Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, CT 06511
****Join the meeting now**
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AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – February 12, 2025
3. Lake Whitney Dam Update: Cody Savoy
4. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
5. Other land items
6. Upcoming Meetings:
   a. Finance Committee regular meeting – Monday, April 7, 2025 (FY 2026 Budget Review – All *RPB members are invited to attend*)
   b. Next regular Land Use Committee meeting - Wednesday, April 9, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
   c. Joint meeting of Consumer Affairs and Land Use – Thursday, April 17, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. (FY 2026 Budget Review – All *RPB members are invited to attend*)
7. Adjourn

**Members of the public may attend the meeting in person or via remote access using instructions at the top of the agenda. To view meeting documents, please visit https://tinyurl.com/3antbz44. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email to jslubowski@rwater.com

SAFETY MOMENT

MARCH – MOLD PREVENTION

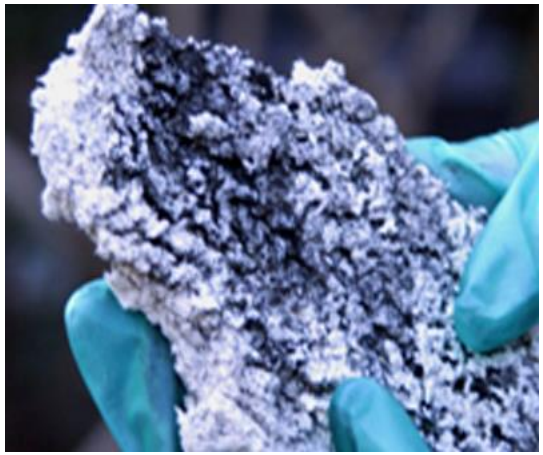
Tap Into Safety

Regional Water Authority

Molds are part of the natural environment. Outdoors, mold breaks down dead organic matter such as fallen leaves and dead trees, but indoors, mold spores can cause health problems such as allergic reactions, asthma attacks and irritate the eyes, nose, skin and lungs.

Tips to Prevent Mold:

- Repair water leaks quickly
- Clean and repair roof gutters regularly
- Keep air conditioning drip pans clean
- Keep indoor humidity low
- Wipe down condensation that collects around windows and doors.



Service – Teamwork – Accountability – Respect – Safety

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

Regional Water Authority

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
February 12, 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, February 12, 2025, at the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven, Connecticut and via remote access.

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

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

CAES: C. Rutledge

Management: S. Lakshminarayanan, V. Benni, and J. Triana

Mr. Malloy called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

On motion made by Mr. Horbal and seconded by Mr. Eitzer, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of its January 8, 2025 meeting, as presented.

At 5:39 p.m., Mr. Levine entered the meeting.

Ms. Rutledge, of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, provided a presentation of invasive bugs in Connecticut. She reported on the Emerald Ash Borer, which is a highly destructive beetle that specifically targets ash trees, with a lifecycle that spans one year. This pest was first identified in the United States in 1990 and subsequently in Connecticut in 2012, starting in New Haven County and gradually spreading to northeastern Windsor and Litchfield County. Current control measures include the use of resistant plant varieties, natural predators such as woodpeckers, the release of parasitoids, and various diseases, alongside biocontrol strategies. Management efforts focus on monitoring multiple sites to assess tree health and the various stages of the beetle's lifecycle, whether in the larval or adult stages. A significant challenge ahead will be determining effective methods for the regrowth of ash trees.

Next, she provided an update on the Spotted Lantern Fly, which is an invasive species that first appeared in Pennsylvania in 2012 and has recently been reported in Connecticut in 2023. This insect, related to aphids and cicadas, is characterized by its large head outgrowth and vibrant appearance. Originally from northeastern Asia, it has notably affected the grape and wine industry in Korea. She stated that the fly spreads through transportation corridors and is currently found in southern Connecticut. Its adult lifespan is considerable, and can cause significant damage, primarily feeding on the Tree of Heaven but also targeting other plants such as multiflora rose, grapes, apples, and peaches. Infestations can be identified by a sooty mold found on leaves resulting from sap consumption, which also attracts bees, wasps, and ants. Control methods include the "hack and squirt" technique, which eliminates tree roots and traps made from shingle materials.

At 6:30 p.m., Ms. Rutledge withdrew from the meeting.

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

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
January 31	76%	98%	77%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
January 2025	0.72	5.95	3.57
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	26.41	43.82	30.76

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

- Madison – Corresponded with property owner of 24+/- acres.
- Cheshire, Bis property – Corresponded with DEEP staff about the status of the OSWLA grant.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – Attended the public hearing at Seymour Town Hall and presented the disposition application. Updated town staff about the progress.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – ZBA approved all the variances that we submitted. P&Z resubdivision application goes before P&Z in February.
- Woodbridge, 2040 Litchfield Tpk. – Owner was given permission to replace the chimney in the kitchen but must look substantially like the original.

Forestry Update

- Located some of the West River plot growth plot centers near Lake Chamberlain.
- Met with the Guilford Town Engineer to talk about our improvements to Goat Lot Rd.
- Responded to a survey from the National Agricultural Statistics Service for USDA's 2024 Census regarding Horticultural Specialties.
- Researched and responded to a survey from the National Agricultural Statistics Service on beekeeping and honey production.
- Investigated a stolen firewood complaint from a RWA woodcutter in Bethany.

Recreation

- New Year's Day Walk had 26 participants.
- Winter tree walk had 29 participants.
- Submitted the annual Recreation Report to DPH as required for our permits.
- DPH issued a recreation activity permit for a hiking trail along the Mill River between Dixwell Ave. and South New Rd.
- Cleared trails at Lake Chamberlain.
- Contacted summer camps about summer events.

	January		December	
	2025	2024	2024	2023
Permit Holders	4,775	4,743	4,787	4,742

Special Activity Permits

- Yale University, School of the Environment (Mark S. Ashton) - Education/field trips for grad students, North end of Lake Gaillard along Crooked Brook Feb. 7; Off Route 79 in North Madison Feb. 28; Silvicultural stand delineation exercise; natural regeneration methods; (2/7/25 & 2/28/25).
- US Forest Service (Bryan M. Tirrell, Forester) – research 391 Totoket Road N. Branford, forest inventory study plot (5/1/2025 – 9/30/2025)
- Hamden Fire Department (Lieutenant Doug O'Rourke) – ice water rescue training, Lake Whitney Old Hartford Turnpike Entrance on 1/24/2025 and Clark's Pond on 1/28/2025 (1/24/2025 and 1/28/2025)
- Yale University School of the Environment- (Dr. Craig R. Brodersen) - Field trips in field botany and forestry. - North Madison Cedar Swamp off of Rt. 80, (1/30/2025-6/30/2025)
- UConn, Dept of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology (Dr. Mark Urban) – Research on pond amphibians - Totoket mountain in Northford; ridge north of Lake Gaillard; 60 ponds distributed to the west and east of Big Gulph Brook (3/1/2025- 3/1/2026)

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
    - Hamden, Downs Rd. field (HA 36) – Corresponded with tenant about allowing bee hives within her licensed area.
    - Woodbridge, Sperry Rd. (WO 5) – Contacted licensee about maintaining the field.
    - Seymour, Clinton Rd. (SE 7) – Town issued letter requesting renewal (5 years) of the agreement for radio equipment at the site.
    - Guilford, Saw Mill Hill Rd. (GU 12) – Contacted licensee about parking a car over the property line.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford and Guilford. Met with All Habitat staff to discuss options to treat autumn olive in the field.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	6.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	0 acres

- Deer hunt - 160 surveys were returned. The table below summarizes hunter effort.

