Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
Meeting Location: Meet at gate on south side of Route 42, Bethany (Stretch of Rte. 42 (Cheshire Rd.) between Rte. 69 and Candee Rd. About .3 miles from intersection of Rte. 69 and .4 miles from the intersection with Candee Rd. about ¼ mile down the woods road. The area will be flagged.

AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, August 13, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Public Comment: Residents and customers may address the Land Use Committee regarding agenda items or other issues. Discussion is limited to the presentation of information for consideration and comment on agenda items.
3. Approval of Minutes – July 9, 2025 regular meeting
4. Study of Precommercial Crop Tree Release of White Oak Saplings Preliminary Results: Dr. Jeffrey Ward, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
5. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
6. Other land items
7. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, September 10, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.
8. Adjourn

*This is an in-person meeting. In the event of rain *ONLY*, the meeting will be held at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut. To view meeting documents, please visit https://tinyurl.com/3antbz44. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email at jslubowski@rwater.com.

SAFETY MOMENT

Tap Into Safety

Regional Water Authority

BACK TO SCHOOL MEANS SHARING THE ROAD: SLOW DOWN

School days bring congestion: School buses are picking up their passengers, kids on bikes are hurrying to get to school before the bell rings, harried parents are trying to drop their kids off before work. It's never more important for drivers to slow down and pay attention than when kids are present – especially before and after school.

<u>If You're Dropping Off:</u>

- Don't double park; it blocks visibility for other children and vehicles
- Don't load or unload children across the street from the school
- Carpool to reduce the number of vehicles at the school

<u>Sharing the Road with Young Pedestrians</u>:

- In a school zone when flashers are blinking, stop and yield to pedestrians crossing the crosswalk or intersection
- Always stop for a school patrol officer or crossing guard holding up a stop sign
- Never pass a vehicle stopped for pedestrians

<u>Sharing the Road with School Buses</u>:

- Never pass a bus from behind or from either direction if you're on an undivided road if it is stopped to load or unload children
- The area 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children; stop far enough back to allow them space to safely enter and exit the bus
- Be alert; children often are unpredictable, and they tend to ignore hazards and take risks

Service – Teamwork – Accountability – Respect – Safety

Regional Water Authority

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
July 9, 2025

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, July 9, 2025, at Roaring Brook Falls, Cheshire, Connecticut. Chair Levine presided.

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

RPB: R. Harvey, N. Campbell, and C. Havrda

Management: V. Benni, J. Hill, and J. Triana

Staff: J. Slubowski

Chair Levine called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

Chair Levine offered the opportunity for members of the public to comment. There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

Mr. Triana, the RWA's Real Estate Manager, reported on a customer complaint related to property located at 25 Salstonstall Place in East Haven. The customer requested a meeting with the Committee but was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict.

On motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its June 11, 2025 regular meeting, as presented.

Mr. Triana provided an update on the Bis property on Roaring Brook Falls in Cheshire, Connecticut, a recent acquisition by the RWA in August 2024. The Committee reviewed maps of the property, which included:

- Property location
- Surrounding open space
- Trail locations and terrain

Chair Levine stated that Committee members were given the task of reviewing the recent application for the disposition of Skiff Street in Hamden for completeness, mode, and date of public hearing. It was the consensus of the Committee that the application was complete. On motion made by Ms. Young and seconded by Mr. Malloy, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend the application to the Representative Policy Board ("RPB") to schedule a public hearing on September 25, 2025.

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

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
June 30	93%	94%	88%	None

UNAPPROVED

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
June 2025	1.07	3.94	3.68
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	1.07	3.94	3.68

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

- Madison, Weber property – Sent letter of support to Yale for the Divinity's School to use. Closed on the property.
- Cheshire – Corresponded with property owner of 4+/- acres.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Waiting for town to get back.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Submitted the disposition application to the FMA. FMA approved and forwarded it onto the RPB.
- Woodbridge, 2040 Litchfield Tpk. – Owner requested to build a garage for his tools and equipment, but they already used their impervious surface allotment. In inspecting the property, noticed that a large shipping container had already been installed. Required owner to remove it due to the impervious surface deed restriction. It was removed by the end of the month.

Forestry Update

- Adjusted deer protection around seedlings and saplings planted at the Maltby southern pine beetle salvage area and watered recently planted trees during a heat wave.
- Inspected witch hazel harvest and the Menunketuc timber sale.
- Taped a radio program segment of Liquid Lunch discussing RWA's forestry program.

Recreation

- Moth event at Lake Saltonstall had 21 attendees.
- Bass tournament had 30 participants.
- Hamden Hall's summer camp brought 40 Kids to Maltby Lakes to fish and hike.
- The Water Wagon was brought to four events by the recreation staff.

