



# COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Draft Recommendations for Legislation

December 3, 2014

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The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) publishes *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*, the state's annual report on the condition of our air, water, land and life. The Council also is required by law (CGS Section 22a-12) to recommend legislation "for remedying the deficiencies of existing programs and activities." From its review of statewide environmental indicators and investigation of citizen complaints, the Council has identified important needs and deficiencies, and recommends these solutions.

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## PEOPLE, LAND and WATER

**Just a handful of programs form the foundation of Connecticut's environmental progress. The indicators of *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*\* show improvement when these basic programs are working:**

- Maintain the current capital budget for the **Clean Water Fund** to eliminate the **overflows of raw sewage** that pollute rivers and close beaches on Long Island Sound and to reduce the **nitrogen discharges** that lead to hypoxia (low oxygen) in the Sound.
- Reduce the number of **violations of environmental laws**.
  - Every year, the staff-depleted Department of Energy and Environmental Protection must cite hundreds of service businesses (such as gas stations, convenience stores, landscapers and medical offices) for failure to register, conduct required tests and/or maintain proper records. This type of violation should be **deterred** by establishing automatic penalties, which would allow DEEP to focus enforcement resources on higher environmental priorities.
  - For permitted facilities that fail to submit required monitoring reports, **shorten the time period** between permit renewals (from ten years to five years for non-reporting alternative sewage treatment facilities, for example).

- Maintain the current capital budget for **farmland preservation**; preserve 2,000 acres each year.
- Authorize sufficient capital funds (estimated to be \$20 million) each year to enable the state and matching-grant recipients to acquire, in fee or easement, at least 8,000 acres of **priority conservation lands** annually.

\*Data supporting these recommendations can be found in *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*.

## PROBLEMS UNCOVERED, SOLUTIONS FOUND

**The following recommendations arose from special Council reports and investigations of citizen complaints.**

- Move the **state water plan** forward with an adequate appropriation.
- Improve **training for municipal inland wetlands agencies**. Training is available online at no or low cost to each municipality, but some municipalities still do not have one member or staff person (the minimum required by statute) who has completed training. To begin, require municipal wetlands agencies to disclose their training status, and require DEEP to gather information from municipalities (as part of their required reports) regarding their training status.
- Appropriate sufficient funds to allow all **state parks** to open in 2015 with enough staff to manage the physical properties and the destructive behaviors of some visitors.
- Appropriate sufficient funds to mount an effective defense against the largest ecological threat to Connecticut’s native habitats: **invasive species**.
  - Require an appropriate agency (the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, DEEP, Agriculture, UConn, or all four) to prepare a **plan** for rapid detection and eradication of newly discovered *terrestrial* invasive species (to complement the existing state plan for *aquatic* invasive species).

If environmental conditions, trends or problems suggest additional measures to you, please let the Council on Environmental Quality know about them:

- NEW: \_\_\_\_\_
- NEW: \_\_\_\_\_
- NEW: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.