Properties	**Surveys Returned**	**Total Hunting Days**	**Total Hunting Hours**
North Branford-Gaillard	108 out of 135	732.5	3942.0
Bethany	25 out of 25	63.0	387.7
Prospect	19 out of 20	185.0	807.0
Ansonia/Seymour	8 out of 8	33.0	208.5
Total	**160**	**1,013.5**	**5,345.2**

- East Haven, Beach Ave. watermain – DEEP staff noted several people contacted them to oppose the project.

- North Haven, 60 Middletown Ave. easement – Reviewed drafts of termination of easement. Executed the document and sent to property owner for recording.
- Hamden, 205 Skiff St. – Met with ACES staff and potential buyer about the lease to the school at this property. Said we would look at their question about whether or not the lease is assignable.
- Madison, Durham Rd. cell tower generator (MA 2D) – DPH issued the change of use permit for the diesel generator.
- Milford, Beaver Brook system parcels – Responded to inquiry from attorney about the deed restrictions for some of the parcels sold to Subway.
- Watermain easement encroachments – Sent draft easement agreement to Murtha to review before contacting owners of properties where we have watermain easements.
- Flood ALERT/Raw water – Met to discuss the new storage figures for the West River lakes. Updated the spreadsheet thereafter.
- Lake Whitney Dam project, East Rock Park – NRA concluded the tree inventory inside East Rock Park.
- Land Use Plan – Sent out meeting invitation to several departments about the start of our latest update of the LUP.
- Bren Leard and Juliette Doyle completed their seasonal employment with us through the LSR grant funds.
- Boundaries – Checked and remarked boundaries in North Branford and Madison.

The next regular meeting is on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

At 6:40 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Oslander, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

_____

Mark Levine, Chair

(R) = Attended remotely.

March 12, 2025
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
February 28	81%	95%	82%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
February 2025	3.08	1.60	3.31
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 – 2/28/25)	29.49	45.42	34.07

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

- Madison – Corresponded with property owner of 24+/- acres.
- Cheshire, Bis property (CH 5) – Received marked up survey from DEEP with comments.
- Cheshire, Moran/Ricci property – Corresponded with DEEP staff about the OSWLA grant for this property.
- Seymour, 56 Squantuck Rd. (SE 5) – RPB approved the disposition application. Jennifer noted the public notice will go into the newspapers on March 3rd.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – P&Z approved the re-subdivision application. Corresponded with Juliano about filing the map on the land records.

Forestry Update

- Removed some trees from CAES plots where they were interfering with the growth of study trees.
- Sent out firewood program renewal packets.
- Contacted USFS's grant administrator to inquire about the future of the LSR grant, and requested a meeting to discuss said administrator's impending retirement.
- Inspected Menunketuc timber harvest and witch hazel harvest.

Recreation

- Compiled events for the next newsletter.
- Passed along information to permit holders that the causeway at the head of Lake Chamberlain would be closed to vehicular access, but open to horses and people on foot.
- Addressed several complaints about the lock at Lake Chamberlain parking lot.
- Ordered trout for stocking this year and applied to DEEP for the liberation permit.
- Reviewed applications and started interviewing applicants for recreation staff.

	February		January	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Permit Holders	4,730	4,771	4,775	4,743

Special Activity Permits

- Woodbridge Fire Department (Sean Rowland) – ice water rescue training, Lake Dawson, (2/4/2025).
- New Haven Bird Club (Patrick T. Leahy) – Maintain and monitor bluebird nesting boxes on 7 sites – Downes Road, Bethany, adjacent to Lake Bethany property and field below Lake Dawson dam,

Woodbridge, farm field on Sperry Road and Lake Chamberlain below the dam, Lake Watrous and other properties – (2/1/2025-12/31/2025).

- Branford Land Trust (Tom Cleveland) - Tracking class - Lake Saltonstall woods – (3/1/2025).
- CT Dept. of Energy & Envir.Protection Wildlife Biologist (Dr. Devaughn Fraser) - acoustic monitoring of bats to determine species occupancy of hibernacula and species presence/bat activity in Fall, Spring, and Summer to help inform tree management activities, Lake Gaillard, Lake Saltonstall added 2/26/25 to permit and all have been notified (2/28/2025-2/28/2026).
- A. DiCesare Associates (Clay Carlson)—perform a routine and underwater inspection of the Lake Saltonstall Bridge, contracted by CTDOT to perform the inspection; (3/20/25 & 3/21/25).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
    - Hamden, Booth Terrace (HA 22 and HA 22A) – Signed license agreement to allow extension of lawn over the property line.
    - Guilford, Saw Mill Hill Rd. (GU 12) – Corresponded with licensee about parking a car over the property line.
    - North Haven, 45 Sackett Pt. Rd. (NO 5) – Informed by North Haven wetlands staff that there was a encroachment from 366 Old Maple Rd. and they were issuing a cease and desist order to the owner to remove items from the floodplain.
    - North Branford, Great Hill Rd. field (NB 4) – Reviewed herbicide applications for the field with the tenant.
    - North Branford, hay field (NB 5A) – Notified tenant that spreading manure on frozen ground is not allowed.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford, Killingworth and Guilford. CIPWG Invasive Plant Review Subcommittee to discuss language to be used in the invasives bill that will allow for sterile cultivars of Japanese barberry and winged euonymus to be allowed for sale at nurseries.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	18.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	0 acres

- East Haven, Beach Ave. watermain – Received Notice of Insufficiency from DEEP. Discussed responses to DEEP with consultant.
- New Haven, Sachem St. easement – Sent draft easement to Yale to review.
- Hamden, 205 Skiff St. – Met with ACES staff and Murtha staff about the lease to the school. We believe that any amendment to the lease would require DPH and RWA approvals. Asked them to draft a lease amendment for us to review.
- Hamden, Olin Powder Ponds valve – Question came through our Engineering Dept. about a sluice valve next to Treadwell St. Responded through our staff that we did not own the valve and had no information on it since it was not on our property.
- Woodbridge, Laurel Rd. discontinuance – Replied to Woodbridge staff again that we had no objection with the town discontinuing the end of the road that abuts our property (WO 11).
- Hamden, Quinnipiac proposal (HA 17) – Responded to inquiry from university about selling or leasing part of the old tank property.
- Orange, Baldwin Rd. guy wire (OR 4) – Replied to UI staff about getting a license agreement in place for the guy wire.
- North Branford, UI watermain easement – Got draft survey and made comments. Asked surveyor to add a polygon for the easement area. Forwarded to Murtha to get title company's comments.

