

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 2019

World Water Day at CT Legislature

Water advocates, legislative champions, and agencies call for action to protect CT's waters

HARTFORD, CONN. – Water advocates from across Connecticut are celebrating World Water Day at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford today.

The United Nations holiday is celebrated each year on March 22. This year's theme is "Leave no one behind," so the statewide and local organizations chose to address a wide range of water issues that affect Connecticut residents, from anglers and kayakers to business owners and farmers—and everyone who depends on safe, healthy drinking water.

Connecticut's first State Water Plan, developed over several years by a broad group of stakeholders, takes into account these many human needs as well as ecological considerations like the need to keep enough flowing water in rivers and streams to sustain fish populations. The Plan is currently awaiting final approval by the General Assembly. The event also comes just days after the release of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's draft Long Island Sound Blue Plan, which catalogs the many natural resources and traditional human uses of the Sound's waters, and offers guidance to balance and protect them.

Speakers at a morning press conference included Senators Tony Hwang and Derek Slap, Representatives Gail Lavielle, Jonathan Steinberg, and Christine Palm; Betsey Wingfield of CT DEEP, Jonathan Harris of OPM; Mike Hage of the Department of Public Health; Water Planning Council chair John Betkoski; and advocates from Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Clean Water Action, CT Fund for the Environment, CT Land Conservation Council, CT League of Conservation Voters, CT River Conservancy, and Rivers Alliance of CT. Students from Connecticut River Academy were in attendance.

Those organizations and others—including Food & Water Watch, Save Our Water, and The Nature Conservancy—have also had educational tables in the Legislative Office Building Concourse Thursday and Friday.

Participating organizations said:

"On World Water Day we celebrate Connecticut's wonderful water resources, while being cognizant of the threats to our water and the need to plan for the future. We'll continue working with legislators, advocates, and stakeholders to strengthen the public trust that protects Connecticut's drinking water, rivers, lakes, and tidal regions to ensure we're leaving no one—not today's citizens nor future generations—behind."

- Karen Burnaska, water projects coordinator, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound

"Connecticut is in the fortunate position of having developed a plan for its water in advance of a water crisis. The State Water Plan puts us on a path toward a sound decision making process for how our water is managed and a periodic inventory of what comes in and what goes out. We must ensure that we balance the use of this vital and limited resource for all uses and the benefit of all. Our legislators and governor must commit to giving this plan the green light so that

we are in a better position to handle droughts, climate change, and other threats to public health and our environment.”

- Alicea Charamut, River Steward, Connecticut River Conservancy

“Per and polyfluorinated chemicals (PFAS) have been found in drinking water sources all over the U.S, including in New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and in Greenwich, CT. Recent reports document PFAS in 194 drinking water systems, serving 16 million people. These chemicals are linked to cancers and disrupt hormones. They are persistent and bioaccumulate up the food chain. PFAS chemicals are found in firefighting foam, anti-stick cookware, textiles, food packaging, and outdoor gear. House Bill 5910, if passed, will restrict the use of firefighting foam for training and prevent significant sources of exposure and contamination of our water sources.”

- Anne Hulick, state director, Clean Water Action

“Municipalities must work together to preserve and protect watershed lands to ensure safe drinking water for generations to come.”

- Katharine Lange, Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow, Connecticut Land Conservation Council

“We are lucky here in Connecticut to have leaders who, even before the first Earth Day, led the nation in protection of wetlands and rivers. People now fish in rivers one wouldn't even approach 50 years ago. But progress has stalled. Seventy percent of our waters still don't meet Clean Water Act Standards. Time to pick up the pace. Let's commit to truly clean water in 90 percent of our rivers by Earth Day 2033.”

- Margaret Miner, executive director, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

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