Canaan and more than an inch in Winsted and Colebrook.

Most of Litchfield and New Haven counties now have abnormally dry conditions, an improvement from moderate drought conditions from a week ago. The panhandle of Fairfield county, from Westport to Greenwich, remains under abnormally dry conditions, the report said.

Nearly 14 percent of the state -including northern Fairfield County, the western border of New Haven County and a sliver of northwestern Litchfield County — have no dry or drought conditions.

## **Randall Beach: It's come to this, in a good way**

Aug. 19, 2020 Updated: Aug. 19, 2020 – NH Register

Three months ago I wrote “a COVID diary” with the sad refrain “It’s come to this,” which my wife, Jennifer Kaylin, and I had begun repeating as the virus took over our daily lives.

An example: “It’s come to this: I’m having long conversations with our dog and two cats, asking them questions and expecting them to answer me.”

Another: “It’s come to this: I haven’t changed my underwear for a few days. What’s the point?”

But most of those “come to this” items were negative. And who needs that these days? How about some positive “It’s come to this” nuggets?

OK, it’s come to this: My wife and I now have more time to sit together on our back deck in lively conversation. One such session earlier this week led to brainstorming over the more upbeat “It’s come to this” winners.

She began by recalling that on 9/11, when she raced into New York City to cover the story as a producer for WTNH News 8 and remained there for a week, “People were so nice to each other. I kept thinking: ‘I wish I could bottle this; it won’t last.’ And it’s kind of the same now. People are just generally being nicer because we’re all suffering so much in different ways. There’s more empathy.”

She offered an example. “It’s come to this: now when a phone solicitor calls, I don’t just hang up. I’m more patient. I listen for a while to their pitch. And I’m less irritated when a motorist cuts in front of me and less impatient when I’m on a line at a store and the cashier and customer are moving really, really slowly. Before this pandemic I probably would have sighed and rolled my eyes. Now I’m a better version of myself.”

This led to me saying “It’s come to this: we’re making many more contributions to local food banks such as the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, the Community Soup Kitchen and the Connecticut Food Bank. After all, we’re not going out to eat much anymore, so why not donate some of that money we’ve saved?”

JK: “It’s come to this: I’m cooking more and trying out more new recipes.”

RB: “It’s come to this: I’m enjoying all of those new treats from the kitchen!”

JK: “It’s come to this: I’m chatting with our neighbors more, although at a social distance. I’m really up on neighborhood gossip - even though there isn’t that much these days because everybody’s basically staying at home.”

RB: “It’s come to this: I’m running more now, usually six days a week, because I’ve got more time to do it. And so I’ve lost at least several of the five pounds I’d gained from sitting around the house, eating and drinking.”

JK: “It’s come to this: I’m exercising more, too! And my gym has reopened, thank God.”

RB: “It’s come to this: we’re hiking more now on weekends. I even purchased recreation permits from the Regional Water Authority, allowing us to discover their many trails.”

JK: “It’s come to this: I now have the time to rummage through our closets. I’m finding lots of stuff we don’t need and donating it to Goodwill.”

RB: “It’s come to this: for the first time I had a catch using old and rarely used baseball gloves with an old friend who had come up with the idea that we meet in Edgerton Park. We probably would never have done this in non-COVID days.”

JK: “It’s come to this: I’m working in our garden a lot more these days, paying attention to the needs of the flowers and trees.”

RB: “It’s come to this: I’m out there with you, regularly watering the lilac tree that Urban Resources Initiative gave us.”

JK: “It’s come to this: We’re talking more with our daughters in California, and learning how to master Zoom. Lots of times they just call us up because they want to make sure we’re OK. And of course we’re calling them a lot to see how they’re doing in Los Angeles, which is struggling to control the virus.”

RB: “It’s come to this: We’re also Zooming with old friends from our neighborhood who moved away. That’s another thing we almost certainly wouldn’t have been doing if it weren’t for COVID.”

JK: “It’s come to this: We’re doing more home improvement projects now because we’re always here, looking around at what needs fixing, and we have more money to spend on the work since we’ve stopped flying to California.”

RB: “It’s come to this: We’ve stopped procrastinating on making doctors’ appointments or getting the cars serviced. Now we pick up the phone and just get it going.”

JK: “It’s come to this: I’m reading more now. And not just magazines. Novels!”

RB: "It's come to this: Although we miss going out to the movies, we're calling Best Video more often to rent good films from their massive collection. You can't browse there now but all you have to do is call them up, tell them what you want to see, then drive out to Whitney Avenue in Hamden and they'll meet you at the door."

JK: "It's come to this: There's more time now to pay attention to the needs of our animals. We clip our cats' nails and regularly clean out the black gunk from our dog's ear. We're getting that infection under control and have set up an appointment with the veterinarian."

RB: "It's come to this: I have reconnected with an old friend from the neighborhood where I grew up in suburban New York. I discovered he's living nearby in Stratford and we're making plans to get together. Meanwhile, a woman who knew my parents many years ago and who now lives in Trumbull has invited us to come visit her at her home on a lake."

Dear reader: do you have your own positive examples of "It's come to this" during the pandemic? Let me know and this can lead to a future column about how all of us are coping.

## **Leaves are changing earlier than usual this year due to drought, tropical storm damage**

by: Tina Detelj - Aug 24, 2020

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (WTNH)— A drive up Route 9 is pretty in the fall. But, this is mid-August and the reds and yellows we are seeing this year are earlier than usual. As are the brown leaves, which now cover the ground below some trees.

"See there are a lot of brown leaves and every one of them is attached to a branch that's broken off," said Jane Harris, the city arborist for Middletown.

She says the recent tropical storm broke branches and killed leaves.

"We've seen significant damage all over town," said Harris. "You can see under that sugar maple just loads of brown leaves."

But she also says the drought is the reason we are seeing trees turn color now.

"We've barely had an inch of rain in two months," said Harris. "So it's very tough on the trees they don't have any options."

The city uses water filled Treegater bags on newly panted trees to combat the drought. Harris says the tropical storm sped up the drought's effect on many leaves.

"Yeah I would say so cause it was a dry storm," said Harris. "You know we didn't really get any rain to speak of and wind is very drying."

Along the shoreline, the color you see on a lot of trees is brown. Those leaves are dead or dying and News 8 is told this is definitely storm related.

That's because during the storm the winds picked up the salt water from Long Island Sound and pummeled the trees, killing the leaves of the south side of them.

On the other side of the trees which were protected from the wind those leaves are still green.

"I've been a forester for the better part of a decade and I've never seen anything like it," said Alex Amendola, a forester for the Regional Water Authority.

He says the constant strong winds from Isaias dried out the leaves and poured salt in the wound.

"You add that salt in there it's like hitting something that's already dry with a flame thrower," said Amendola.

He says aesthetically the burned leaves don't look good.

"You can see how they're brown and they curl up, and that leaf is basically dying," explained Amendola, as he held a birch tree branch.

But he says there shouldn't be any long term effects from this damage. In fact that birch tree has already started growing new leaves to replace the dying ones.