	June		May	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,916	4,989	4,979	4,571

Special Activity Permits

- Connecticut Butterfly Association- (Gina Nichol) conduct survey of nocturnal moths and other insects, Lake Saltonstall Parking Lot Area, (6/28/25)
- New Haven Bird Club (Patrick Leahy) – Fall Migrant and Foliage Walk to observe fall birds and beautiful tree colors, Lake Dawson, (11/1/25).
- New Haven Bird Club (Patrick Leahy) – Fall Migrant and Foliage Walk to observe species that are nesting on Lake Chamberlain, (11/15/25).
- New Haven Bird Club (Patrick Leahy) – spring bird walk to observe species nesting on Lake Chamberlain, special emphasis on Bluebird/Tree swallow trail of bird houses, Lake Chamberlain, (5/20/26).

UNAPPROVED

- New Haven Bird Club (Patrick Leahy) – spring bird walk to observe species nesting on Lake Watrous, special emphasis on Bluebird/Tree swallow trail of bird houses, Lake Watrous, (5/27/26).
- Bimbler's Bluff 50K (Russell Hammond) - Annual 50K foot race - Use of trails through Genesee Preserve north of Guilford (10/19/2025).
- CT Forest & Park Assoc. (CFPA) (Julia Sonen) conduct tour of property, Master Woodland Manager Program, forestry ecology, Rt. 79 Madison-Nathan's Pond, (10/18/25)
- Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station – (Joseph Barsky) conduct research on impact of silvicultural treatment on stand dynamics, on sapling white oak tree release, effectiveness of slash wall on tree regeneration, impact on forested stands affected by emerald ash borer, collect ticks for research. Madison-Nathan's Pond, Bethany-Sanford Brook, Seymour-Haddad Road & Silversmith Road, North Branford-Lake Gaillard, Woodbridge-Lake Chamberlain, **Added Hosley Brook, Branford on 6/18/25** (1/1/2025-12/31/2025).
- Connecticut Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation-(Mr. Jack Swatt) flowering chestnut trees on RWA property to harvest nuts to plant in their Germplasm Conservation Orchards to preserve genetic diversity of the species; Seymour Slash Wall, RT 79 Durham, Genesee Tract, Menunkatuck, Bethany Tract 13 (6/30/2025 – 9/30/2025).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - Madison, 752 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Abutter has moved some materials. Told him to contact us for inspection when everything is gone.
  - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Abutter has gotten in contact with another surveyor to look at his old survey. Offered to put boulders along the back line. That is acceptable but will be inspected prior to approval.
  - Agricultural agreements – Corresponded with tenant of several fields on the west side of the system about his intentions. Decided to only use the Branford fields. Placed the western fields on Farmlink.
  - North Branford, 1790 Middletown Ave. (NB 16) – Sent letter to abutter about bridges and mowing over the property line.
  - Branford, Cherry Hill Rd. (BR 10A) – Checked town records and the property (20 Autumn Ridge Rd.) was sold on June 3. Sent letter to the new owners saying they would need to enter into a license agreement to use the portion of the lawn on our property.
  - Orange, Baldwin Rd. (OR 4) – Reviewed license agreement for UI's guy wire.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford and Branford. Conducted a drone flight at Page's Millpond and Furnace Pond to collect pre-harvest data on water chestnut populations. The water chestnut harvest started at the end of the month. Foresters were interviewed by WTNH about the steam weeder and invasives management.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	15 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	0.5 acres

- Woodbridge, Racebrook Rd. access (WO 10) – Contacted abutter to see if they would consider access easement since they are looking to lease their land for a solar array.

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- Woodbridge POCD – Assisted town staff with questions they had as they update their POCD.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – North Branford P&Z made the referral to the Town Council which meets to discuss the matter in July.

Committee members discussed future meeting topics and locations with management. Mr. Triana reported that next month's meeting will take place in Bethany.

Chair Levine stated it would be appropriate to elect the Committee chair for the upcoming year. He asked Committee members for nominations. Hearing none, Mr. Betkoski proposed nominating Mr. Levine as chair for another year. On motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Betkoski, the Committee voted unanimously to elect Mr. Levine as chair of the Committee, effective immediately.

The next meeting is on Wednesday, August 13, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

At 6:08 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

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Mark Levine, Chair

UNAPPROVED

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 (jtriana@rwater.com)

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

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.