- Hamden, South Sleeping Giant wellfield – Answered questions about the limits of our easement at the golf course from Engineering staff.
- Land Use Plan – Sent out Introduction section to staff for comments.
- Boundaries – Worked on marking boundaries in Madison, Guilford, Killingworth, North Branford and Hamden.
- North Branford, Sea Hill Rd. – Emailed and left VM for town engineer to find out the status of Sea Hill Rd. behind the gate. Have not gotten a reply.
- Guilford, Haggarty property – Noted that the monastery bought the field from Haggarty that contains the tunnel access and air release valve.
- North Haven, easement for Whitney/Wintergreen Tank (HA 25) – Assisted GIS with finding easement documents for accessing tank in Hamden from road in North Haven.
- Drone flights – Performed drone flights at the West Pond Tank in North Branford for Engineering staff.

Attachments

- January 30, 2025 - Democrats Propose Updates To State Water Plan - CT News Junkie
- February 8, 2025 - Scientists issue grim prediction for critical resource in 2025: 'We are seeing worse extremes on both sides' – The Cool Down website
- February 13, 2025 - Hamden considers proposal to remove 'hazardous' trees on scenic roads without prior approval – NH Register
- February 19, 2025 - Invasive plants wreak havoc in CT. Meet the new additions to those bringing ecological damage. – Hartford Courant
- February 27, 2025 - Chemicals Found In CT Drinking Water Revealed In New Study – Patch.com

Upcoming Agenda Items

April 2025 - Skiff St., Hamden

Democrats Propose Updates To State Water Plan

CT News Junkie - by Viktoria Sundqvist - January 30, 2025

Two Connecticut lawmakers are introducing updates to the State Water Plan to account for climate change.

State Sen. Martha Marx, D-New London, and state Rep. Jonathan Steinberg, D-Westport, said the updates, proposed as Senate Bill 732, would ensure the plan is meeting the standards and needs of the Connecticut people and is prepared to meet current and future pressures and demands, including in events of fires, droughts, or floods.

Potential revisions under SB 732 include ensuring the Water Plan is reviewed and updated every five years, and including strategies in it to address climate change resiliency, emerging contaminants, and other threats to state water resources.

“Connecticut is seeing the impacts of changing weather systems in its own backyard, and to not address it now is like waiting to call the fire department until the flames spread to the room you’re in,” Marx said in a news release. “Statewide, from the coasts to the forests, the State Water Plan is especially important for our constituents and communities.”

Every municipality has water sources that can be impacted by flood and drought, she said.

“The Water Plan needs to reflect all of the pressures facing Connecticut, including the one becoming more noticeable as time passes,” Marx said.

Steinberg said Connecticut needs clean drinking water now, but it also needs clean drinking water 20 years from now.

“Flooding and spills threaten the safety of our drinking water, and dozens of communities with public water supplies haven’t put steps in place to protect them,” Steinberg said in the release. “Combined with the impacts of climate change, which takes Fairfield County from deluging floods to bone-dry drought within a few months, it’s clear our water plan needs updating.”

Denise Savageau, president of the CT Association of Conservation Districts and a member of the Water Planning Council Advisory Group, has been involved in the implementation of the State Water Plan since its adoption in 2019. She said healthy watersheds in the state are a necessity, and climate change can have a large impact on water quality.

“Increases in stream temperatures and low flows are resulting in increases in cyanobacteria and harmful algal blooms,” Savageau said. “Flooding brings in excess nutrients and sedimentation.”

It is more crucial than ever to provide decision-makers with clear guidance on sustainable water stewardship, said Alicea Charamut, executive director of the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut.

“While the original plan was a strong foundation, regular reviews and updates are essential to address current and future challenges,” she said.

The purpose of the State Water Plan is to balance the state’s use of water to meet all needs in the state and provide information and principles to better inform decisions made across the state, officials said.

Scientists issue grim prediction for critical resource in 2025: 'We are seeing worse extremes on both sides'

The Cool Down website - by Timothy McGill - February 8, 2025

The latest report from a large group of scientists and researchers whose mission is to keep an eye on Earth's water warns that our overheating planet is "wreaking havoc" on our planet's water cycle and that the outlook for 2025 is grim.

What's happening?

The Global Water Monitor (GWM) is a network of organizations and individual experts who collaborate with the goal of offering free, rapid, and global climate and water resource data.

The GWM has pioneered approaches to merging and analyzing water-related measurements from satellites and ground stations that help them deliver timely insights into rainfall patterns, atmospheric conditions, soil moisture levels, river discharge, and water body volumes.

The GWM's latest report includes a dire outlook for 2025, warning of the potential for new droughts to develop or intensify in northern South America, southern Africa, northern Africa, Central Asia, parts of North America, and Western Australia. The report not only has projections for this year, but it also summarizes a challenging year for the planet's water resources in 2024.

"In 2024, Earth experienced its hottest year on record and water systems across the globe bore the brunt, wreaking havoc on the water cycle," said Professor Albert van Dijk, the lead author of the report, per The Guardian. "Heavy rainfall events also caused widespread flash flooding in Afghanistan and Pakistan, killing more than 1,000 people. Wildfires driven by the hot and dry weather burned through more than 52,000 sq km in September alone, releasing vast amounts of greenhouse gases. So we are seeing worse extremes on both sides."

Why is the new report on Earth's water resources important?

The GWM report found a troubling trend that favors more extremely dry months.

The report notes that record dry months were 38% more common compared to the 1995-2005 baseline average for global precipitation over land. On the other end of the spectrum, extreme precipitation events in 2024 were 52% more common, with West Africa, Europe, and Asia experiencing record-breaking daily rainfall events.

"From historic droughts to catastrophic floods, these extreme events impact lives, livelihoods, and entire ecosystems," added Van Dijk.

"In 2024, water-related disasters caused more than 8,700 fatalities, displaced 40 million people, and resulted in economic losses exceeding US$550 billion globally, with true figures likely higher due to incomplete data and events not listed," stated the GWM report.

