Digest of Administrative Reports to the Governor
FY 2023-24

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

KATHERINE S. DYKES, COMMISSIONER

Joseph DeNicola, ***Deputy Commissioner of Energy (Energy and Technology Policy)***

Emma Cimino, ***Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Quality (Air Management, Materials Management and Compliance Assurance, and Water Protection and Land Reuse)***

Mason Trumble, ***Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Conservation (Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources)***

Marissa Gillett, ***Chairman, Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA)***
John Betkoski III, ***Vice Chairman, PURA***
Michael Caron, ***Commissioner, PURA***
David Arconti, ***Commissioner, PURA***

Established **– 2011**

Statutory authority **– CGS § 22a-2d**

Central office **– 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106-5127**

Number of employees **– 943**

Recurring operating expenses **– $293,113,437**

Organizational structure –

Office of the Commissioner **– Chief of Staff; Chief of Legal, Planning and Regulatory Affairs;** Office of Legal Counsel; Office of Adjudications; Office of Communications, Public Affairs and Web Publications; Office of Policy and Legislative Programs; Office of Innovative Partnerships and Planning; Office of Environmental Review and Strategic Initiatives; Office of Climate Planning; Land Acquisition and Management; Office of Equity and Environmental Justice; and the Bureau of Central Services.

Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Quality **– Bureau of Air Management**: Divisions of Engineering; Enforcement; Planning & Standards; and Radiation. **Bureau of Materials Management and Compliance Assurance:** Divisions of Engineering & Enforcement; Emergency Response and Spill Prevention; Permitting and Enforcement; and Sustainable Materials Policy and Planning. **Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse:** Divisions of Remediation; Water Planning & Management; and Land & Water Resources; and Office of Planning and Resilience.

Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Conservation **– Bureau of Natural Resources**: Divisions of Forestry; Fisheries; and Wildlife. **Bureau of Outdoor Recreation:** Divisions of Boating; Environmental Conservation Police; and State Parks and Public Outreach. Office of Outdoor Industry and Experiences.

Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Energy **– Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy (BETP):** Offices of Energy Supply and Infrastructure; Building and Transportation Decarbonization; Telecommunications and Broadband; and Affordable Housing Energy Retrofits.

Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA): Offices of Education, Outreach and Enforcement; Administration and Operations; Technical and Regulatory Analysis; Legislative and Governmental Affairs; and Federal, Regional and Wholesale Affairs. *Note: PURA is housed within DEEP and operates independently with respect to its adjudicatory functions.*

Mission

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is charged with conserving, improving, and protecting the natural resources and the environment of the State of Connecticut as well as making cheaper, cleaner, and more reliable energy available for the people and businesses of the state. The agency also is committed to playing a positive role in rebuilding Connecticut's economy and creating jobs – and to fostering a sustainable and prosperous economic future for the state.

Statutory Responsibility

Public Act 11-80, effective July 1, 2011, facilitated the establishment of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The majority of the Commissioner's statutory responsibilities are found in the following titles of the Connecticut General Statutes: 15, 16, 16a, 22a, 23, 25, and 26.

Public Service

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) was created by Public Act 11- 80 (codified at CGS § 22a-2d). Effective July 1, 2011, DEEP brought together the former Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Public Utility Control (DPUC) – now called the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) – along with the energy policy group from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). In 2021, DEEP was given responsibility for broadband policy development and infrastructure deployment pursuant to Public Act 21-159.

During 2023-2024, DEEP continued to focus on:

- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the department through the launch of the 20BY26 Initiative
- Advancing the state's agenda to provide cleaner, cheaper, and more reliable energy and broadband to Connecticut's residents and businesses
- Effective and efficient management of the state's public utilities
- Protecting our environment and natural resources
- Providing first-class outdoor recreational opportunities to residents, businesses, and visitors
- Increasing equity, inclusion, and access in department policies, programs, planning processes, and services
- Working to increase staff diversity in all programs to reflect the state's changing demographics
- Increasing outreach and education to environmental justice and vulnerable communities
- Redesigning our webpage with input from communities and other stakeholders
- Increasing government transparency
- Continuing to collaborate with state- and federally recognized tribes

Highlights and Achievements 2023-2024

ENERGY BRANCH

Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA): Offices of Education, Outreach and Enforcement; Administration and Operations; Technical and Regulatory Analysis; Legislative and Governmental Affairs; and Federal, Regional and Wholesale Affairs.

- **Rate Cases**
  - Conducted two prudency reviews for rate increase applications affecting over 448,000 Connecticut ratepayers.
  - Issued two decisions that both protected ratepayers from paying for imprudent utility expenses, while ensuring that the two utilities' financial conditions are sufficiently maintained.
    - 22-08-08: United Illuminating Decision
    - 23-08-32: CT Water Decision
  - 24-01-03/24-01-04: Conducted two Rate Adjustment Mechanism proceedings and issued interim decisions
  - 23-11-02: Established a docket for a gas rate case and initiated the review process including public comment hearings, discovery and over 10 in-person hearings.
- **Grid Modernization**
  - 17-12-03RE02: Issued a final decision outlining a framework for the deployment of advanced metering infrastructure in a way that will protect ratepayers and ensure that investment in AMI will advance the economic, energy, and environmental policies of Connecticut.
  - 17-12-03RE10: Submitted a report to the state legislature documenting the existing Standard Service procurement process, reviewing the energy supply procurement practices of peer jurisdictions, and analyzing potential procurement process modifications.
  - 22-08-07: Completed the first solicitation through the Innovative Energy Solutions Program, selecting seven innovative pilot projects that advance grid flexibility throughout both Eversource and United Illuminating's territories that will demonstrate benefits to ratepayers and the grid.
  - 23-08-07: Launched the second solicitation cycle of the Innovative Energy Solutions Program on January. This solicitation attracted over 50 applications spanning multiple technologies. These proposals are still under review with PURA.
  - 23-08-09: Submitted a report to the state legislature on the Electric Distribution Company System Reliability, incorporating new customer-centric data reporting requirements for the first time.
  - 22-06-29: Facilitated the residential Distributed Energy Resource interconnection process, by streamlining the policy for allocating distribution system interconnection upgrade costs.
  - Issued final decisions establishing program design improvements, and goal refinement in six annual reviews of the clean energy programs established by PURA's Equitable Modern Grid Framework including:
    - Docket No. 23-08-01: 2023 Clean and Renewable Energy Program Data and Report
    - Docket No. 23-08-02: Residential Renewable Energy Solutions Program Review – Year 3

        - Docket No. 23-08-03: Non-Residential Renewable Energy Solutions Program Review – Year 3
        - Docket No. 23-08-04: Shared Clean Energy Facility Program Review – Year 5
        - Docket No. 23-08-05: Energy Storage Solutions Program Review – Year 3
        - Docket No. 23-08-06: Electric Vehicle Charging Program Review – Year 3
    - Provided support and advisory services to other state agencies such as DEEP and the Green Bank in the development of federal funding applications such as the U.S. EPA's Solar for All program and U.S. DOE's Grid Resilience & Innovation Partnerships program.
- **Performance-Based Regulation**
    - Initiated Phase 2 of PURA's investigation into a Performance-Based Regulation Framework (PBR Phase 2) pursuant to Section 1 of Public Act 20-5, also known as the "Take Back Our Grid" Act.
    - PBR Phase 2 is composed of three reopener dockets:
        - 21-05-15RE01 to investigate Revenue Adjustment Mechanisms
        - 21-05-15RE02 to investigate Performance Mechanisms
        - 21-05-15RE03 to investigate integrated distribution system planning.
    - Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, the Authority has held more than 23 technical meetings and working group meetings, issued more than seven requests for written comments, and issued two straw proposals in the PBR Phase 2 reopener dockets.
- **Energy Affordability**
    - 23-05-01: Issued a decision in Docket No. 23-05-01, Energy Affordability Annual Review, which:
        - Assessed the ongoing residential energy affordability programs offered by the state's regulated electric and gas utilities;
        - Provided direction on the January 1, 2024 launch of the residential Low-Income Discount Rate (LIDR); and
        - Provided guidance and direction on changes to the Matching Payment Plan (MPP) program as directed by Section 30 of Public Act 23-102, An Act Strengthening Protections for Connecticut's Consumers of Energy.
    - 23-09-34: Launched the Stakeholder Group Compensation Program pursuant to Section 15 of Public Act 23-102
- **Water Infrastructure**
    - Adjudicated and approved four applications for Water Infrastructure and Conservation Adjustments for the purpose of accelerating the replacement or rehabilitation of aging water systems as well as to encourage conservation and secure system resilience.
- **Electric Infrastructure Safety**
    - In Docket Nos. 23-01-39 (Aug. 9, 2023) and 23-01-32 (Nov 22, 2023) - Reviewed Eversource's response to public safety incidents (entrapment in vehicle with live wires and underground infrastructure explosions). The Authority issued fines to Eversource for not meeting regulations in Dockets No. 23-01-39RE01 and 23-01-32RE02.
    - On December 20, 2023 in Docket No. 22-06-05 - Approved three front-of-the-meter storage pilots in United Illuminating territory to improve the resilience of electric grid in neighborhoods in New Haven, North Haven, and Bridgeport, totaling 6.3MW, pursuant to Public Act 22-55.
    - By June 30, 2024, completed 2024 cybersecurity reviews of the four large utilities: Eversource, Avangrid, CT Water, and Aquarion.
- **Gas Pipeline Safety / Call Before You Dig**
    - Continued to better ensure public safety and deter safety violations and violators by conducting over 400 gas pipeline safety inspections, reviewing over 1,300 reports of Call

Before You Dig damages and violations, and taking over 650 enforcement actions, including collecting approximately $1,400,000 in civil penalties.

