



**For the Environment Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director
March 3, 2025**

Rivers Alliance was formed to fight for sound water policies at the state and federal levels, to provide education on water resources, and to advocate for any person or group striving to protect water. If you want clean, free-flowing and healthy rivers, and high-quality drinking water, Rivers Alliance is here to help.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the following raised bill before you today.

SB 732 – AN ACT REQUIRING THE STATE WATER PLAN TO BE AMENDED TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE – Supports

Thank you for raising this bill, which emphasizes the need to update the State Water Plan to address climate change.

Connecticut’s General Assembly plays a vital role in State Water Planning by ensuring that the Water Planning Council agencies that oversee water planning – Office of Planning and Management (OPM), Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) - continue to work together rather than in silos and that the State Water Plan is current and is being implemented.

Rivers Alliance has been involved in water planning for decades – spearheading efforts that brought about Connecticut’s first State Water Plan. Myself and our previous Executive Director, Margaret Miner, were both active in the development of the plan, serving on various sub-committees. I currently serve as Co-Chair of the Water Planning Council Advisory Group which is a broad and balanced stakeholder group established to assist the WPC in researching and analyzing water resource issues and advise on matters of interest.

To ensure that Connecticut is prepared to meet current and future water challenges, **we recommend the following revisions to the proposed bill:**

- **Require an update of the State Water Plan every five years**, starting this year.
- **Include emerging and legacy contaminants** in the plan.
- **Inventory all lands within public drinking water supply watersheds and aquifer protection areas**, not just those owned by water utilities, to enhance protection of our drinking water sources.
- **Update annual reporting requirements to the CGA** to include an implementation plan for the coming year along with associated costs.

What is the State Water Plan?

“This State Water Plan has been prepared to help planners, regulators, and lawmakers make decisions about managing Connecticut’s water in a manner that is consistent throughout the state with stakeholder-defined principles and available scientific data.”

— *Excerpt from the Executive Summary of the Connecticut State Water Plan*

The State Water Plan addresses **all water resources**. It serves as a vital framework for managing our water resources – **ensuring that we have water for fish and faucet for future generations**.

Why do we need to update the plan?

We are very fortunate that Connecticut’s first state water plan was developed outside of a time of crisis. It was a landmark achievement when it was adopted, but time has moved forward, and so have the challenges we face. **We must act now to ensure our water policies reflect today’s realities and tomorrow’s uncertainties.**

A regular cycle of feast or famine predicted for decades with increased frequency of high-intensity, short duration precipitation events and more frequent droughts are upon us. **Recent events, such as the devastating flooding in Southbury and Oxford followed by drought, underscore the urgency of updating our water management strategies.**

Unresolved Issues

The current plan includes “implementation-ready” consensus recommendations, but **many critical issues—such as water conservation, aging infrastructure, emerging and legacy contaminants, and funding for implementation remain unresolved**. These are issues that directly impact our ability to adapt to and be more resilient to a changing climate.

Source water protection

Approximately 80% of land within our drinking water supply watersheds is privately owned. While Connecticut has robust protections for lands owned by water utilities, we need a clearer understanding of the vulnerabilities from activities on privately owned lands. This knowledge would enable **better collaboration between water utilities, DPH, and private landowners to safeguard our water supplies.**

Incorporate the recommendations of the GC3

An incredible amount of work was done by the Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GC3) and it’s working groups. **There are numerous recommendations within the GC3 reports that are directly related to water quality and water quantity that should be incorporated into the State Water Plan.**

Keeping the State Water Plan Current

We urge the committee to **mandate an update of the State Water Plan every five years**, starting this year. In light of climate change uncertainties, proactive and regular updates are essential to safeguard our water resources and avoid crisis-driven responses.

Additionally, we recommend updating reporting requirements to the CGA to include an annual implementation plan with associated costs. This step will help track progress, ensure accountability, and keep lawmakers informed of resource needs.

Resource Needs

Updating the State Water Plan will require additional resources and funding. In particular, we support funding for a director position to oversee the plan’s update and implementation and to coordinate the efforts of the Water Planning Council and its workgroups. This position was identified as a near-term goal in the current State Water Plan and highlighted in the [2022 State Annual Report Fact Sheet](#).

Planning for our water resources is about protecting a resource that belongs to all of us. We call on state leaders, lawmakers, and the public to support a full update of the Connecticut State Water Plan. The time to act is now—before shortages, contamination, and other costly disasters make the decisions for us. **We urge the committee will consider the recommended enhancements and pass this bill.**