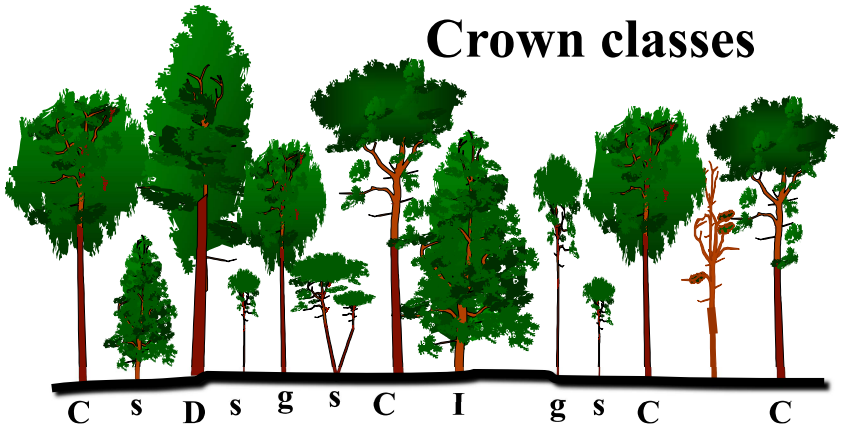
After initial measurements, each PoCT were randomly assigned to one of two treatments: control/no release or release. No competing/interfering neighboring trees will be removed for control treatment. For release treatment, all competing/interfering neighboring trees with crowns adjacent to the PoCT live 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 ft^2/acre to 58 ft^2/acre. The final overstory removal harvest was completed in 2012.

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

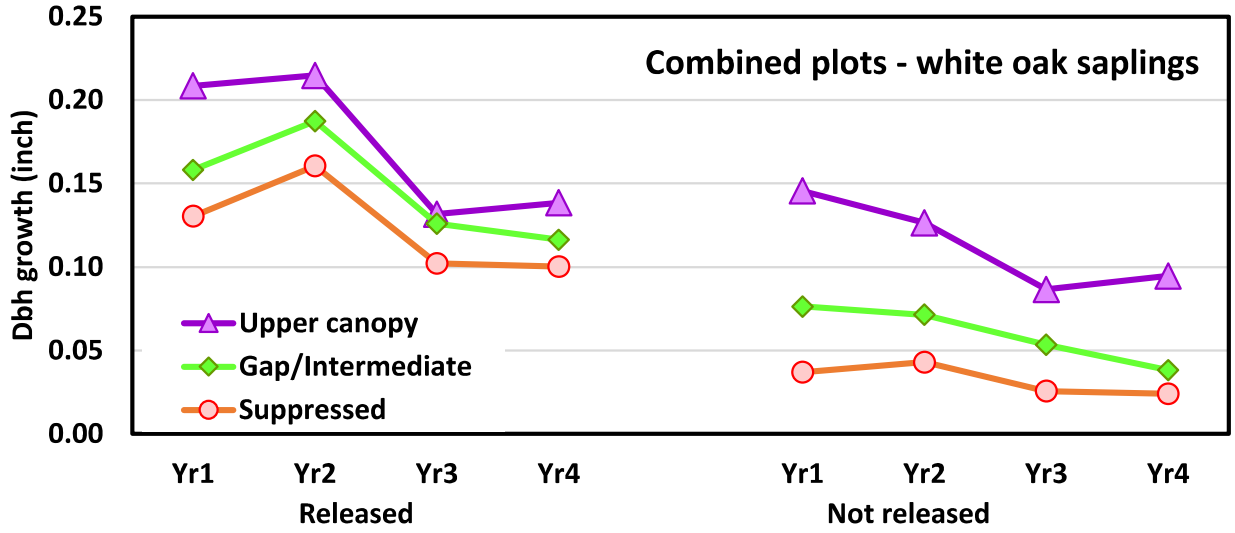
Initial canopy Position	Release	Unreleased control
Upper canopy	65	68
Gap	66	68
Suppressed	66	78
Grand Total	197	214



Crown touching release - Observations through 4rd year after release

Note: no statistics are presented

Diameter growth: Crop 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	

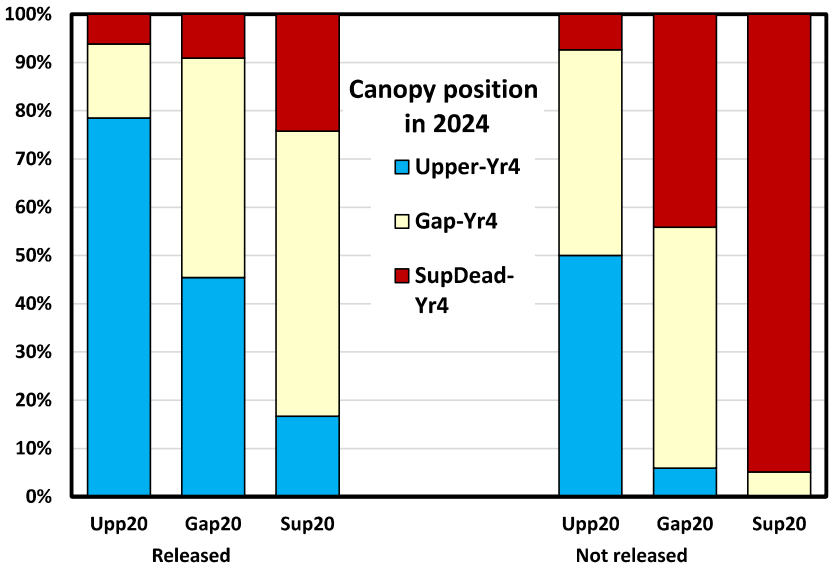
Crown-touching release

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.