- **Office of Education, Outreach and Enforcement -**
    - Monitored the activities of electric suppliers and aggregators in Connecticut and initiated investigations regarding certain practices of several of those electric suppliers to determine whether they are in compliance with state statutes, regulations, and PURA's orders.
    - From July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, the Authority either settled or fully litigated 3 matters with suppliers, resulting in over $2.2 million in fines and a revocation of a supplier's license.
    - Additionally, during the same time period, EOE processed the following: 273 Class I, II, or III certification applications; 267 conduit excavation applications; 6 electric submetering applications; 10 water submetering applications; 18 small cell wireless facility applications; 20 wireline facility applications; 2 electric supplier licensing applications; 98 electric aggregator applications; 2 electric supplier licensing periodic reviews; 19 natural gas seller applications; and 4 certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) applications.
    - EOE Customer Affairs managed 12,294 customer complaints. This resulted in $126,074.19 of restitution directly to customers

Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy (BETP)

Office of Telecommunications and Broadband

- Launched the $40.8M ConneCTed Communities broadband infrastructure grant program, funded by the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), to significant response and demand for funds. Preparing for award announcements this calendar year, which will result in a strong step towards universal broadband access in Connecticut.
- Completed and received federal approval of the $144M Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program Initial Proposal, setting the stage to launch a subgrant prequalification program later this year. Completed the program's broadband map Challenge Process clarifying broadband availability and funding eligibility at over 16,000 locations throughout the state.
- Responding to broadband concerns in Multi-Dwelling Units (MDUs) within Distressed Municipalities, partnered with COGs and municipal leaders to identify multi-family homes that may be classified as eligible for federal broadband funding. Processed over 300 broadband availability challenges in 22 communities
- Implemented a multi-channel stakeholder engagement plan to drive awareness, understanding and involvement in federal broadband programs, including direct engagement with COGs, municipalities, public serving and private organizations. Outreach initiatives included virtual roundtables, 1:1 informational meetings, mailed letters, and technical support office hours.
- Began implementing a grant management system to expedite and ease grant administration and facilitate program monitoring, compliance and reporting in partnership with internal and external partners.

Office of Affordable Housing Energy Retrofits

- Coordinated the development of the initial applications for the federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate (HEAR) and Home Efficiency Rebates (HER)

programs to the U.S. Department of Energy. This nearly $100M in funding will provide rebates to low-income households for efficiency and electrification upgrades including, but not limited to, heat pumps, insulation, and heat pump hot water heaters.

- Launched and continued to oversee a new Weatherization Barrier Remediation Program (the Residential Energy Preparation Services [REPS] Program) to make homes for people with limited income ready for energy-saving weatherization programs.
- Co-led a working group to provide input into the development of the residential solar tariff for multi-unit affordable housing.
- Launched a working group to identify ways to better coordinate the state's single-family Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) with utility low-income energy efficiency programs. Ideas identified have the potential to allow both programs to better leverage state and federal funding and to more comprehensively serve low-income residents. Continued to work with a competitively selected service provider to launch a new multifamily WAP with new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding.
- Used competitively awarded federal funding to design and evaluate the viability of a potential district geothermal heating and cooling system for an affordable housing complex in Wallingford.
- Co-led, in partnership with the CT Green Bank, Greenstorm discussions that include DEEP, the Energy Efficiency Board, CT Green Bank, the Electric Distribution Companies, and various other stakeholders to coordinate on federal funding initiatives.
- In collaboration with the Office of Building and Transportation Decarbonization, administered the federally funded State Energy Program with both annual and BIL funding.

Office of Building and Transportation Decarbonization

- Modified and approved the 2024 Conservation and Load Management (C&LM) Plan Update to align it with the Administration's equity and clean energy goals.
- Hosted Contractor Technical Advisory Council meetings with C&LM program contractors, utility administrators, and the Energy Efficiency Board to discuss issues impacting contractors and customers.
- Continued to support the drafting of the initial application for the IRA HER program. This program will provide approximately $50 million in rebates to low-income families to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- Represented Connecticut on the ISO-New England energy efficiency forecast working group. The team member creates CT's annual projected 10-year energy efficiency budget forecast.
- Monitored the daily wholesale price of gasoline at the Hartford/Rocky Hill and New Haven rack terminal. Pursuant to Public Act 12-4, DEEP notifies the Attorney General if the wholesale price is equal to, or above, predetermined criteria as a flag that an abnormal market condition exists.
- Continued to finalize the High Performance Building Standards, which will update environmental requirements associated with large, state-funded new construction and major renovation building projects.
- In collaboration with the Office of AHER, administered the federally funded State Energy Program with both annual and BIL funding.
- Collaborated with state agencies, the utility companies, and CT businesses to initiate, fund, and install energy efficiency measures at state buildings. Led bi-weekly, interagency GreenerGov meetings; state agencies participating in Connecticut GreenerGov reduce carbon emissions, energy use, and state building operation costs to meet Executive Order 21-3 mandates. Partnered to develop a GreenerGov work plan to track progress towards goals outlined in E.O. 1 and E.O. 21-3.

Office of Energy Supply and Infrastructure

- Reviewed and evaluated proposals received in response to a request for proposals for up to 3,975,000 megawatt hours per year for zero carbon renewables, including solar, onshore wind, run-of-river hydropower, energy efficiency, and storage paired with zero carbon resources. A selection announcement is expected to be made in the fall of 2024.
- Reviewed and evaluated proposals received in response to a request for proposals for up to 1,196 MW of offshore wind resources. A selection announcement is expected to be made in the fall of 2024.
- Reviewed and evaluated proposals received in response to a request for proposals for up to 450 MW of energy storage facilities that are designed to: (1) displace fossil fuel generation, particularly in the Environmental Justice communities, while maintaining reliability; (2) interconnect new large electrical loads such as electric fleet vehicle charging facilities; and/or (3) support the integration of new intermittent renewable generation in areas of the grid that have known capacity constraints. These projects will further the State's goal of deploying 300 MW of storage by December 31, 2024, 650 MW by December 31, 2027, and 1,000 MW by December 31, 2030. A selection announcement is expected to be made in the fall of 2024.
- Reviewed and evaluated proposals for year 5 of Connecticut's Shared Clean Energy Facilities (SCEF) program, which aims to deploy 50 MW per year of Class I renewable energy resources such as solar and fuel cells and provide on-bill savings to participating customers, the majority of which are low to moderate income. DEEP will file its recommendation for a price cap and bid preferences for year 6 of the program in the fall of 2024.
- Released the Greenhouse Gas Inventory showing progress through 2022 in achieving the State's economy-wide climate goals to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, 45 percent emissions reductions below the 2001 level by 2030, and 80 percent below 2001 levels by 2050, and to have a zero carbon electric sector by 2040.
- Released a draft 2024 Connecticut Clean Hydrogen Roadmap as required by Public Act 23-156 and held a public meeting to lay out Connecticut's goals for clean hydrogen's integration into the energy landscape; guide strategic develop of clean hydrogen production, infrastructure, and end use; identify benefits and risks associated with hydrogen; and recommend policies, programs, and pilot projects to support clean hydrogen development and deployment in alignment with state goals.
- Released a Report on Select Connecticut Energy Supply Issues as required by Section 35 of Public Act 23-102. This study: (1) evaluates the feasibility of deploying small modular reactors, advanced nuclear reactors, fusion energy facilities; (2) reviews the process for power purchase agreements procured pursuant to a state solicitation or pursuant to the state's renewable energy programs and identifies best practices; and (3) reviews the state's gas supply system.
- Facilitated public input on the program objectives for the State's grid resilience formula funding to reduce the likelihood and occurrence of disruptive events, particularly in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. Received federal formula funding for Year 3 of the 5-year program. A request for information is expected to be released in the fall of 2024 on how to use this funding in coordination with other related funding available.
- Received an award from the Department of Energy (DOE) through the BIL's Grid Innovation Program for up to $389M to Connecticut and its neighboring New England states for regional electric infrastructure upgrades to ready the onshore transmission system for up to 4,800 megawatts of additional offshore wind, and deploy an innovative, multi-day battery energy storage system to enhance grid resilience and optimize the delivery of renewable energy.
- Received a $62.45M award from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Solar for All Program to increase access to distributed solar and storage in low income and disadvantaged

communities. Held public meetings to accept public comment on the best use of this funding and working with EPA to receive the full award at the end of 2024.