The biggest toll in terms of human tragedy came from the most damaging events that occurred in Africa, South Asia, and Papua New Guinea. Floods and drought displaced over 30 million in Southern Africa and the Sahel region. These events exacerbated food insecurity, creating food shortages for over 30 million people.

The report also noted over $520 billion in economic damage globally from tropical cyclones and ecological damage from droughts and deforestation-related fires in the Amazon rainforest.

What's being done about the impacts of a warming world on Earth's water cycle?

"We need to prepare and adapt to inevitably more severe extreme events," suggested Van Dijk. "That can mean stronger flood defences, developing more drought-resilient food production and water supplies, and better early warning systems. Water is our most critical resource, and its extremes — both floods and droughts — are among the greatest threats we face."

Reducing the amount of heat-trapping gases released into the atmosphere is crucial. We can all take some simple steps that will help like unplugging "energy vampires" in our homes, upgrading to LED bulbs, and weathering our homes.

Hamden considers proposal to remove 'hazardous' trees on scenic roads without prior approval

By Austin Mirmina – NH Register - Feb 13, 2025

HAMDEN — Dangerous trees growing on the town's handful of scenic roads could be removed without consent under a new proposal designed to improve public safety, officials say.

According to the proposed amendment, Hamden's tree warden would be allowed to remove "hazardous" trees, limbs or branches that pose "an imminent threat to public safety" along the town's six designated scenic roads without having to get prior approval from the Hamden Legislative Council.

But residents worry it could open the door for unnecessary removal.

Hamden's current regulations for scenic roads require town officials to obtain permission from the legislative body before removing any mature trees. But the proposed amendment would authorize Hamden's tree warden to complete emergency work when there is "not sufficient time to obtain prior approval."

The warden then must notify the Legislative Council within a week of taking action.

"I agree with this ordinance because safety is first," Joseph Colello, Hamden's public works director, said during a recent Legislative Council meeting. Residents of scenic roads, he added, "would not want a friend or loved one or anybody else to be injured or worse if something had fallen that we knew was dangerous and we didn't take action on it."

Hamden's scenic routes include portions of Hogan and River roads, Spruce Bank Road, Hillfield Road, Tuttle Avenue and Brookside Drive, the proposal states. With the exception of Brookside Drive, which sits in southern Hamden, all of the roads run through the northern part of town, many of them near Sleeping Giant State Park.

Known for their natural beauty and rural charm, these roads feature lush tree canopies that create ample shade for pedestrians, including the Quinnipiac University students who frequent the area, said Linda Remetz, an Ives Street resident who also owns a home on Hogan Road.

Some of the scenic roads are so narrow that "you have to move over when the other car comes," North Haven resident Lana Claire Ives said.

"When you get into that area on Hogan Road, you're lost," Ives added. "It's so beautiful."

Some residents were skeptical about the revision to the town's scenic road ordinance. Instead of being cut down, dead trees, such as those on Spruce Bank Road, should be preserved as a habitat for animals living in the area, including woodpeckers, owls, bobcats, deer and turkeys, Remetz said.

Colello responded to residents' concerns by clarifying that the "only reason" for removing trees on scenic roads would be if "we think someone could get hurt or worse."

"We are not taking down trees that are healthy and we're not even thinking that way," he said. "In fact, we prune them to keep them healthier when we can."

Diane Hoffman, a member of the Hamden Tree Commission, called the change "appropriate" and said Hamden's tree warden, Christopher Rhone, "needs to have the right to take action" when trees endanger public safety.

Hoffman said she would like to see the town use a consulting arborist to evaluate the health of scenic road trees that lose limbs or branches.

Katie Kiely, chair of the Legislative Council's Public Works, Facilities and Sustainability Committee, said they were "open" to Hoffman's idea and they would consider it ahead of the group's Feb. 18 meeting, when a vote on the amendment is expected to occur.

Sue Gruen, Hamden's town attorney, said the amendment would bring Hamden in line with other municipalities whose regulations for scenic roads have similar provisions for emergency tree clearing.

Invasive plants wreak havoc in CT. Meet the new additions to those bringing ecological damage.

Hartford Courant | By Stephen Underwood | Feb. 19, 2025

There's been a lot of discussion in Connecticut around invasive plant species wreaking havoc across the state's rivers and ponds, and even growing through concrete foundations, as the state continues to allocate funds each year to fight the plants.

"These are plants that are not native to Connecticut and cause some sort of environmental, economic or human health damage," said Lauren Kurtz, an invasive species outreach specialist at the University of Connecticut. "These criteria must usually be met to be included as an invasive plant species."

In Connecticut, the different criteria a plant must meet to be defined as invasive is set under state statute, Kurtz said. These criteria include a plant being non-native, a plant naturalized to its surroundings, a plant that grows without the benefit of cultivation, a plant that has the potential for rapid and widespread dispersion and a plant that exists in high numbers outside of habitats that are managed.

Kurtz said invasive plants are bad for the local ecosystem for a variety of reasons. Invasive plants outcompete and choke out native flora and they don't provide a food source for native wildlife. In other cases, they can harm pollinators by reducing food and shelter by altering the ecosystem structure.

The term "invasive" was first coined in the 1950s, but it wasn't until the 1990s that greater awareness of the problem spread. In 1999, then-President Bill Clinton signed an executive order establishing the National Invasive Species Council. The executive order required the federal government to begin dealing with invasive plant and animal species.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's aquatic invasive species grant program has been providing funding to combat invasive aquatic plants like hydrilla for over five years. The highly invasive hydrilla chokes out all other native plant species in the water it infests.

A particularly robust species of hydrilla that scientists have determined is genetically unique to the Connecticut River grows at such an explosive rate and achieves such density at the height of its growing season, that it traps boats and fishermen cannot sink a hook through it.

DEEP has previously awarded approximately $1.5 million to 59 projects during the first four years of the program, according to a spokesperson with the agency. This year, the state awarded $400,000 to 12 projects that will reduce the impacts of aquatic invasive species on inland waters in Connecticut.

There are 102 invasive plant species in Connecticut, according to Kurtz.

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Council maintains an official state list of which plants have been categorized as invasive since 2004.

That number has been steadily increasing over the past few decades as increased globalization and horticulture have introduced more invasive plants inside Connecticut's borders.

Last October, the state added five new species including Japanese angelica tree, Quackgrass, Japanese wisteria and Chinese wisteria. The ornamental Callery pear has also been added to the state's invasive

list. The Callery pear, a species of pear tree native to China and Vietnam, is known for its white, pedaled flowers in the springtime.

Quackgrass

Quackgrass also is known as Medusa's head, Devil's grass, witch grass, and knotgrass, according to experts.