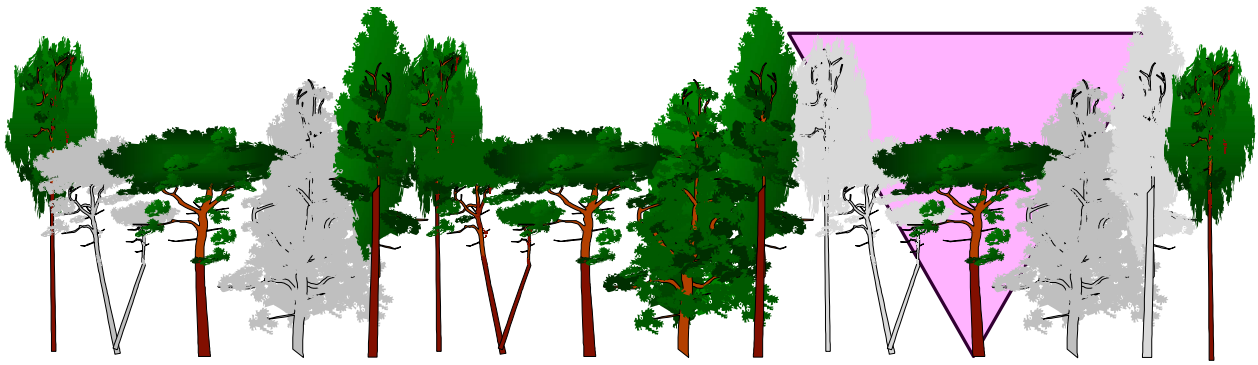
After four years it is clear that a higher proportion of released white oak saplings are in competitive (upper canopy) or potentially competitive (intermediate/gap) canopy positions than unreleased trees. Among stems that were initially in the upper canopy, nearly 80% remained in the upper canopy three 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.



Crown touching **No release** **Inverse cone**

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:

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

where β_0 is the estimated intercept, β_1 - β_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); $TREAT_i$ 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 appraised 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.

August 13, 2025
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
July 31	85%	90%	81%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
July 2025	2.25	5.24	3.74
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 – 7/31/25)	3.32	9.18	7.42

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

- Cheshire, former Bis property (CH 5) – Supplied updated survey to DEEP for the OSWA grant and it was approved. Started title work as required for the grant.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Following up with the town regarding P&SA.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – LUC determined that the application was complete. RPB scheduled the public hearing for September. Notices of the public hearing sent to all required parties.
- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Contacted potential buyer since there were signs posted at the property. They were still waiting to get estimates for work on the house.

Forestry Update

- Met with Audubon staff to learn how to assess a maple stand as "bird friendly." This certification can only be performed by an Audubon endorsed forester and will allow maple producers utilizing RWA property to claim their syrup product is bird friendly.
- Discussed a potential grant opportunity though the USDA pertaining to improving forest stands for timber production.
- Continued to work on the second field season of the Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant and have RWA submit for reimbursement from the USFS.

Recreation

- Bass tournament was held at Lake Saltonstall with 32 participants.
- Botany walk was held at Pine Hill with 25 participants.
- The New Haven PALS camp came twice to the Maltby lakes with kids to fish with the help of our police. Sixty-one kids participated.
- Discussed proposal of a trail at the former Beech St. property with the North Branford Land Conservation Trust.
- The Water Wagon was brought to six events.

	July		June	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,861	4,929	4,916	4,989

Special Activity Permits

URI (Ari Locklear and designees) – Release biological agent, moth Hypena opulenta to help control the population of invasive plants black and pale swallowwort, Lake Gaillard, Lake Saltonstall (7//17/2025) noontime.

CT Forest & Park Assoc. (CFPA) (Julia Sonen) conduct tour of property, Master Woodland Manager Program, forestry ecology, Seymour Site, Seymour (6/13/26). Note this is for next year.