- Conducting a risk assessment of the state's energy sector with key energy stakeholders to identify vulnerabilities consistent with guidance released by the DOE and as required by the BIL in order to receive federal State Energy Program funding. This risk assessment will be incorporated into the state's energy security plan that must be submitted to DOE by September 30, 2024.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BRANCH

Bureau of Air Management (BAM)

- **Advocated for strong federal clean air rules, standards, and policies to advance Connecticut's clean air goals and objectives, including:**
    - EPA's proposed New Source Performance Standards for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Power Plants Responding to EPA's Request for Information on Large Municipal Waste Combustors.
    - EPA's proposed Multi-pollutant Emissions Standards for Model Years 2027 and Later Light-Duty and Medium-Duty Vehicles.
    - EPA's GHG Standards for Heavy-Duty Vehicles, Phase 3
- **Advanced clean transportation/mobile source regulatory strategies**
    - Advanced the adoption of Connecticut's Clean Air Act as required by CGS § 22a-174-201d, § 22A-174-201e and § 22a-174-202.
    - Engaged with California as part of its regulatory process for advancing a clean vehicles proposal.
    - Managed the Connecticut Hydrogen and Electric Automobile Purchase Rebate (CHEAPR) vehicle incentive program and provided administrative support for the CHEAPR Board by deploying over $27 million to support the purchase of over 14,800 clean vehicles in Connecticut since 2015.
    - Administered several funding sources, including Volkswagen, the Diesel Emissions Reductions Act, and the EPA Clean School Bus Program, to support the transformation of the transportation sector to meet the State's air quality and climate goals.
    - Launched an e-Bike incentive program committing $750,000 to issue 468 vouchers to residents of environmental justice communities, residents who were income qualified or residents who participated in certain public assistance programs. Of the 468 vouchers that were issued, 422 were redeemed.
- **Continued to address ozone nonattainment, air pollution transport, and regional collaboration**
    - Continued to manage the ozone reclassification process and the development of an implementation plan and initiated formal regulatory changes to reflect the reclassification to "severe" non-attainment with respect to the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ozone (smog) and addressing federal requirements of the Clean Air Act to satisfy the regulatory requirements associated with the 2015 National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ozone.
    - Continued to work collaboratively with the Office of the Attorney General and participate in regional and national dialogues to ensure compliance with "Good Neighbor" requirements and other policy and legal mechanisms to address air pollution transport as

well as other multi-state ligation efforts to defend Connecticut's interest in ensuring clean air in regional and national challenges under the Clean Air Act.

- **Monitored air quality statewide and issued daily air quality forecasts**
  - Maintained and operated an existing network of 14 air quality monitoring sites statewide.
  - Issued a daily forecast to inform the public of air quality levels measured daily and issued corresponding public health notifications.
  - Advanced efforts in community-based monitoring to further expand statewide monitoring efforts through a sensor loan program and increase data and transparency on localized air quality conditions.
- **Air Quality Permitting**
  - Implemented the Title V and NSR permitting programs.
  - Received 102 permit applications and completed processing 126 permit applications.
  - Continued to prioritize permit timeliness and advance the goals and objectives related to the agency's 20BY26 effort to increase the predictability, efficiency, and transparency of DEEP's regulatory processes.
  - Continued to advance a regulatory agenda in response to EPA rulemaking.
- **Air Enforcement**
  - Administered a field inspection program of major and minor sources of air pollution to meet EPA requirements and commitments including all phases of compliance reviews.
  - Conducted compliance evaluations of hundreds of major and minor sources of air pollution; many of which entailed field inspections
  - Responded to nearly 100 public complaints regarding air quality
  - Continue to deploy the Department's Geospatial Measurement of Air Pollution (GMAP) program, a community-based air quality monitoring program that will emphasize pollution surveillance in environmental justice communities
  - Issued violation notices to document noncompliance with state and federal air quality statutes/regulations; developed and executed administrative consent orders entailing injunctive relief and the payment of civil penalties
  - Developed and executed stipulated orders to curb emissions of ozone precursor pollutants (nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds) from high-emitting sources
  - Administered the Department's emission trading programs, including the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) carbon dioxide trading program
- **Ensured the safe, secure, and environmentally responsible use of ionizing radiation**
  - Modernized program for regulation of radioactive materials by updating regulations and procedures to be compatible with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in preparation for becoming NRC Agreement State to assume regulatory authority for radioactive materials.
  - In cooperation with federal partners, continued to provide ongoing support and oversight, and to ensure safety and regulatory compliance for operations at the Millstone Nuclear Power facility.
  - Ensured safe and secure shipment of radioactive and spent nuclear fuel in state.
  - In cooperation with federal partners, ensured continued safe storage of spent nuclear fuel.
  - Conducted environmental monitoring confirming no buildup of radiation in environment surrounding nuclear facilities in state.
  - Implemented state oversight and safety requirements to ensure safe and effective mammography equipment.

- Coordinated emergency planning, preparedness, and response efforts to ensure effective management of potential consequences associated with the radiation releases.
- Coordinated with federal partners to monitor for any adverse effects from hostilities in Ukraine related to potential radiological releases.
- Coordinated study and evaluation of the role of advanced nuclear in de-carbonizing the electrical grid.

- **Compliance Assistance/Education and Outreach/Electronic Tools/Environmental Justice**
  - Supported and completed the E-filing of annual emission statements.
  - Held bi-monthly meetings of the Air Advisory Committee (SIPRAC) to promote effective communications and enhanced transparency with stakeholders.
  - Focused compliance assistance efforts in the Air Bureau's permitting and enforcement programs on building stronger links with environmental justice stakeholders.
  - Met quarterly with the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (CEEJAC) Subcommittee on Air and Transportation to discuss priority actions for 2023.
- **Continued engagement in statewide, regional, and national issues associated with air quality and radiation safety by representing Connecticut's interests with the following organizations**
  - National Association of Clean Air Agencies
  - Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management
  - Ozone Transport Commission
  - Northeast High-Level Radioactive Waste Transportation Task Force
  - Nuclear Energy Advisory Council

<u>Bureau of Materials Management and Compliance Assurance (MMCA)</u>

Continued engagement in statewide, regional, and national issues associated with water and waste regulatory programs by representing Connecticut's interests with the following organizations

- Northeast Waste Management Officials Association
- Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials
- New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC)
- Association of Clean Water Administrators

Waste Engineering and Enforcement Division

- With the closure of the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) Resource Recovery Facility in Hartford, Connecticut is now shipping approximately 860,000 tons per year of solid waste out of state. The single largest component of solid waste that is sent to incinerators and landfills is organic waste, including food scraps.
  - Following up on previous year's efforts DEEP continued to provide grants and technical assistance to businesses and municipalities through the Sustainable Materials Management Grant Program focused on organics collection programs. The municipalities have transitioned to a permanent food scrap collection program. Middletown, CT was the first in the nation to implement unit-based pricing in conjunction with organics collection.
  - Issued several demonstration projects for composting food scraps at established leaf composting facilities to support waste diversion goals.

- Expanded the infrastructure for food waste diversion by issuing a permit for an on-farm anaerobic digestion facility in Coventry Connecticut capable of processing up to 75 tons per day of food scraps, including the capability to accept packaged food wastes. The Coventry digester adds to the food waste diversion infrastructure in the northeast corridor of the state.
- Met EPA's Federal Grant Commitment for Hazardous Waste Inspections with diminished inspection staffing resources.
- Reinitiated the Hazardous Waste Advisory Committee with a public meeting with over 200 attendees.
- Reissued the Municipal Transfer Station General Permit, which allows guidelines and practices for the collection of food scraps at municipal transfer stations as well as satellite locations throughout a municipality.
- Pesticides management program renewed over 730 Commercial Supervisor licenses, over 1,500 Commercial Junior Operators, registered over 7,500 pesticides products, registered over 1,100 pesticide applicator business—all with historically low staffing levels.
- Received and processed over 350 Freedom of Information Act requests.
- Fielded over 1000 calls on the Division's Compliance Assistance Engineer of the Day Hotline.
- Processed, through the Electronic Waste Extended producer responsibility program, 76 electronics manufacturers renewal registrations collecting $419, 316 in fees for the General Fund and processed 4 new electronics manufacturers registration resulting in $24,000 in fees for the General Fund.

Water Permitting and Enforcement Division

- Wastewater & Stormwater Permitting
    - Modernized the paper Subscriber Agreement business process to an electronic process streamlining the process for the regulated community increasing the divisions approval timelines.
    - On October 22, 2015, the U.S. EPA published the final National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Electronic Reporting Rule, 40 CFR Part 127. This regulation requires the electronic reporting and sharing of Clean Water Act NPDES program information instead of the current paper-based reporting of this information. The Department has been making consistent progress to comply with the 2015 regulation and in 2023 entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with US EPA to develop and maintain the NPDES Electronic Reporting Tool (NeT) for the applicable NPDES general permits and program reports.
    - Continued to prioritize permit timeliness and meeting 20BY26 timeframes, an agency-wide initiative to increase the predictability, efficiency, and transparency of DEEP's regulatory processes. Through these efforts, the division has resolved over 60 backlogged and legacy projects.
    - DEEP's Stormwater Program held a listening session on January 25, 2024 to solicit feedback on the terms and requirements of the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4). Many parties shared their success stories as well as their challenges to comply with certain aspects of the current permit. In response to that listening session, DEEP hosted a series of 4 technical workshops to discuss those challenges for the development of the new general permit.
    - The Division hosted listening sessions for five (5) wastewater general permits to solicit feedback from stakeholders during the technical development phase for the reissuance of the project.

