

# CONNECTICUT STATE WATER PLANNING COUNCIL

Public Hearing – March 20, 2018  
Public Health Committee

Testimony submitted by John Betkoski, Chair, Connecticut State Water Planning Council (WPC) and Vice Chairman, Public Utilities Regulatory Authority on behalf of the Connecticut State Water Planning Council

## **Raised House Bill No. 5154 AN ACT CONCERNING WATER USAGE AND CONSERVATION DURING DROUGHT CONDITIONS**

The Water Planning Council (WPC), comprised of the Department of Public Health, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Office of Policy & Management, and the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, would like to thank the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 5154, *An Act Concerning Water Usage and Conservation During Drought Conditions*.

While individual state agencies have statutory and/or regulatory responsibility for a number of the specific actions that can prove necessary in responding to drought, the state's overall drought response efforts are guided by the Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan (State Drought Plan). The State Drought Plan is an *ad hoc* plan, approved by the WPC in 2003, and the WPC is in the process of updating the drought plan for the first time. The State Drought Plan is available at:

[http://www.ct.gov/waterstatus/lib/waterstatus/Drought\\_Preparedness\\_&\\_Response\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/waterstatus/lib/waterstatus/Drought_Preparedness_&_Response_Plan.pdf)

Experiences during recent drought or near-drought events have exposed shortcomings of the State Drought Plan and the WPC is in the process of finalizing interim changes to better prepare the state for the next drought. The WPC, furthermore, intends to develop legislative recommendations to improve the future updating and implementation of the State Drought Plan. To that end, while the WPC encourages the codification of the adoption of a state drought plan, the WPC respectfully requests that House Bill 5154 be amended to require the WPC to provide a report with specific legislative recommendations to the General Assembly for consideration during the 2019 legislative session. Our proposed substitute language is appended to this testimony.

A key goal of the State Drought Plan is to ensure that it ensures timely action and clear communication in times of drought. In this respect, House Bill 5154 is in line with work the WPC intends to implement during the next twelve to eighteen months in accordance with the draft State Water Plan, which is currently under review at the General Assembly. In identifying such work as a priority, the State Water Plan noted the desire

for input from chief local officials and roles of town ordinances and possible legislative changes.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. We encourage Committee members to reach out to the WPC and its agencies with any questions.

## Proposed Substitute Language

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Water Planning Council, established pursuant to section 25-33o of the general statutes, shall review state and local authorizations concerning drought events in this state, including, but not limited to, state and local processes and authorities for the issuance of any notices regarding changing drought intensity and any attendant voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions during any such notice. Not later than February 1, 2019, the Water Planning Council, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, shall submit a report to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment and public health that makes legislative recommendations for the submission of a comprehensive drought plan based on such review. In developing the report, the Water Planning Council shall consider an appropriate interval in which to update a drought plan and items that should be incorporated into the plan, including, but not limited to: (1) a synthesis of such authorities, processes and water use restrictions, (2) recommendations for the standardization of initiating notices regarding changing drought intensity in this state, including, but not limited to, recommendations concerning the appropriate level of reservoir depletion and public drinking water supply depletion for triggering any such notice, (3) recommendations for the attendant voluntary and mandatory water use restrictions for any such notices regarding changing drought intensity, but not limited to, the implementation of mandatory water use restrictions during any such notice, (4) an effective public notification system for any such notices regarding changing drought intensity that utilizes any available Internet web sites and social media of the affected water companies and municipalities where such water companies operate and that recommends the appropriate drought level for use of emergency notification systems as part of such public notification system, and (5) the viability and effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms designed to assure compliance with any mandatory water use restrictions. In undertaking any such review and in developing any such report pursuant to this section, the Water Planning Council may consult with the advisory group established pursuant to subsection (c) of section 25-33o of the general statutes.