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - Madison, 702 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Continued communicating with abutter who was trying to get his surveyor involved.
  - Agricultural agreements – Met with potential tenant in Prospect. Executed agreement with tenant for the fields in Branford.
  - North Branford, 1790 Middletown Ave. (NB 16) – Abutter called and said they would enter into a license agreement. In process to be signed.
  - Branford, Cherry Hill Rd. (BR 10A) – Certified letter was returned unopened. Murtha to advise on next step.
  - East Haven, Barberry Rd. fields (EH 9, 10, 11, & 13) – Review of the LOA in progress.
  - West Haven, Shingle Hill tanks (WH 7) – Received updated draft of the agreement with the City from Murtha. Forwarded to the City for their review.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in Branford, East Haven, Bethany, and North Branford. Inspected for water chestnut in Lake Saltonstall. Collected all plants found, and documented locations. Monitored water chestnut harvest and facilities crew helping dispose of the chestnut. All accessible chestnut was harvested in 10.5 days, including the rear bay. Performed a drone mission at Furnace Pond to documented the condition of the water chestnut before the harvest. Began preparation for herbicide treatment trials on the Saltonstall ridge.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	14 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	3 acres

- Woodbridge, Racebrook Rd. access (WO 10) – Sent draft of the access agreement to the property owners to review.
- Deer hunt – Two proficiency tests were held with all hunters passing. The head count after the tests stands at North Branford – 129; Bethany – 23; Prospect – 20; & Seymour – 8.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – North Branford approved the easement. Asked Murtha to send them the documents they needed to complete. Tried to correspond with UI staff about the easement over their property.
- Land Use Plan – Received final comments.
- Cell phone antennas – Corresponded with Crown Castle staff about the lease extension.
- Easements – Researched UI easement near Lake Whitney dam for Engineering. In this case, it existed by prescription due to the moving of the road over time. Researched easement for our watermain behind Walmart in the Hamden Mart off of Dixwell Ave. UI wants to move their lines to the back and is asking us to subordinate our easement.
- Drone missions - Performed a drone mission for Engineering to document condition of watermain underneath the Kimberly Ave. bridge, over the West River.

Attachments

- July 8, 2025 - Spotted lanternfly population exploding in CT, but bats may solve that problem – NH Register
- July 10, 2025 - Tract of land near CT reservoir that provides drinking water is bought. Here's why and what it cost – Hartford Courant
- July 12, 2025 - Officials unveil high-powered contraption to fight dangerous issue at reservoirs: 'They tend to grow rampant' – The Cool Down website
- July 11, 2025 - Yale Divinity and RWA Finalize Purchase of 24 Woodlands Acres in Madison Protecting the Watershed – CT Examiner
- July 29, 2025 - CT experts urge action as 'incredibly-hard-to-control' Japanese knotweed spreads across the state – NH Register

Upcoming Agenda Items
September 2025 -

Spotted lanternfly population exploding in CT, but bats may solve that problem

By Jordan Nathaniel Fenster – NH Register - July 8, 2025

Across Connecticut, spotted lanternflies are emerging by the millions. Cortnie Rosenhaft, for example, saw them in her backyard in Stamford.

“I just noticed a cluster of the nymphs on my blueberry bushes in my backyard,” she said. “I pretty much freaked out, so my husband and I dug out the two bushes and destroyed them. They were typical nymphs — small black bugs with white spots. We killed them by flicking them into a cup with rubbing alcohol. Some got away, unfortunately.”

Mary Tesla started seeing them up the coast.

“I found about a dozen nymphs in my flower pots on my patio and two adults and I squished them all,” she said. “They are quite prevalent in Milford.”

Gale Ridge, an entomologist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, said the lanternflies are particularly bad along the main highways, I-95 and I-91. They lay their eggs on any vertical surface, which includes along the sides of trucks and on the insides of wheels.

“Milford is just literally hopping with them,” Ridge said. “There's a spot there where the trucks stop, and that's where we started seeing them in really considerable numbers. Merchandise being moved around the country moves these things around, particularly when you have a species that's predisposed to lay their eggs on any vertical surface.”

Since being first identified in Pennsylvania in 2014, the invasive spotted lanternfly, usually native to Asia, has marched north. They’ve been seen in every Connecticut county, though there are established populations in Fairfield, Litchfield, Hartford, New Haven and New London counties.

Spotted lanternflies have four stages of life, the final, adult stage being the most recognizable. When this year's crop fully matures there will be clouds of the bugs, as there were last year, across the state.

There is evidence, however, that the spotted lanternfly’s days might be numbered. They’re new to New England and, as such, had no natural predators.

But that may be changing. Bats have discovered a taste for lanternfly.

Bat guano is the key

If you want to know what bats are eating, you have to get your hands dirty.

Researchers from Rutgers University learned that bats have been eating spotted lanternflies by looking through bat guano in New Jersey. Their findings were published in February in the journal Forests.