    - Stormwater Program published the updated CT Stormwater Quality Manual and CT Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control and in a multi-agency workgroup collaborating to mitigate the impacts of winter salt usage on the environment and drinking water supplies.
    - Continued ongoing work to identify permit streamlining opportunities.
- Wastewater and Stormwater Compliance
    - Launched a new online Noncompliance Reporting platform for all regulated stakeholders. The regulated community will use the online platform to report instances of noncompliance for all discharge permits issued in WPED. This project modernizes the current paper procedures, allows for more transparent tracking of permit noncompliance, and expedites the subsequent compliance assistance.
    - Launched a new online Compliant Intake Platform. This new tool provides an additional avenue for the community to report potentially adverse environmental impacts to the Department. The tool allows the compliance teams to triage, track and respond in real-time to complaints supporting our hybrid work environment. The tracking and mapping tools allow us to better visual patterns and the uses of the data are limitless.
    - Conducted compliance evaluations and inspections for hundreds of sources of water pollution.
    - Issued violation notices to document noncompliance with state and federal water quality statutes/regulations; developed and executed administrative consent orders entailing injunctive relief and the payment of civil penalties

Emergency Response and Spill Management Division

- Received 3,653 reported releases and responded to 1,856 releases of petroleum or hazardous material to ensure steps were taken to protect public health and the environment and that proper cleanup was conducted.
- Performed 1,386 inspections.
- Issued 938 enforcement actions (red tags, consent orders, Attorney General referrals, notices of violation).
- 42 permits issued.
- 2007 Site assessments performed.
- 14,241 documents uploaded to the public portal.
- 142 site assessments conducted.
- Continued investment of significant resources to support coordination of programs with release-based regulation development.
- 1,010 enforcement actions issued.
- 4 government-initiated unannounced exercises.
- 1,840 cleanups completed.
- Processed 2,200 EPCRA reports.
- Assessed PFAS impacts at landfills.
- Followed up on 400 complaints.

<u>Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse</u>

Long Island Sound

- The Bride Brook Estuary Transformation Project at Rocky Neck State Park, a collaboration between CT DEEP and The Nature Conservancy in CT, has been recommended for $4M in funding under the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Transformational

Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants. The project will focus on planning for ecosystem restoration and resilience and an improved public experience.

- CT DEEP and the Connecticut Port Authority are collaborating with the US Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a $3 million study of potential alternatives for management of dredged material from coastal dredging projects in CT.
- CT DEEP is collaborating with the New York Department of State's Coastal Management Program to conduct a Long Island Sound Ecological and Use Sensitivity Analysis to support siting and regulatory decision-making for offshore wind transmission cable placement in the Long Island Sound.

Water Planning

- Participated with the Water Planning Council to evaluate the US Geological Survey water streamflow, water quality and groundwater monitoring programs in the state and submit a Report of the Evaluation of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Data Collection Programs to support the recommendations of the State Water Plan.

Clean Water (Wastewater)

- Neared completion of work with communities across the state to upgrade wastewater treatment plants to address phosphorus pollution, which will improve water quality by reducing nutrient loads in our rivers and streams and in the Long Island Sound. Two communities are still working on the necessary upgrades: Ridgefield's is expected to be complete by summer 2025 while Plymouth is in the design phase and will need more time.
- In August 2024, finalized the FY24-25 Priority List for implementation of the next phase of wastewater infrastructure projects using the Clean Water Fund, as supplemented by BIL funds. Clean Water Fund priorities include providing financial assistance (including subsidies) to support shovel-ready water quality projects to upgrade wastewater treatment facilities and collection system infrastructure, address combined sewer overflows in four communities (Hartford, Norwich, Bridgeport, New Haven), support green projects to address climate change, and implement federal BIL funds for clean water projects with a focus on shovel-ready projects in distressed areas to mitigate sanitary sewer overflows.
- In June 2023, committed state Clean Water Fund and Clean Water Fund-related funding to implement a pilot program that will address sewage overflows in streets and basements in North Hartford, where residents have been chronically impacted by the long-term recurrence of sewer overflows. The funds will be applied to 12 projects proposed by the Metropolitan District (MDC) to increase protections from sewer and stormwater-related flooding and backups in North Hartford. Seven projects began in 2023 consisting of 5 public infrastructure related projects, and 2 projects on private property (one project consisting of installing backflow preventers in homes and the other consisting of installing new sewer piping/house connections to separate stormwater from sewage). Six projects are planned for 2024 and one for 2025.
- Continue to implement Sewage Right to Know requirements using DEEP's cloud-based system (QAlert) and associated CT DEEP Performance Dashboard to the expanded reporting requirements of Public Act 21-42. The system allows reporters to report sewage spills, make corrections, and provide data updates, thus allowing for more accurate data. The Dashboard also allows for analytics and widgets to improve public transparency and self-service. To meet the real-time notification requirement of Public Act 12-42, DEEP is using an X (formerly known as Twitter) account called "CTSewerOverflows" (@CTSewageSpills) through which DEEP disseminates reports of sewage spills in the state.

Dam Safety

- The dam safety program issued 12 individual permits and 18 general permit authorizations for dam owners to conduct work on dams, including dam removals.
- For DEEP-owned dams, the department inspected 30 dams, including dams that are components of larger flood control projects; managed 10 dam repair or removal projects; and continued to update and develop Emergency Action Plans for DEEP-owned high or significant hazard dams.
- Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-402 was updated to clarify owner responsibilities for dams and to allow the Commissioner to compel owners or more swiftly take action on a dam that is causing, or is about to cause, a condition that is an imminent and substantial threat to public safety or the environment.

Release Cleanup

- Development of Release-Based Cleanup regulations continued pursuant to Public Act 20-9. DEEP and DECD co-chaired a working group to receive stakeholder feedback and advice on a new program that will align Connecticut's cleanup program with 48 other states.
- Transformation to electronic government platforms and systems is continuing, as funding allows, to further enhance public access to information and modernize collaboration between agency, communities, and businesses.
- Substantial cleanup continued at the Raymark Industries Federal Superfund Project in Stratford to remove Raymark waste from multiple locations in town for consolidation. Project is advancing with substantial federal funding ($70M so far).
- Brownfield cleanup advanced in environmental justice communities with assistance from a $485,000 BIL award from EPA.
- Implementation of critical recommendations of the PFAS Action Plan continued: Testing of private drinking water wells for PFAS contamination in vulnerable communities across the state; Take-back of aqueous film forming foam from state and municipal fire departments, and procurement of new regional foam trailers for major incident response using new "green" foam concentrate.
- In June 2024, issued cleanup completion certificate for property adjacent to Bradley International Airport that aligns with CT Airport Authority operational enhancements.

Coastal Permitting

- The Land & Water Resources Division (LWRD) held a stakeholder engagement meeting in July 2024 to investigate process improvements to the coastal regulatory programs. LWRD is currently gathering input from the meeting and formulating possible improvements to the program. A follow up engagement meeting will be scheduled for late fall / early winter.
- LWRD launched a new enforcement page that includes a way for citizens to report wetland or watercourse violations, an explanation of what to expect from a DEEP inspection on a complaint and highlights coastal permitting requirements.

Infrastructure Permitting

- LWRD renewed and modified the Water Resources Construction General Permit. This general permit authorizes various water resource construction activities which require an Inland Wetlands and Watercourses and/or Water Diversion permit. New categories have been added to the general permit making efficiencies for infrastructure projects.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION BRANCH