The sod-forming grass is native to Europe and Western Asia, according to UConn Extension. It is believed to have been introduced to the United States from Europe in the 1600s through hay bales and seeds and now can be found in nearly all 50 states.

It grows very well in disturbed areas that are cool, moist and receive less than 50% shade.

Among the most prominent features includes stems that have long, claw-like leaf structures that clasp the stem. Quackgrass grows fast and crowds out native species and crops and quickly monopolizes soil nutrients and water, according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Quackgrass can also prevent the growth of native plants through a biological phenomenon called allelopathy. The plant can release chemicals that inhibit the growth of other plants.

"This means that they can make chemicals that come out of their roots or leaves," Kurtz said. "The chemicals degrade into the soil and can have harmful effects on other native plant species. Not all invasive plants can do this, but there are several that can."

Quackgrass is different from other lawn pests including crabgrass as crabgrass tends to flatten itself to the ground, while quackgrass has a more upright growth habit. Crabgrass is an annual, while quackgrass is a perennial, according to Kurtz.

Japanese angelica tree

Japanese angelica tree is an extremely aggressive, fast growing, deciduous tree that invades a forest canopy.

This deciduous tree grows 20-30 feet tall and is native to China, Japan, Korea and Russia and was introduced to North America in 1830 as an ornamental plant. The bark is rough and gray with prickles and the plant produces a small black fruit.

“All of these plants including Japanese angelica tree have been largely introduced through the ornamental plant trade, they are certainly not new to Connecticut,” Kurtz said. “But there is a lot more concern as they spread fast outside of cultivation. Wisteria can spread by seeds, stems touching the ground, and root fragments left in the soil.”

The plant was at one time cultivated for its exotic appearance in gardens. It is thought that its spread may have went largely unnoticed because of its close resemblance to a native plant called the devil’s walking stick.

Japanese wisteria

The invasive plant spreads rapidly and can alter natural ecosystems or interfere with landscaping, according to state officials.

It was first brought from Japan to the United States in the 19th century through the ornamental garden trade. The invasive plant became a popular fixture in gardens because of its abundant and large lavender colored flowers while in full bloom.

“It’s a very unique plant the grows very well on a structure,” Kurtz said. “People traditionally have grown them on arches or structures, but that’s the problem with the plant, because it grows on a forest canopy and quickly takes over an entire forest.”

Japanese wisteria spreads quickly and can climb trees and shrubs, strangling them and killing them. It’s notable for its ability to wrap its vines around trees and strangle the tree until it dies. The plant also has a very aggressive and extensive root system that can bore down more than 10 feet below the soil and suffocate nearby plants.

Japanese wisteria is found invasive in the mid-Atlantic and southeastern U.S., from upstate New York to Florida and west to Texas.

Chinese wisteria

Chinese wisteria looks very similar to its Japanese counterpart but has some unique traits, according to state officials.

The invasive was introduced to the United States by the early 20th century as a popular ornamental gardening plant. Much like Japanese wisteria, the plant has hard woody vines that twine tightly around host tree trunks and branches and can cut through bark.

The plant quickly takes over ecosystems and kills native plants much like Japanese wisteria.

But one distinguishing feature can help separate the two, according to officials. Vines of Chinese wisteria grow in a counter-clockwise direction while Japanese wisteria vines grow clockwise. Chinese wisteria vines are also brown-gray in color with fine white hairs, while the Japanese wisteria vines are smooth and brown.

“It’s becoming more noticeable particularly among roadways and it was still being commonly sold,” Kurtz said. “So that was the main driver. We immediately put a prohibition on the sale or transport of the plant by putting it on the invasive list.”

Chinese wisteria has been reported to be invasive in at least 19 states from Massachusetts to Illinois south to Texas

Callery pear

Also known as the ornamental or Bradford pear, the invasive plant is a species of pear tree native to China and Vietnam.

The invasive plant was once widely popular and planted for its white blooms in the spring, according to Kurtz. But this ornamental tree has become highly invasive. It threatens native wildlife habitat and has become a nuisance for private and public landowners.

“It’s distributed by birds that eat their fruit,” Kurtz said. “It’s a really popular landscape tree because it blooms early in the spring.”

The fruit of the Callery pear tree is small, hard, and green to brown in color. The fruit is considered inedible to humans because of its many cyanide-laced seeds unlike non-invasive pear plants that are edible.

Unlike the other invasive plants, for the Callery pear in particular, the new law states that “no person shall import, move, sell, purchase, transplant, cultivate or distribute …” the plant on or after Oct. 1, 2027.

“Trees take longer to grow than shrubs and can take a few years to mature,” Kurtz said. “So the new law gives nurseries a few years to sell their Callery pears they are currently growing. It gives them some buy-in as well to sell the stock they have invested in. It is controversial but that was the reasoning behind the delay.”

How do invasive plants kill native plants?

Invasive plants can kill native plants and animals by outcompeting them for resources, altering habitats and introducing plant pathogens.

Some invasive plants have aggressive root systems that spread long distances from a single plant. These root systems often grow so densely that they smother the root systems of surrounding vegetation.

“They’re really competitive and will shade out some of the native plants and displace what was growing there,” Kurtz said. “The invasive plants will pretty much take over very quickly.”

One of the ways an invasive species can prevent the growth of native plants is a biological phenomenon called allelopathy.

“This means that they can make chemicals that come out of their roots or leaves,” Kurtz said. “The chemicals degrade into the soil and can have harmful effects on other native plant species. Not all invasive plants can do this, but there are several that can.”

Black walnut trees are known to inhibit the growth of many other plants, including basswood, birch and pine trees through allelopathy. About half of the state’s invasive plant species are thought to be able to produce allelopathic effects on plants around them, according to the CIPC.

How do invasive plants come to Connecticut?

Many of the state’s invasive plants were brought to the U.S. for gardening or used as decorative shrubs. Others came here accidentally through hitching rides in the soils of other plants on shipping containers.

“The problem with many invasive plants is that they are pretty to look at and popular because they can grow in a lot of habitats,” Kurtz said. “The nursery industry is successful at propagating them because they are so hardy, robust, and adaptable. So if you have one in your yard, there’s a good chance it spreads beyond your yard.”

Invasive plant seeds are often distributed by birds, wind or unknowingly humans allowing seeds to move great distances. Some invasive plants have aggressive root systems that spread long distances from a single plant.

“Many invasives thrive on disturbed soil,” Kurtz said. “You’ll see a lot of invasive plant species on the sides of roads or at construction sites. They tend to propagate very quickly in areas with lots of human impact. Disturbed soil is any soil that has been changed from its natural state by human activity.”

