

State Water Plan Policy Subcommittee
March 10, 2016
1:00, Conference Room 6C
CT DEEP, 79 Elm St., Hartford
Final Summary

Attendees: Bob Moore, Betsey Wingfield, Alicea Charamut, Martha Smith, Matt Pafford, Virginia de Lima, Corinne Fitting, Melissa Czarnowski, David Radka, Robert Young, Bart Halloran, Betsy Gara, David Sutherland;

Via phone: Tom Callahan, Ellen Blaschinski, John Hudak, Larry Bingaman, Beth Barton

Approved February 9, 2016 meeting summary.

Mike O'Neill is working on a draft of the Agricultural Policy discussed at the January meeting, and is hoping to have something for the members to react to at the next meeting.

The WPC Drought workgroup will be meeting April 8, and members will report out at the next Policy Subcommittee meeting.

The RFQ for a consultant through NEIWPC closed last week and the work group will report out at the April 5 Steering Committee meeting.

Discussion of cross walk handout on DEEP water quantity and water quality programs. A fundamental issue is whether or not water quality will be addressed in the State Water Plan as a separate focus, or only in the context of how it affects the use of water. Decision was made to add a column labeled "Drinking Water" to identify which programs had a very direct nexus to drinking water quality.

How critical water quality is varies with the issues and by geography. Fair and consistent decision making with respect to water management is an important focus of the State Water Plan. This is a difficult question to wrestle with in the abstract, as it depends on the scope of the State Water Plan (which may be limited by time and funding) and on the specific issues. For example, the group discussed nitrogen loading to Long Island Sound which is a very important issue but is being addressed under the Long Island Sound Study. Acknowledgement of the existing water quality programs and the role quality plays in water use issues may be as far as we can go in this first iteration of the State Water Plan. Ellen Blaschinski will add DPH's programs to the listing for the next meeting and further discussion. Matt Pafford will try to pull the discussion into a few sentences that summaries the Subcommittee's discussion on this issue borrowing strongly for language from the work of the Other States group.

Discussion of Drought Response Authorities. DEEP has very limited authorities in a drought. DPH's authorities are a little broader, including providing for drought response through

development of water supply emergency contingency plans in the Water Supply Planning process and in a drought emergency, have joint authority with DEEP and PURA to over-ride permits.

From a utility perspective, it is very difficult to enforce water restrictions. Communication between the water supplier and municipalities are critical and they are not always on the same page. Although there is a model ordinance for municipalities to adopt, it is too limited – it needs to be broadened out to include a pick-list of options that would fit into a particular municipality’s regulations. Few municipalities are willing to spend valuable policing efforts on enforcement of water restrictions. In addition, the water supplier could establish an emergency rate mechanism to discourage excessive use, but due to quarterly billing there is a disconnect in terms of incentives.

Discussion of obstacles to having emergency interconnections between utilities, as it may count against a system’s Margin of Safety, and a Sale of Excess Water permit must be obtained. There should be some room to simplify this process. Bob Young will draft a policy on emergency interconnects.

Discussion of equitability of conservation among different types of users during drought. The DPH regulations allow the water company to define “priority users” which do not have to reduce usage as much as other users when conservation is called for. Different water suppliers approach this issue differently and the information is not publically available. Further discussion may be helpful to determine if the guidance and regulations are resulting in the best outcome.

Ellen Blaschinski reported that revisions are being made to the proposed FOIA legislation (HB 5263) based upon discussions with a number of stakeholders and expect the bill to move out of committee shortly.

Agenda for the next meeting will be 1) OPM drought presentation, 2) quality vs quantity cross walk from DPH, 3) draft agricultural use policy, and 4) update on FOIA legislation.

Next meeting will be April 14, 2016 from 1 to 3 in conference room 2B.