Bureau of Natural Resources

Forestry Division

- The Forestry Division is composed of several important programs that work together to conserve and manage forests. Connecticut's state foresters and their partners protect our forest resources by:
    - Encouraging private landowners to practice responsible long-term forest management (private landowners own 73% of Connecticut's forest, with more than two-thirds of that owned by families or individuals)
    - Protecting Connecticut's forest resources from the effects of fire, insects, disease, and misuse
    - Providing accurate and timely information about Connecticut's forest resources
    - Certifying forest practitioners
    - Managing the State Forests, in which exist many large blocks of unfragmented forest land
    - Engaging municipalities and citizens in the work of urban forestry
    - Promoting the local forest industry
- With approximately $4 million in new BIL and IRA funding, the Urban and Community Forestry program awarded $1 million in grants in Spring 2024 to help communities plant urban trees in the most heat island-affected areas, restore urban riparian areas, and assist with tree inventories, maintenance, and planning to increase urban tree cover in economically stressed Connecticut cities and towns supporting priorities identified in Connecticut 2020 Connecticut Forest Action Plan and Governor Lamont's goal of increasing urban tree canopy cover by 5% by 2040.
- Forestry staff facilitated the development of 3,468 acres of new or revised forest stewardship plans on private forest land and provided education and technical assistance to more than 2,700 landowners.
- The Forestry Division enabled private Connecticut forest landowners to access over $17 million in federal funding from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program for implementing sound forest management practices.
- DEEP staff from the offices of State Lands Forest Management (SLM), Land Acquisition and Management, and Legal are addressing a substantial backlog of encroachments on DEEP managed properties. We continue to find new encroachments as staff inspect the boundaries of many of our lands.
- SLM staff initiated eleven timber sale agreements improving forest health and wildlife habitats on approximately 669 acres of agency-managed State Forests.
- SLM staff initiated control of invasive plant species threatening forest health and inhibiting natural regeneration on two hundred and forty-four acres.
- SLM priorities have shifted in response to continual forest health outbreaks that have affected our forests. Most recently, staff are addressing landscape level impacts from repeated severe spongy moth defoliation that occurred during the 2021 and 2022 growing season impacting north-western CT.
- Connecticut's Interstate Fire Crew members (CIFC) deployed to Rhode Island, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Texas, Montana, and North Carolina. So far in 2024, CIFC has responded to Oregon and Washington State assistance requests. DEEP maintains a roster of agency staff members and personnel certified to fight forest or wildfires. Crew members must complete a rigorous training program and participate in an annual physical work capacity test and refresher training course. Connecticut maintains this firefighting capability to participate in a reciprocal aid program operated by the U.S. Forest Service and the Northeast Forest Fire Protection Compact. All state agency expenses directly associated with these deployments are 100% reimbursed to the state of Connecticut by the requesting Agency.

Fisheries Division

- The dedicated staff of the Fisheries Division focus on advancing the conservation, enhancement, restoration, use, and appreciation of Connecticut's fish, fisheries, and fish habitats. Work occurs across several broad programs, including Fish Culture (Hatcheries), Inland Fisheries Management, Habitat Conservation and Enhancement, Diadromous Fisheries Restoration, Constituent Services, and the CT Aquatic Resources Education program.

- **The Fish Culture** program operates three fish hatcheries: The Quinebaug Valley Trout Hatchery, the largest and raises most of the trout stocked in support of recreational fishing. The Kensington State Fish Hatchery focuses on rearing Atlantic salmon to support popular fisheries in the Naugatuck and Shetucket rivers. The Burlington State Fish Hatchery rears "Survivor Strain Brown Trout" to support the world-renowned blue-ribbon trout fishery in the West Branch Farmington River and Kokanee Salmon to support unique fisheries in select northwestern lakes.
    - In total, staff enhanced fishing opportunities for Connecticut residents by producing over 550,000 catchable-size trout, 1,474 large broodstock Atlantic Salmon, and 192,000 Kokanee Salmon fingerlings. Over 2,000 locations were stocked across nearly 100 lakes and ponds and more than 125 rivers and streams.
    - A highlight of this fiscal year was the completion of the B1-T-611 Energy Efficiency Project at Quinebaug Valley Trout Hatchery. The new improvements to the hatchery will save thousands of gallons of water daily, reduce the hatchery's environmental impact, and aligns with the goals of Governors Lamont's Executive Order 1 in reducing the state's water consumption by 10% by 2030. Improvements include installation of new filters and pumps, as well as the rehabilitation of the hatchery's water treatment system. The project was executed by the DAS and funded by the DEEP's Lead by Example Program for $6.7 million. The new filtration and pump infrastructure will allow the hatchery to recycle water more efficiently, which will save thousands of gallons of water daily. The improvements will also reduce the hatchery's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Inland Fisheries Management** programs focus on the monitoring, assessment, and maintenance of coldwater (e.g., trout and salmon) and warmwater (e.g., bass and catfish) fisheries.
    - Conducted in-person angler surveys to determine angler catch and opinion data from 18 Community Fishing Waters and four rivers/streams.
    - Initiated a yearlong angler survey of the blue-ribbon trout fishery on the West Branch and mainstem Farmington River.
    - Conducted nearly 400 fish community samples using a variety of sampling gears including backpack electrofishers, boat electrofishers, trap nets, and hoop nets.
    - Stocked over 30,500 Northern Pike into four Pike Management Lakes.
    - Stocked 37,580 walleye fingerlings to support future angling effort.
    - Initiated to the sportfishing regulations in the Inland District to clarify language and enhance fisheries.
- **The Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education (CARE)** program has been teaching beginners (both rural and urban communities) about the wonders of fish and fishing since 1986. The CARE program offers a variety of "Fish with CARE" classes and events showcasing urban and suburban fishing opportunities. These events are designed to increase fishing participation by showing participants how fun and easy fishing can be while also fostering an appreciation for the environment and our state's natural resources.
    - Developed over 18 fishing instruction videos.
    - Implemented a self-paced "Learn to Fish" web-based course in both English and Spanish.

- Conducted 152 fishing classes or events.
- Introduced 5,940 participants to the many benefits of fishing in a meaningful and positive way.
- Implemented an online "angler recognition" portal to acknowledge catches of trophy fish, state record fish, first catches, and lifetime personal best catches.
- Facilitated the Youth Fishing Passport and the accompanying year-long fishing challenge contest to engage youth and their caregivers to spend quality time together outdoors.
- The work of the CARE program is only possible thanks to a team of trained volunteers who donated 3,687 hours of their time during the fiscal year.

- **The Constituent Services Program** provides support on all things fish or fishing, including the following:
  - Maintain the Division's webpages.
  - Disseminate information and address concerns or answer questions via social media platforms.
  - Process permits related to Scientific Collecting, Fishing Derby/Tournaments, Liberation, Importation, and issuance of Special Fishing Regulations.
  - Publish the "Fishing Guide", which contains rules and regulations related to fishing.
  - Maintained a collaborative relationship with FishBrain to have fishing regulations published in the world's most popular fishing app at no cost to the state.
  - Respond to phone calls and emails from the public seeking information and advice related to fish and fishing.
- **The Habitat Conservation and Enhancement (HCE)** program serves as a vital liaison for the Fisheries Division with other DEEP Program personnel who take primary responsibility in issuing permits for regulated activities that potentially impact fish populations and their habitats. HCE staff interact directly with federal, state, and local regulatory and planning agencies, as well as private conservation organizations and individuals to provide timely information to conserve, restore, and enhance the state's aquatic environments.
  - Provided technical review and comments on over 250 regulated activities
  - Reviewed approximately 100 triploid Grass Carp Permit applications
  - The Grants for the Control of Aquatic Invasive Species Program awarded 13 grants totaling approximately $545,000 to organizations conducting control, research, and educational projects related to aquatic invasive species.
- **The Diadromous Fish Restoration Program** serves to monitor and enhance those species of fish which migrate between freshwater and saltwater for some part of their life. These species are often important both economically and ecologically. Construction of dams during the early 1800s has often reduced the ability for these fish to reach optimal freshwater habitat needed to support their population.
  - Staff monitored, operated, or provided technical assistance related to the operation and maintenance of 65 fishways across the state.
  - A total of 610 adult American Shad, 300 adult Sea Lamprey were transplanted to waters that historically supported runs in order to re-establish viable populations.
- **The Marine Fisheries Program** focuses on the monitoring, assessment and management of marine fish and invertebrate populations in Long Island Sound.
  - Marine recreational and commercial fishing in Connecticut provides approx. $350 million of annual economic activity and supports thousands of jobs.
  - Staff participate in multiple meetings of interstate fisheries management bodies (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, New England Fisheries Management Council) to make cooperative fishery management decisions with other states and federal partners.
  - The Marine Species Monitoring and Assessment (MSAMP) program conducts several long-running biological surveys of fish and invertebrate populations, most notably the

Long Island Sound Trawl Survey which has operated annually for 40+ years, making it one of the longest-tenured fisheries surveys on the Atlantic coast.
    - Data generated by the MSAMP program plays a vital role in understanding the impacts of climate change on Long Island Sound, and in scientific management of economically important marine fisheries.
    - The MSAMP program also collects important data on critically endangered fish species such as Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon. This information plays a critical role in coastwide cooperative recovery efforts for these species.
    - The Marine Fishery Statistics Program collects harvest data from commercial and recreational fishery participants along the CT coastline. Data generated by the Fishery Statistics Program satisfies federal mandates for fishery monitoring and is crucial in ensuring sustainable use of Long Island Sound fishery resources.