Guano monitoring, as it turns out, is a good method of tracking the lanternfly, and better than other methods.

“Conventional monitoring methods, such as traps or visual inspections, are limited in their spatial coverage and may not reliably attract or capture target species,” the study says. “In this study, we explored the potential of bat guano as an additional tool for invasive insect detection. We collected guano samples from five bat species across three forested sites in New Jersey, between 2018 and 2022 and used species-specific quantitative PCR (qPCR) to detect spotted lanternfly DNA.”

Over the course of the years the researchers were attempting to track lanternfly DNA in bat guano, they found that bats were, in many cases, eating more and more of the bugs. At some sites, lanternfly traces turned up in 12.5 percent of guano samples at the start of the project, rising to 29.4 percent at the end of the study.

Ridge said it’s happened before, with gypsy moths and the Western conifer seed bug. Both were invasive and ran rampant until local predators found them to be a food source. Spotted lanternflies are, “the new kid in the sandbox. Nobody's noticed them,” she said.

In the case of the moths, it was a fungus that was their undoing. There are still some hotspots, but they are nowhere near as prevalent as they used to be.

For the seed bugs, feather leg flies found that they could lay an egg on the bugs, which would then serve as a food source for the fly larvae.

With so much forest cover in the state, there are more than a few species that might find lanternflies to be a delicacy, bats, birds or something else.

“I’m hoping that, basically, the spotted lanternfly will run into the Connecticut buzzsaw of predators,” Ridge said.

Bats and fungus

There are about 1,400 species of bats in the world, nine of which live in Connecticut. They all eat insects.

The bat most often seen flitting around Connecticut skies, the little brown bat, is no longer a common resident. It succumbed to white nose syndrome, the result of a fungal infection.

“It grows on the bats while they're hibernating, and it essentially disrupts their sleeping so much that they dehydrate themselves, and wakes up the bats while they're supposed to be in reserve, and they use up all of their fat storages, and they essentially starve and dehydrate themselves over the course of the winter,” said Laurel Yohe. “It used to be in caves by the millions.”

Yohe is an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina, but she did her post-doctoral work at Yale. She said the little brown bat used to be the “common backyard bat,” but no longer.

“It’s one of those interesting ecology cases where you take for granted the common pigeon or something, and then all of a sudden one bad thing can happen and absolutely knock them out,” she said.

While Yohe said bat researchers are “seeing an increase in the consumption of the lanternflies,” the bats have their limits.

“Bats are what we call ‘opportunistic insect feeders.’ It's not like they're targeting one type of insect. They're just kind of flying around in the air and catching what's available,” Yohe said.

Bats prefer to eat mature lanternflies, and the timing works out well — the lanternflies mature just when the bats need them.

“July through September, that's when the lanternflies tend to be in their more adult form,” Yohe said. “That’s also when bats are really trying to fatten up for winter time, too.”

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Tract of land near CT reservoir that provides drinking water is bought. Here’s why and what it cost.
Hartford Courant | By Kenneth R. Gosselin | July 10, 2025

A not-for-profit regional water authority has acquired 24 acres of land in a watershed area that surrounds a reservoir tapped to provide water and other services to cities and towns.

The South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority said it purchased the property near Lake Hammonasset in Madison for $235,984 last month, partly financed by a $43,000 grant from the Yale Divinity School. The authority serves the Greater New Haven area.

The authority said the property will be added to its holdings of protected, watershed land around Lake Hammonasset, one of 10 reservoirs that are part of the authority’s system supplying water to 15 municipalities.

The newly-acquired, densely-wooded land off Durham Road will be protected from development, contains no trails and will not be open to the public for recreation, the authority said.

The authority oversees nearly 28,000 acres of watershed land, including 3,326 acres within the Hammonasset watershed.

In terms of available recreation areas, the RWA has them in 13 towns and cities in Greater New Haven and recreation permits can be purchased for access to those areas, dubbed “miles of wide, well-kept trails through a wilderness.” (Permits are $25 for a one-year individual permit, $50 for a two-year family permit and veterans, seniors, students and people with disabilities receive $5 off. For information email ask.recreation@rwater.com.)

The acquisition is part of the authority’s broader initiative, “The Land We Need for the Water We Use” to purchase watershed parcels to ensure the quality of water for its customers.

“Protecting the watershed lands that surround our water sources and drain into them is crucial to our mission to supply high-quality water to our customers,” John Triana, the authority’s real estate manager, said, in a statement. “By acquiring this parcel, we can ensure that it remains in its natural, pristine state.”

The purchase, from landowner Robert Weber last month, was partly financed by a grant from the Yale Divinity School. The grant supports the school’s effort to receive a Living Building Certificate from the International Living Future Institute.