Rose Hiskes (second from right), from the Connecticut Invasive Plants Working Group, talks about local plant, during an Invasive Species workshop sponsored by the Hebron Pollinator Pathway Group at the Raymond Brook Preserve in Hebron on April 22. Shown in the foreground is some heavy plastic that the pollinator group has placed in order to try to control a patch of invasive plants at the Preserve. (Melanie Savage/Courant Community)

Rose Hiskes (second from right), from the Connecticut Invasive Plants Working Group, talks about local plants during an Invasive Species workshop sponsored by the Hebron Pollinator Pathway Group at the Raymond Brook Preserve in Hebron. (Melanie Savage/Courant Community)

Stopping the spread

You can fight invasive plants by preventing their spread including removing them and educating others, Kurtz said.

“You can start on your own property and taking out invasive plants you see or even just seeds,” Kurtz said. “Or if you don’t own property, get involved with a land trust or advocacy group. Many times they will hold ‘pulling parties’ where people get together to pull out invasive plants.”

“I think what’s most important is just getting the message out there that invasive plants are detrimental to the environment and our natural habitat,” Kurtz said. “Education is really a huge part of this.”

Chemicals Found In CT Drinking Water Revealed In New Study

A variety of compounds found in tap water could have a negative impact on people.

Rich Kirby, Patch Staff - Posted Thu, Feb 27, 2025

CONNECTICUT — Residents of Connecticut who drink tap water could be getting a dangerous cocktail of hundreds of chemicals, heavy metals and radioactive substances every day, according to an analysis of the nation's drinking water supply released Wednesday.

Connecticut's 482 public water utilities, which serve 2,727,000 people, have 120 known contaminants, according to the Environmental Working Group, a research and environmental advocacy nonprofit organization. A search-by-ZIP-code function allows people to see what's in their community's drinking water.

What's in Connecticut's Water?

Chemicals found in Connecticut water systems include Haloacetic acids, bromodichloromethane, Dichloroacetic acid and chloroform.

EWG analyzed water quality data from nearly 50,000 water systems collected between 2021 and 2023. It identified 324 contaminants in drinking water supplies across the country, with almost all community water systems having detectable contaminants.

Federal PFAS Regulations at Risk

The report comes amid federal government upheaval that jeopardizes landmark standards regulating PFAS — a dangerous, ubiquitous class of chemicals linked to cancer, reproductive issues and other serious health problems.

The final rules, approved in April, are "the most significant action on drinking water in a generation for some of the worst chemicals in drinking water — a tremendous public health plan," Melanie Benesh, the EWG's vice president of government affairs, told Patch.

"It means thousands of people are not going to get sick or die from serious, chronic diseases," she said. "It shouldn't be reversed. Lives and health are at stake."

More than 143 million people are exposed to PFAS in their drinking water, according to data from the Environmental Protection Agency. PFAS have been detected in nearly every American's blood, including newborns.

President Donald Trump's "Regulatory Freeze Pending Review" memorandum in January directed agency and department heads to consider delaying the effective date of any final rules published in the Federal Register for 60 days pending review.

That's not unusual any time there's a change in the administration and agency leadership, Benesh said.

Lee Zeldin was sworn in as the 17th administrator of the EPA on Jan. 25. As a congressman representing New York's 1st District from 2015 to 2023, he voted in favor of tougher regulation of PFAS.

Though a positive sign, Benesh said the EWG and other safe-water advocates have "real concerns that these landmark health protections for our drinking water will be significantly weakened and rolled back."

Also in January, the Trump administration withdrew a proposed rule from the previous administration that would have subjected manufacturers to federal discharge limits on PFAS. The withdrawal means there is no federal limit on the amount of PFAS a manufacturer can release into waterways. That places greater burden on states to place limits on states.

Legislation pending in California would require the stature to pass an emergency resolution codifying the federal limits in the event that the EPA weakens the standards, Benesh noted.

"I wouldn't be surprised if other states follow suit," she said.

What's Next?

Dozens of states have adopted policies concerning PFAS.

Last June, Gov. Ned Lamont signed a unanimously passed bill will pretty much phase out the use of PFAS in Connecticut. The law primarily aims to protect public health by limiting exposure to PFAS from common consumer and safety products to which PFAS has been "intentionally added," according to the Connecticut Business & Industry Association.

The Trump administration has also asked for a stay on pending litigation surrounding the PFAS standards. The final rules face a multidistrict legal challenge in U.S. District Court in South Carolina, a consolidation of 10,000 associated cases with tens of thousands of plaintiffs.

Defendants include large companies such as 3M, DuPont, Chemours and Corteva.

“It is imperative that we do everything we can to keep them in place,” Benesh said of the standards. “The Trump administration, on the whole, has been very sympathetic to chemical companies.”

The Biden administration also unlocked nearly $1 billion in funding to help states and territories implement PFAS treatment measures through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Some of the money in the Safe Drinking Water Act revolving loan fund has already been distributed. But it’s unclear how Trump’s pause on infrastructure spending could affect PFAS mitigation, which many utilities would be unable to tackle without government help.

Other key findings in Wednesday’s EWG report include:

Volatile organic compounds: VOCs like trichloroethylene or TCE, perchloroethylene and benzene are widespread contaminants linked to industrial pollution and environmental persistence. These chemicals, even at low concentrations, can cause cancer, liver damage and neurological issues. They are found in tap water at levels ranging from parts per trillion to parts per billion.

Nitrate: Nitrates from farm runoff and wastewater can contaminate drinking water, especially in rural areas. Long-term exposure to high nitrate levels can cause serious health problems, including cancer, thyroid issues and harm to developing babies. Nitrate contamination is particularly dangerous for infants, especially when used in baby formula, as it can lead to life-threatening conditions like methemoglobinemia.

Heavy metals: Arsenic is a naturally occurring mineral that causes bladder, lung and skin cancer as well as harm to the skin and lungs. Arsenic is found in drinking water in all 50 states.

Hexavalent chromium, or chromium-6, is a carcinogen made infamous by the Erin Brockovich case in California, and is in the drinking water of over 250 million Americans. There is no federal limit for chromium-6, despite its widespread presence and link to cancer and organ damage.

Disinfection byproducts: Chlorine disinfectants used to treat water can form harmful byproducts linked to cancer and reproductive health issues. These byproducts are consistently found in large water systems serving millions of people.

Radiological contaminants: Radium and uranium were detected in many water systems, sometimes exceeding EPA limits. Long-term exposure can lead to neurological disorders, developmental delays and organ damage. Radioactive elements like radium and uranium, naturally occurring or released from mining and industrial processes, increase cancer risk due to ionizing radiation.

Fluoride: While fluoride is added to water for dental health, high levels can cause dental and skeletal fluorosis and may harm children's neurodevelopment. Some communities have seen fluoride concentrations exceed recommended limits.