Wildlife Division

- The Wildlife Division continued to provide technical assistance to municipalities and individual residents to address the challenges of a growing and geographically expanding black bear population. Both the numbers of home entries and the complaints about bear damage to property and livestock continued to increase. In 2023, bears were reported from 165 of our 169 towns and cities. Over the last three years, observations of sows with cubs, an indication of a breeding population, were reported in 117 different municipalities. In 2023, conflicts with trashcans and bird feeders accounted for most of the reported complaints. Backyard chickens represented 85 livestock complaints. Unfortunately, 2023 also included two separate human attacks (both adults sustained non-life-threatening injuries.) In 2023, a formal bear awareness marketing campaign was launched resulting in over 1.6 million impressions and over 80,000 link visits. Legislation aimed at addressing increasing bear-human conflicts passed (Public Act 23-77) prohibiting the feeding of dangerous animals such as black bear, allowing individuals experiencing damage to agriculture to obtain depredation permits in narrow circumstances, and clarifying self-defense rights when experiencing a bear attack.
- The Outreach Program within the Wildlife Division continued to engage the public across a variety of platforms. Our social media engagement with residents remains strong:
    - Facebook: 52,500 followers
    - Instagram: 5,800 followers
    - Wildlife Highlights eNewsletter: 7,243 subscribers
    - Hunter Highlights eNewsletter: 2,487 subscribers
- *Connecticut Wildlife* magazine, the DEEP website, and a variety of printed and digital materials provided additional outreach opportunities. Staff conducted a wide variety of public programs, most commonly on bears, bobcats, and coyotes, but also on native pollinators and illegal trade in turtles, reaching over 7,000 people. Master Wildlife Conservationist volunteers provided many additional public programs and participated in numerous outreach events.
- The Conservation Education Firearms Safety Program (CEFS) conducted training classes for firearms, bow, and trapping activities. A total of 2,363 students graduated from these programs. Five mentored Junior Pheasant Hunts, six advanced hunter education seminars (e.g., venison processing; turkey hunting), nine CEFS instructor training workshops, and nine special outreach events were conducted to promote and address the goals of Connecticut's Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) plan.
- Revision of Connecticut's Wildlife Action Plan began in earnest with updates to the species of greatest conservation need list drafted and work on refinement of conservation actions and conservation opportunity areas underway. The plan will be completed for submission to and approval by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2025.

- Connecticut's 112 Wildlife Management Areas and 96 wildlife impoundments were the focus habitat management projects ranging from invasive species control to prescribed burns. A second year of prescribed burning was conducted at Suffield Wildlife Management Area to help restore native warm-season grasses—critical habitat for the state endangered upland sandpiper and grasshopper sparrow. A similar effort at Matianuck Natural Area Preserve helped restore dunes that are part of the last remaining sand plain habitat in Connecticut and home to a variety of state listed species.

Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

State Parks and Public Outreach Division

- Attendance at State Parks and Forest Recreation Areas grew considerably during the pandemic, and annual visitation is now estimated at more than 17 million visitors. Our diverse visitors come from every community in the state, and we have removed financial barriers to entry by allowing free parking access to everyone with a CT-registered vehicle through our Passport to the Parks program.
- In collaboration with DOT, the Park ConneCT program continued to operate in 2023 and 2024 by providing bus transportation on the weekends and holidays to Hammonasset Beach State Park, Silver Sands State Park and Sleeping Giant State Park, creating free bus and shuttle service to three Connecticut State Parks. The program was expanded in 2024 to now include excursion bus transportation to two summertime No Child Left Inside (NCLI) events – Dino Day at Dinosaur State Park and Saltwater Fishing Day at Fort Trumbull State Park.
- Connecticut has an unprecedented amount of infrastructure repair and refurbishment needed across our State Park system, and the Lamont Administration has made a historic commitment of $70.7 million ($10.7 million of ARPA funds as well as $30 million of bond fund authorizations in both FY 24 and FY 25) to support these important investments.
- The State's Recreational Trails Grant Program has dramatically accelerated both the number of projects funded across the state and the total dollars dedicated to this year's grant round ($10 million), which will provide funding for 45 additional projects throughout CT. In addition, the adopted state budget provides an additional $10 million for additional grant opportunities for 2025.
- The Division of State Parks and Public Outreach made plans to introduce, in fall 2024, all-terrain wheelchairs at five state parks with its Outdoor Accessibility Initiative. These 5 parks (Dinosaur State Park, Topsmead State Forest, Harkness Memorial State Park, Rocky Neck State Park and Gillette Castle State Park) will each receive two ARPA-funded all-terrain powered wheelchairs, which will provide ADA access to trails at these park locations.
- In 2024, we added 12 EP Maintainer 3s to our State Parks system and one Operations Supervisor, creating a new South/Central District.

Boating Division

- The Boating Division continued to advance Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) education through seasonal Boating Education Assistants, providing municipal boat launch monitor training and issuance of Special Use Licenses for launch monitors. AIS Stamp funds were used to provide training to AIS stewards, and a digital media campaign for AIS Stamp awareness. DEEP created and deployed new informational signage regarding hydrilla at state boat launches.
- A total of 7,808 students took Boating Division-approved boating safety courses during this period, including 2,190 students in 99 free safe boating courses led by DEEP staff and volunteer

instructors. DEEP staff and volunteer instructors offered specialized classes for Spanish-speaking students and for deaf students.

- The Boating Division continued to work on plans to renovate boat launches at Candlewood Lake (Squantz Cove) and Niantic River State Boat Launch. An award to replace the Baldwin Bridge State Boat Launch floating docks and gangways was granted during this period. A number of improvements were made at Gardner Lake State Boat Launch including signage, shoreline erosion control, and line striping.
- The Boating Division oversaw the removal of 983,943 gallons of recreational vessel boat sewage by managing pump out grants for stationary units and vessels in Candlewood Lake and Long Island Sound in 2023. Grant money totaling more than $980,000 was also awarded for boat sewage disposal facilities, or pump out stations, for 30 marine facilities during the 2024 boating season. The program is administered by DEEP with a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Clean Vessel Act program and provides free pump out service to boaters in Connecticut.
- The Boating Division assisted marinas and other affected property owners by processing 113 applications to transfer ownership of abandoned vessels.
- The Boating Division created a publicly accessible Boating Incident Dashboard, which is a detailed compendium of boating accident data including fatalities, boating under the influence, primary boating incident types, causes of boating incidents, and other boating safety information. This dashboard is especially useful to assist with media inquiries during the summer months.

Environmental Conservation Police Division

- The Environmental Conservation Police Division (EnCon) has been actively recruiting this past year to hire additional officers to increase staffing levels to fill all vacancies in the division. To support the recent hiring of new officers over the past couple of years, the division has begun to deliver an advanced new officer training course in wildlife, fisheries, and boat operations.
- EnCon remained busy for FY24, logging 25,578 calls for service, which included 261 public outreach events, 221 nuisance bear calls, 145 arrests, 1,690 infractions, 514 written warnings and 1,448 verbal warnings. Officers logged contacts with approximately 1,850 hunters, 10,450 anglers and 4,570 boaters.
- EnCon has moved the Western District Office to the recently completed DEEP Western District Headquarters building in Watertown, CT. This move keeps EnCon in close contact with the other divisions of DEEP and allows for better collaboration and support amongst the divisions
- EnCon is continuing to improve its processes and is excited to announce that we have met Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC) Tier 3 accreditation standards ahead of schedule. The division also has created and hired an accreditation manager position to aid the division in maintaining our accreditation program.

Office of Outdoor Industry & Experiences

- DEEP established an Office of Outdoor Industry & Experiences within the Environmental Conservation Branch, joining, MA, NH, VT and ME as well as approximately 20 other states nationally to establish a similar office. Connecticut's office exists to grow Connecticut's outdoor recreation economy in the following ways:
  - Partnering with the private sector to provide outdoor recreation experiences in State Parks.
  - Promoting Connecticut both as an outdoor recreation tourism destination and as a place to live, work and play outside.
  - Expanding and protecting equitable access to the outdoors.

- Connecticut's $4.6B outdoor recreation economy is the second largest in New England and has demonstrated robust growth each year since the pandemic – expanding by 20% in 2021 and by another 11% in 2022. To build on this momentum, DEEP launched a new, interactive State Parks website, and Governor Lamont and the Legislature committed an historic $80M to the Restore CT State Parks initiative. DEEP is building upon successful partnerships in Connecticut State Parks – such as the Essex Steam Train, Farmington River Tubing, and Mohawk Mountain Ski Area – by inviting businesses, non-profits, and other private sector stakeholders to submit concepts to a Request for Information (RFI), which is intentionally broad to encourage innovative, creative concepts that meet the following goals:
    - Elevate outdoor recreation and visitor experience
    - Expand tourism destinations
    - Provide equitable and sustainable access to the outdoors
- DEEP received over 40 submissions to the RFI and will be issuing Requests for Proposals to implement partnerships that best align with our mission and goals above.