According to its web site, the mission of the institute is “to cultivate a society that is socially just, culturally rich, and ecologically restorative.” The certificates are awarded for support of that mission.

“This is part of our larger effort to develop a sustainable future, an effort that we consider to be a sacred obligation,” Greg Sterling, dean of the Yale Divinity School, said, in a statement.

Officials unveil high-powered contraption to fight dangerous issue at reservoirs: 'They tend to grow rampant'

by Rick Kazmer – The Cool Down website - July 12, 2025

Regional Water Authority personnel in Connecticut are doing their best Stanley Steemer impersonation. But instead of carpet cleaning, the team is using hot steam to battle invasive plants growing around reservoirs, according to WTNH News 8.

"What I like about it is it seems to be controlling the seed bed as well as the plants that we're killing. The heat seems to be going into the surface layer of the soil," forester Casey Cordes said.

The contraption looks like a carpet cleaner, with a hose connected to a hot steam machine. The workers are shown in footage shared by News 8, mushing up the invaders with water heated to 250 degrees Fahrenheit.

The authority bought the equipment with a grant from the U.S. Forest Service, the TV station added.

At issue are mugwort, stiltgrass, Japanese barberry, and other foreign plants that have taken root and spread quickly. The species have shallow root systems, so they don't hold soil well during heavy rains, which leads to erosion into reservoirs, per News 8.

The troublesome weeds are also a problem for many homeowners.

"They tend to grow rampant. They tend to take over areas in your yard or the edge of your yard. So, that gets the attention of a lot of homeowners," Cordes told the station.

Columbia Climate School reported that the planet's overheating is aiding invasive species that take root in unwanted places.

As conditions change in certain areas, native plants may not do as well as a new arrival, which can thrive and create an imbalance. The number of alien varieties, both plant and animal, is expected to jump 36% by 2050 as Earth continues to warm.

An insect example is the emerald ash borer, which has destroyed 100 million trees in the United States since arriving from Asia.

The ash borer is among thousands of invasive species in the country that caused more than $20 billion in damages and losses annually from 2010 to 2020. That was a sharp increase from the $2 billion in yearly costs during the 1960s, according to a study published by ScienceDirect.

In Connecticut, the steam treatment also avoids the use of harmful herbicides, which can leach into reservoirs, per News 8.

Steam is likely not a viable option for most homeowners battling unwanted plant life. But there are planet-friendly ways to encourage native ones to grow. Native species are a boon to pollinators and, in turn, about 35% of the food supply, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Often, plants most people assume are weeds are actually native blooms that can be a part of a rewilded yard. Natural species require less work once established and don't need costly treatments and loads of water to maintain.

A combination of steam and measures to encourage native plant growth could be a combination to tackle the unwanted and prolific outsiders plaguing reservoirs and backyards alike.

"Deer are not going to eat them, insects are not going to eat them. So, they tend to run rampant in our forests," authority forester Joshua Tracy told News 8.

Yale Divinity and RWA Finalize Purchase of 24 Woodlands Acres in Madison Protecting the Watershed

CT Examiner – 7/11/25

MADISON – The Regional Water Authority has acquired 24 acres of undeveloped land off Durham Road, expanding its protected land holdings within the Lake Hammonasset watershed, in keeping with what officials say is a commitment to purchase watershed parcels that protect the public water supply.

The purchase, after more than two years of negotiations and a grant from the Yale Divinity School, was completed in June. The purchase price was $235,894. The acquisition is part of the RWA's "The Land We Need for the Water We Use" initiative, developed in 2007.

Lake Hammonasset, which straddles the Madison-Killingworth border to the southeast of this land, is one of the 10 reservoirs that supply water to the RWA.

In the late 1990s the non-profit corporation put millions of dollars into its capital budget and started "an aggressive program acquiring land on the public water supply watersheds for protecting the public water supply," said real Estate manager John Triana told CT Examiner.

In 2007, he said, "things were getting tighter" and the authority shifted focus, introducing the broader initiative.

RWA proposed the sale of 1,000 acres of "lands that we owned but it's not on the watershed, so it's not really protecting the public water supply or any part of it," using the profits to buy 3,000 acres, according to Triana.

The original plan was intended to accomplish this in 15 to 20 years.

"We still keep trying to work on it," said Traina. "We do try to keep that as a guiding star on how we're trying to protect the public water supply."

The latest purchase was made possible in part through a grant that supports the divinity school's work towards a Living Building Certificate from the International Living Future Institute.

The divinity school's Living Village, a regenerative, net-positive-energy residential complex, is scheduled to open in August.