Lake Whitney Dam and Spillway Improvements Project

Land Use Committee Meeting Update

March 12, 2025

Regional Water Authority

Information on RWA's Dams

- RWA owns and maintains over 31 dams which ranges in height from 5 feet to over 100 feet
- 13 of the 31 Dams are classified as High Hazard
- Constructed between 1860 to 1957
- They were constructed of materials, such as, rubble stone masonry, concrete and earth
- Our oldest dam is the Lake Whitney Dam

How was the Dam Built

- Do we have Construction Drawings?
- Was there an Engineer of Record?

The 2004 Leak

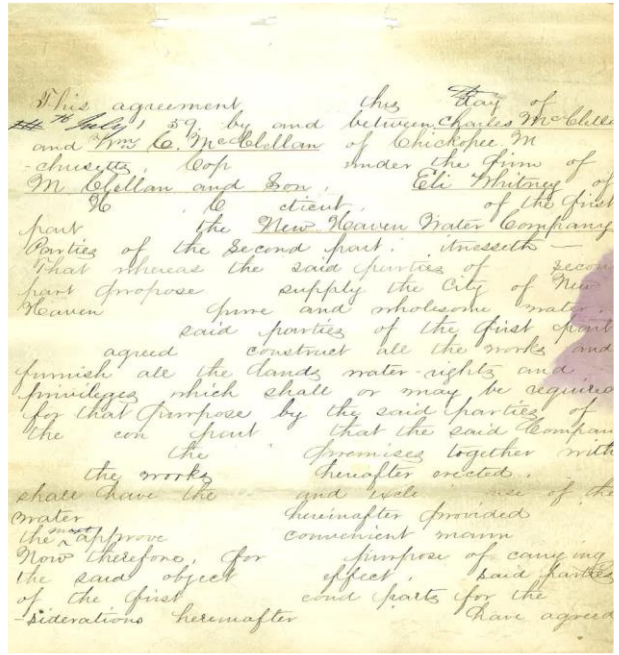
Project Goals

- Increase the structural stability of the dam
- Control seepage through the dam
- Increase the dam's hydraulic capacity to safely pass the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF)

Photo showing collected seepage through dam of 150 gallons per minute +/-

Construction Challenges and Risks

- ❖ Managing water flow during construction
- ❖ Keeping the water treatment plant operational
- ❖ Protecting existing utilities
- ❖ Permitting with several agencies
- ❖ State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO)



Project Execution Evolution

- Design team evaluated 20+ rehabilitation alternatives
- Construction risks, high project cost and long schedule identified
- Alternate Downstream Option considered and 90% design completed
- SHPO concerns
- Project delivery changed to Early Contractor Involvement (ECI)

PROJECT APPROACH - Upstream Concrete with Davis Street Cofferdam

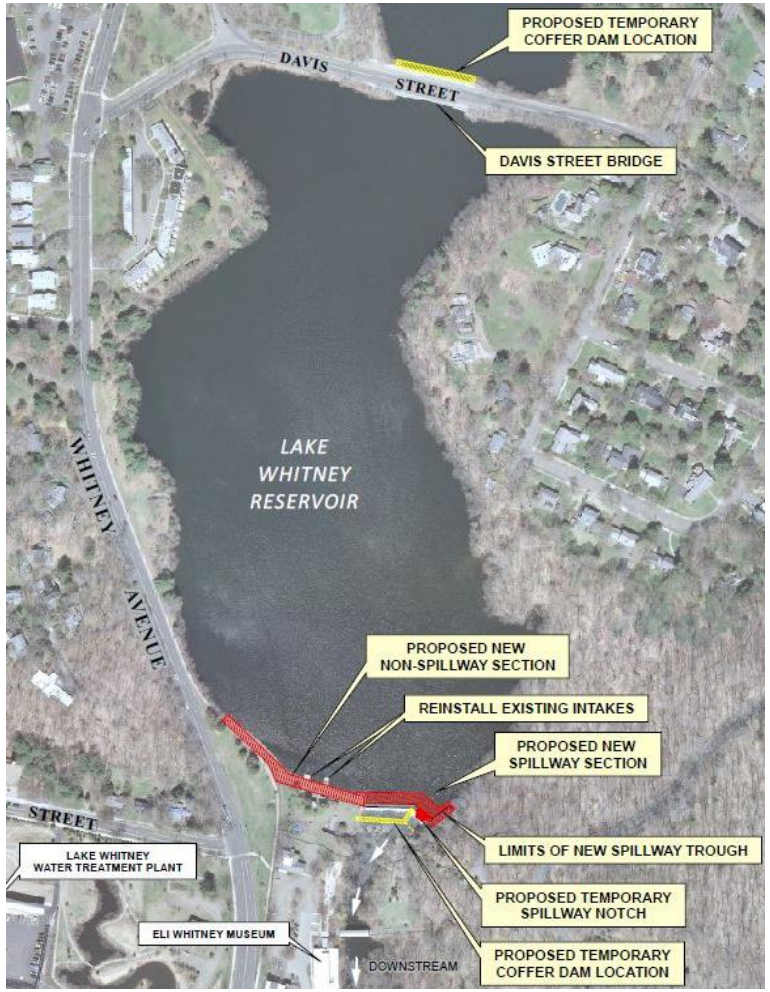
PROS

- Limited SHPO impacts/public concern due to no changes to downstream face of dam.
- Limited environmental permitting challenges - partial lake drawdown has been discussed with ACOE and DEEP.
- Reduced cofferdam height and length which reduces risk and cost.
- Lower construction risks associated with lowering lake and not having 40 feet of water retained immediately upstream of the construction site.
- Upper basin with mudflats remain full for duration of project - Limited public impacts and environmental permitting from drawdown.

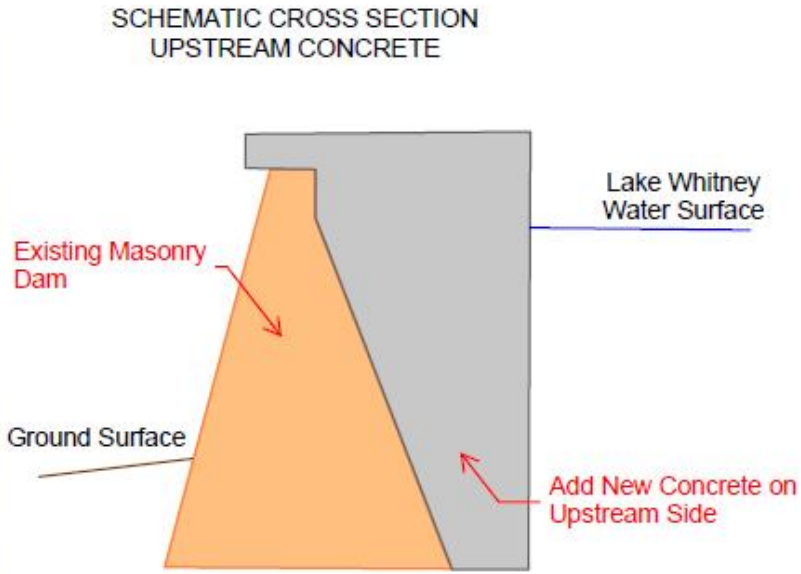
CONS

- Robust cofferdam required at Davis Street (costly, requires coordination with City, requires specialty contractor).
- Bypass for the WTP intake required to extend to Davis Street.
- Temporary deconstruction of a “notch” in the spillway and reconstruction required for water control and to maintain river flows.