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Office of Climate Planning

- The Climate Planning Office continues to support cross-agency functions for the three branches of DEEP through integrating planning for the impacts of climate change and reducing carbon emissions in line with the state's statutory goals of a 45% economy-wide GHG emissions reduction by 2030 and 80% by 2050, as well as a zero-carbon energy supply by 2040, using an equity lens and informed by the best available climate science. Following are some highlights:
- Partnered with the UConn Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation to launch another round of the Climate Justice and Equity Grant program to fund community-based organizations to conduct and participate in climate planning.
- Led and/or coordinated policy and program development to achieve the above goals, including the implementation of Executive Order 21-3. The Climate Office launched the DEEP Climate Resilience Fund (DCRF) with a call for proposals in September 2022. Twenty-one grants totaling $8.8 million for climate resilience planning and project development were announced in June 2023. The Office is administering the contracts for all 21 grantees. The funding source for the DCRF received an additional $40 million in authorized funding in the 2024 legislative session, bringing the total authorized funds to $75 million.
- Received a $3 million grant from EPA Climate Pollution Grant Program (CPRG) in August 2023. With this funding, the office developed a State Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) by March 1, 2023 with 14 implementation-ready climate action measures in the sectors of transportation, buildings, electricity, waste, and natural and working lands as well as the following elements and analyses:
    - Greenhouse Gas Inventory
    - Quantified Greenhouse Gas Reduction Measures (14 Climate Action Measures)
    - Benefits Analysis (Reduction in Co-pollutants)
    - Low Income Disadvantaged Communities (LIDACs) Benefits Analysis
    - Review of Authority to Implement
    - Intersection with Other Funding Availability (focused on other federal funding opportunities through the BIL and the IRA
- Led the development of applications for EPA CPRG Implementation Grant funding due on April 1, 2023. The state was successful in being part of two multi-state coalition proposals for funding under the EPA CPRG:

    - The $450 million New England Heat Pump Accelerator to deploy heat pumps across CT, RI, MA, ME, and NH.
    - The $250 million Clean Corridor Coalition to building medium- and heavy-duty truck charging infrastructure along the I-95 corridor.
    - The City of New Haven was also selected for funding a networked geothermal system that they were eligible to receive funding because it was included in the State PCAP.
- Started work on the EPA CPRG Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) that will be due on December 1, 2025 and will reconvene the Governor's Council on Climate Change in fall 2024 to engage with the development of that plan.
- Coordinated the state's membership in national (U.S. Climate Alliance), including the development of a coalition-wide Climate Workforce Initiative and international (Under2 Coalition) coalitions to reduce carbon emissions.
- Advised the Commissioner on climate-related legislation in the 2024 session.

Office of Innovative Partnerships and Planning (IPP)

IPP supports cross-agency functions for DEEP's three branches and the Commissioner's Office in the areas of agency-wide planning, permit assistance, stakeholder engagement, and enforcement and compliance assurance.

- **Agency-wide Planning**
    - **DEEP's 20BY26 Initiative** – IPP leads DEEP in pursuing 20 measurable improvements across the agency that increase the predictability, efficiency, and transparency of our processes. 20BY26 focuses on continued implementation of successful strategies for regulatory process improvements and developing new ones to benefit the businesses, towns, and residents of Connecticut. 20BY26 launched in February 2024 with a kickoff report and webinar. For 20BY26, IPP maintained a dedicated inbox: DEEP.20BY26@ct.gov; helped develop goals, objectives, and tasks for each goal; made 14 presentations to stakeholders; organized and participated in 143 internal goal meetings, and led the publication of the initiative's first progress report.
    - **Program Support** – IPP provides permitting and programmatic support for programs across DEEP. Some highlights from this year:
        - Provided SIMS (DEEP's permitting and enforcement database) agency-wide training June 2024, technical support, and annual permit report.
        - Created or updated 19 permit applications, provided web content management and support for DEEP's webmaster, assisted in graphic design of programmatic factsheets, revamped DEEP's main Contacts webpage so that our customers can reach us directly.
        - Maintained dashboards to track metrics on Permit Assistance client satisfaction permit processing timeframes, processing of legacy permits, and regulatory adoption.
        - Coordinated with DMV on their licensing of 168 auto recycling and repair facilities, which have many environmental permitting touchpoints and potential for non-compliance.
        - Provided inter- and intra-agency coordination and review of three FERC 401 Water Quality Certifications.
        - Developed DEEP's Quick Start Guide video for DEEP's Online Document Search Portal.
        - Developed a Permitting and Environmental Justice flow chart to show how and when the permitting and public processes are related to each other.

- **Permit Assistance -** IPP's Permit Assistance program is utilized more than ever due to the uptick of development projects, enhanced promotion of its services, improvements in the transparency of the permitting process for applicants, and the increased flow of state and federal funding opportunities.
    - **Pre-Permit Application Assistance –** IPP assists permit applicants at the beginning of the permitting process through pre-application meetings, where we gather program staff to answer applicants' questions and provide advice on their project. This year, IPP led **108 multi-permit pre-application meetings** and maintained a dedicated **inbox for DEEP pre-app assistance** (DEEP.OPPD@ct.gov).
    - **Client Concierge Service –** IPP provides next-level assistance, project management, and inter- and intra-agency coordination for time-sensitive, complex, multi-permit projects. This year, IPP:
        - Managed **55 active Concierge projects**, including Tweed New Haven airport, Amtrak CT River bridge replacement, redevelopment of former UCONN campus West Hartford, Vineyard Wind, AB Eco Park North Haven, Riverfront Recapture Hartford, Resilient Bridgeport, and NVCOG's Kinneytown Dam Removal.
        - Maintained a dedicated **Concierge Inbox** (DEEP.Concierge@ct.gov).
        - Provided regular email blasts on permitting information, useful tools, regulatory updates, and funding opportunities for businesses and developers through Campaign Monitor, with 300 subscribers.
        - Maintained a dedicated **Concierge webpage** with factsheets, stakeholder engagement information, and other resources.
        - Held bi-weekly DECD-DEEP interface meetings to coordinate on permitting and brownfields projects.
        - Developed a **Municipal and Concierge Database**.
    - **Early Municipal Assistance –** Through the Concierge service, IPP now offers Early Municipal Assistance (EMA) – since March 2024 - to help municipalities better navigate DEEP's systems, plan projects, receive status updates, and resolve permitting issues. In building out this program over the past year, IPP developed a new Municipal Hub and Municipal Team webpages providing resources and points of contact, including a new EMA form to request a meeting, newsletters through Campaign Monitor sign up (with 1,700 municipal subscribers), with notable projects including New Milford DPW, Vernon Exit 67 Sewer Extension, participation in the MS4 Permitting Working Group hosted by DEEP's Water Permitting and Enforcement Division, and many dam repair and removal projects.
    - **Small Business Assistance** and other assistance to businesses. IPP has been planning the development of inter- and intra-agency coordination to providing permitting assistance and funding information to small businesses. DEEP also helps with name changes and multi-media permit transfers, assisting businesses in transferring permits under another's name for the same permitted actions, allowing businesses to save time and money by not having to re-apply for new permits.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**
    - **STEPS -** IPP has been an integral part of multiple stakeholder engagement groups garnering input from the regulated community on topics such as solar development, offshore wind, and environmental justice. In particular, IPP leads the cross-agency team for Sustainable, Transparent, and Efficient Practices (STEPS) for Solar Siting that worked with CT Department of Agriculture to develop a Draft Guidance for Siting Solar on Agricultural Lands and assisted DEEP's BETP with procurement of renewable energy. IPP maintains a dedicated inbox (DEEP.STEPS@ct.gov) for this stakeholder outreach.

    - **Municipal Events –** IPP provided coordination of, support for, and participation in event exhibitor planning at Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), Council of Small Towns (COST), Sustainable CT, Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development (CT RC&D), and Connecticut Main Street Summit for DEEP programs. IPP serves as DEEP's representative on the Sustainable CT Board of Directors.
- **Enforcement and Compliance Assurance -** IPP serves as DEEP's coordinator for enforcement and compliance assurance, including liaising with EPA, training, and enforcement reporting for formal enforcement actions.
    - *With other State Agencies,* to hear about grant updates from across the State Government, through weekly meetings with the CT BILT team and leads from other agencies, like DECD, Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), Office of Policy and Management (OPM), DHS, and Department of Transportation (DOT).
        - Coordinated DEEP's preparation and response to EPA in their five-year audit of DEEP's state delegated programs: Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The SRF (State Review Framework) Round 4 Report was published in March 2024, where the overall finding was a strong performance for Connecticut's environmental enforcement and compliance programs. IPP also participates in EPA's Region 1 (R1) Enforcement and Compliance Assurance monthly meetings with enforcement and legal directors of each R1 state and EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.
        - Coordinated agency-wide training for enforcement and multi-media inspections.
        - Made quarterly updates to Formal Enforcement Actions on CT Open Data Portal.
        - Continued updating DEEP's 1996 Enforcement Response Policy.
        - Provided oversight and program assistance on DEEP's Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEPs), as well as coordinating the approval and use of funds with DEEP's Bureau of Central Services and programs on project tracking and spending. This year IPP drafted an SEP SOP for agency-wide use and is working to revise DEEP's 1993 SEP Policy to include actions for environmental justice, climate resilience, and energy efficiency.

Office of Equity and Environmental Justice

- Continued to convene the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC), a council established by EO 21-3, within DEEP to advise the Commissioner on current and historic environmental injustice, pollution reduction, energy equity, climate change mitigation and resiliency, health disparities, and racial inequity. All subcommittees, including Air & Transportation, Water, Waste, Energy & Technology, and Land, met throughout the year to provide feedback on draft proposals, projects, and grant programs. The council also welcomed six new members and five new subcommittee members.
- Along with the UConn's Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA), finalized the version 2.0 of an "Environmental Justice Mapping Tool" to identify vulnerable populations that may be disproportionately impacted by pollution, health disparities and climate change. This tool will enable the public to access demographic, health, and potential pollution sources across the state of Connecticut.
- Developed tools and resources for stakeholders to navigate the Environmental Justice Public Participation process as outlined in Public Act 23-202. This includes the creation of guidance documents, updated permitting flowcharts, webpage for regulations development.
- Launched a Request for Proposals for an Environmental Justice Mapping Consultant to develop a new cumulative impacts tool and update the state's environmental justice screening tool.