"As part of the Habitat Exchange imperative of the Living Building Challenge, YDS is responsible for setting aside land in perpetuity through an approved local Land Trust organization," Tom Krattenmaker, Yale Divinity School director of communications, told CT Examiner in an email.

"One of the provisions that the Divinity School needed for that certification was that the property that you are protecting has to be adjacent or abutting at least 100 acres of another protected area," said Triana.

"We own a parcel of about 450 acres next to where the 24 acres are," he said.

RWA owns and protects nearly 28,000 acres of watershed land in the region, including 3,326 acres within the Hammonasset watershed.

While this newly acquired densely-wooded parcel, located south of County Road and east of Durham Road, has no trails and will not be open to the public, there is other RWA property open for fishing, hiking, horseback riding and boating.

"Recreation is part of the public education component of what we do," said Edward Crowder, a RWA spokesperson.

"We do want people to appreciate the value of pristine land and the impact of these activities is very minimal, so that land is still being protected from development, from the impact of heavy traffic and vehicles and people are still able to enjoy it," he said.

The Divinity School and RWA say they are both committed to protecting the environment.

"Most of the work we do is helping the environment, helping the public water supply and helping everyone involved and we're glad we got this one to the finish line with the help of the Divinity School," said Traina.

"We've protected it in perpetuity," said Traina, "and the benefits of that are going to last forever."

CT experts urge action as 'incredibly-hard-to-control' Japanese knotweed spreads across the state

By Sloan Brewster, NH Register - July 29, 2025

WINSTED — First seen in the United States on an estate in New Hampshire in the 1800s, Japanese knotweed has spread across the country, according to Tom Zetterstrom.

Japanese knotweed that is growing in the rear of the Winchester Department of Public Works property. The Northwest Conservation District held a Roadside Invasive Management Workshop at the site Tuesday.

Jim Shannon/Hearst Connecticut Media

An invasive plant, Japanese knotweed will wreak havoc on septic systems, grow through concrete, asphalt, rock walls, foundations and water and sewer lines, said Christian Allyn, founder of Invasive Plant Solutions in Canaan.

“And I've seen all of that as a professional operator,” Allyn said.

Primarily a how-to for local public work crews to manage Japanese knotweed and other invasive plants, including mugwort, bittersweet, Japanese Barberry and burning bush, the workshop included area first selectmen, public works supervisors, crews and conservation commission members from across northwest Connecticut.

It’s not only up to the towns, said Holly Hambleton of Connecticut Master Gardeners, but homeowners should also do their share of management.

Hambleton, who works with the Canton Department of Public Works to control weeds along the Farmington River Trail in the Collinsville section of town, noted that the plants can escape from people’s yards.

“If they don’t remove them from their yards there’s no sense for us to remove them from public areas,” she said. “If you don't get rid of your bittersweet, your burning bush, they will invade.”

“They'll just come back to us,” added Margery Winters, president of Simsbury Land Trust. “We remove them from our properties they'll just reseed from someone else’s property. Everybody's in this together.”

Allyn said the threat of invasive plants has risen in the last 10 years, particularly Japanese knotweed, which requires three to five years of consistent treatment with herbicides and monitoring for five to 10 more years.

“Japanese knotweed is incredibly hard to control,” he said. It can thrive in disturbed ecosystems like roadsides and it can crowd out native plants.

Presenters at the workshop discussed various herbicides and the best time of year to spray.

Todd L. Mervosh, of TM Agricultural & Ecological Services, in Suffield, said spraying Japanese knotweed should be done before the plant flowers. While blooming typically takes place in mid-August, hotter summers are bringing flowers early, he added.

“If we want to spray Japanese knotweed before it flowers, probably better do it very soon,” he said.

Cutting back the weed is also part of management but when that’s done too early, it grows back too quickly, Mervosh said. He recommends waiting until the end of June or beginning of July.

That way, when it does grows back, it will stay vegetative longer, giving a longer window before it flowers.

“Don’t do sloppy mowing,” added Zetterstrom. Not being careful while mowing can lead to the spread of the unwanted weed.

“The knotweed is a clonal propagator, meaning that small segments of the plant if dug up or disturbed can reproduce on their own, regrow into a new area,” Allyn said.

It can also spread when the edges of the river are repaired and weeds are broken and transplanted miles downstream, he said. The best way to prevent proliferation is not to transport contaminated soils.

Treating areas infested with invasive weeds on the local level involves creating budgets and getting towns, schools and conservation commissions educated so they can begin, Allyn said.

For homeowners looking to clear their land of the invader, however, he recommends seeking professional assistance.

“So there's about six of us here in Connecticut that offer this service and we know what herbicides to use and what time of the year they need to be applied so that the invasive plants are treated effectively,” he said. “Generally it’s best to connect with the professional so that way you're taking on the project responsibly in a way that's successful.”