PROJECT APPROACH

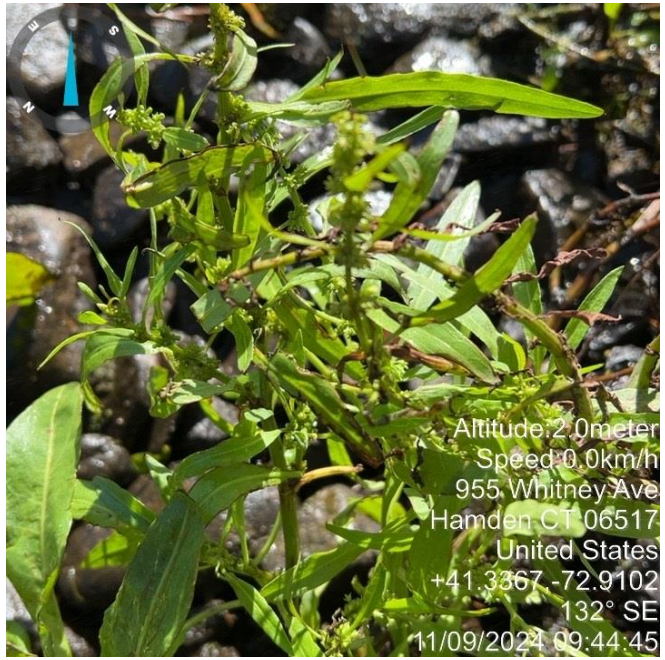


PROJECT APPROACH



Project Permitting

- UNITED STATES ARMY CORE OF ENGINEERS INDIVIDUAL PERMIT
  - NDDB
  - Section 7 US FISH& WILDLIFE SERVICE IPAC Review
  - DEEP Fisheries Consultation or NOAA
  - Section 106 SHPO and THPOs
- CT DEEP DAM SAFETY INDIVIDUAL PERMIT
  - NDDB
  - Fishway Determination Form
  - Fisheries Consultation Application (for WQC)
  - Streamflow Release Determination
  - Sediment Removal Management Plan



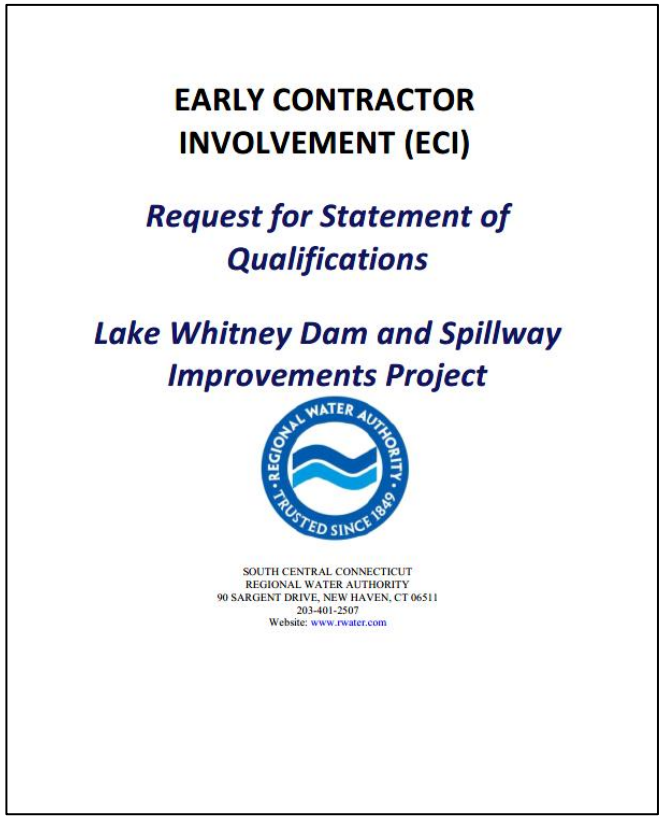
Rumex Maritimus (**Golden Dock)**

Project Permitting

- UNITED STATES ARMY CORE OF ENGINEERS INDIVIDUAL PERMIT
  - NDDB
    - Submitted to NDDB 3/21/24 Rare species surveys, specimen collecting ongoing as of Oct 2024
  - Section 7 US FISH& WILDLIFE SERVICE IPAC Review
    - Submitted 10/31/24 Updating Determination Key after response from US FWS
  - DEEP Fisheries Consultation or NOAA
    - Submitted to Fisheries on 11/21/24 Met with Fisheries on 12/13/24 to discuss project.
  - Section 106 SHPO and THPOs
    - SHPO submitted 12-10-24; THPOs submitted 12-11-24

ECI Method Applied to Whitney Dam Project Delivery

- Integrated Delivery Solutions (IDS, Mark Alpert) prepared RFQ with RWA team
- Two phases defined – Phase I professional services to supplement design, Phase II for construction services
- Coordination with WIFIA and SRF funding
- Public RFQ process meets RWA, State and Federal contracting requirements



EARLY CONTRACTOR INVOLVEMENT (ECI)

Request for Statement of Qualifications

Lake Whitney Dam and Spillway Improvements Project

SOUTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT
REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY
90 SARGENT DRIVE, NEW HAVEN, CT 06511
203-401-2507
Website: www.rwater.com

Phase 1 Contractor Take Aways

- Grouting Program Recommendations vary between contractors
- Proprietary means and methods for construction and water control
- Concrete Placement and quality controls differs between contractors but same general concerns regarding “Heat of Hydration” and quantities
- Variability between contractors' schedules between 2.5 and 4 years
- Potential cost savings to RWA could facilitate beneficial re-use plan (Peat Swamp)

Steps Moving Forward

- Advance preferred alternative to 100%, including permitting
- Conduct further design engagement with ECI contractors
- Solicit Phase II bids from ECI contractors
- Select one contractor based on value (price, work plan and construction methodology)
- Questions?