- Maintained a GIS map reflecting CGS § 22a-20a that shows communities identified as environmental justice communities and certain emitters of pollution, defined as "affecting facilities," located in environmental justice communities. This tool is used by environmental organizations, neighborhood communities, academia, industry, financial institutions, consultants, attorneys, green industry businesses and local, state, and federal agencies.
- Continued to facilitate DEEP's participation in the Native American Heritage Advisory Council to preserve tribal history and archeological artifacts, and to support state and federal tribes in these efforts.
- Worked with the State-recognized tribes and the State Historic Preservation Office to assess and protect historic cultural resources and make infrastructure improvements on reservations.
- Hired a Tribal Affairs Liaison to strengthen DEEP's relationships with the state-recognized tribes as well as coordinate maintenance and repairs on the reservations.
- Exercised oversight over public engagement and participation with respect to permitting and provided assistance to industry and department's permitting and program staff to ensure meaningful public participation in the community. The EJ Office developed additional guidance for industry on how to schedule and hold public meetings in person and remotely.
- Served on numerous environmental, conservation, municipal and civil rights boards and commissions to advise and support diversity, inclusion, and equity throughout the state.
- Supported DEEP's Urban Green and Community Gardens Grant Program, which provided funding assistance to develop or enhance urban open spaces for public enjoyment and/or environmental education.
- Strove to provide access to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons by decreasing language barriers and translating outreach materials and publications. Created a new LEP Working Group, internal to the agency, to refine an internal protocol and policy on offering increased translation and interpretation for DEEP's programs. Facilitated the capacity of the agency's Language Bank, a volunteer effort of DEEP employees to provide translation on agency-wide initiatives.
- Streamlined the Title VI discrimination complaint process.
- Revamped the agency's Equity and Environmental Justice Newsletter.
- Visited sites and coordinated with DEEP staff, municipalities and local law enforcement to address flooding, illegal dumping, quality of life issues, housing contamination, illegal car repair, mismanagement of solid waste, and electric suppliers.
- In partnership with the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History co-sponsored the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Environmental and Social Justice event.
- Continued engagement with neighborhood and community organizations, including but not limited to:
    - Stamford South End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) Initiative
    - Bridgeport East End NRZ
    - Hartford Friends of Keney Park (served as an advisor)
    - Watershed Planning & Management Division on the Mill River Urban Watershed Initiative – helped expand their activities into environmental justice communities
    - Bloomfield Lisa Lane Farm Community Garden Program
    - National Science Foundation Innovative Technology Experiences for Students & Teachers Engaging Underrepresented
    - Eastern CT Land Trusts
    - Groundwork Bridgeport
    - The community concerned with the expansion of Tweed Airport,
    - Performed outreach and assisted in coordinating meetings in to respond and address the concerns with flooding in homes and businesses in North Hartford.
- Increased outreach to environmental justice communities by supporting programs in the branches (urban fishing programs, weatherization assistance program, GMAP, OSWA, UGCG, etc.) and

also CEEJAC updates and resources and environmental education programs, as well as the Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge – Cops & Bobbers, Hooks & Ladders: An annual event at Keney Park Pond where Hartford Law Enforcement and Fire Departments engage with youth attendees.

- Develop tools and create partnerships to Increase staff diversity:
    - Collaborated with the Historically Black Colleges & Universities Connect
    - Leveraged Hartford's 89.9 WQTQ radio station to recruit and engage the community in DEEP's programs.
    - Continually engaged in outreach and recruitment efforts with DEEP's Bureau of Natural Resources to attract a diverse applicant pool for seasonal and full-time positions
    - Advertised employment opportunities to underserve communities and faith-based organizations.
- Participated in the All States, Regional, and the Office of Resource Conservation & Recovery Environmental Justice monthly meetings
- Served on the planning committee of the Youth Climate Summit
- Originated and led the development of the Friends of Keney Park Nature Center Project

Office of Land Acquisition and Management

Green Plan

In 2023 and early 2024, DEEP took initial steps to update the Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy (Green Plan). DEEP and partners developed a more encompassing definition of open space and used this new definition to collect new data on the extent and distribution of open space in Connecticut. Additional data will be collected throughout the remainder of 2024 and the goals, public outreach and finalized Green Plan will be completed in 2025.

Open Space Protection

- Recognizing the threat of loss or degradation of natural resources due to land-use change and development, the General Assembly set a goal of preserving 21% of Connecticut's land base as public open space (CGS § 23-8). To reach this goal, 673,210 acres across the state needs to be acquired as open space. Of the total open space goal:
    - 10% (320,576 acres) shall be held by the State of Connecticut (DEEP), and
    - 11% (352,634 acres) shall be held by DEEP's land conservation partners (municipalities, non-profit land conservation organizations, and water companies).
- At the end of 2023, DEEP and its partners together held a combined 517,511 acres as public open space: 76.87% of the way towards achieving the total statewide open space acquisition goal. DEEP must acquire 56,748 more acres and DEEP's partners must acquire 98,951 more acres.
- *State (DEEP) Open Space:* As of December 31, 2023, DEEP held an estimated 263,828 acres of land in its system of Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Management and water access areas: 82.3% of its open space goal. In 2023, DEEP added 141.31 acres to Connecticut's network of Parks, Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, water access, and other publicly available open space areas. DEEP utilizes state bond funds through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program combined with Federal funding though the Highlands Conservation Act, the Forest Legacy Program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the EPA's Long Island Sound Grant, in addition to private funding – maximizing the impact of state dollars.
- *Partner-held Open Space:* As of December 31, 2023, DEEP conservatively estimates that its partners held 253,683 acres: 71.9%, of their share of the statewide open space goal. Of this, non-

profit land conservation organizations held about 70,315 acres, municipalities held 85,498 acres, and water companies held 97,870 acres as open space.

- DEEP also manages the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grant program (OSWA), which provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire land for open space. Properties acquired through the OSWA program are protected with conservation easements – ensuring that they are open to the public and preserved as open space in perpetuity.
- In 2023-2024, DEEP focused on statute and program changes to the OSWA and Urban Green and Community Garden (UGCG) programs to improve equity. Statutes changes included adding 48 additional communities in need to the communities that qualify for UGCG funding and increased funding through OSWA. Additionally, underserved communities can now qualify for funding to cover incidental costs associated with the OSWA application and closing process. Lastly, nonprofit organizations can now apply for funding directly through UGCG for projects within underserved communities. Staff also revamped the UGCG and OSWA program guidelines, applications and scoresheets to reflect the statute changes, clarify definitions and standardize procedures.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

- Stateside Funding- The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) stateside funding is a federal grant program that can be used to acquire property or develop existing property for outdoor recreation. Since the passing of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020, CT has been receiving between 4 and 4.5 million in funding. In 2023-2024, DEEP received about 4 million in funding for repaving in Chatfield Hollow and Hammonasset and replacing toilets in various state parks and forests throughout the State.
- Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) – The LWCF ORLP program is a subset of LWCF funding that is nationally competitive and geared towards environmental justice communities. In the last few years, DEEP has worked with Bridgeport and Stamford to put in applications for park enhancements that have been awarded almost $3 million. In early 2024, DEEP worked with Bristol and Stamford to put in applications for two additional park improvement projects.
- Administrative Funding – In 2023, the LWCF program added 7% of annual funding for administrative purposes. Recently, DEEP hired a full-time LWCF program manager using the new administrative funding.

Property Management

- The property management section of LAM administers property rights and manages requests by municipal, utility, DOT, private and federal entities. In 2023-2024, DEEP managed 100-200 projects for technical assistance and agency responses. Furthermore, an encroachment resolution policy and procedures, including associated staff training materials, have been developed to address a long-standing backlog of encroachments across the agency. With these updates and in conjunction with local property managers and legal, LAM staff have resolved over 20 encroachments this year, many of them long-standing, and are addressing nearly 30 more encroachments across DEEP properties.

Office of Adjudications

- The Office of Adjudications received fourteen requests for a hearing, adjudicated eight contested permit matters and one order, and issued five final decisions.
- Adjudications has two open matters continuing into the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- The Hearing Officer facilitated one informational public hearing in lieu of a contested hearing for a permitted matter.
- The Hearing Officer facilitated a public hearing for Fisheries' regulation-making proceeding.
- Mediated six matters between DEEP and outside parties.
- Mediated fifty-one Notices of Disabled Underground Storage Tank Systems pursuant to General Statutes § 22a-449(g) in lieu of contested cases.
- Facilitated monthly hunting and fishing panels, as requested, with Wildlife, EnCon, and Fisheries divisions.
- The Office of Adjudications has ongoing projects to address public access to information for open and closed matters, including a public-facing filing system that will allow members of the public to access docket information and provide parties with an electronic method for filing material with the Hearing Officer.

Office of Environmental Review & Strategic Initiatives (ERSI)

- ERSI, established during this reporting period, coordinates several activities that cut across all bureaus, divisions, and offices of DEEP such as: environmental reviews related to actions of state and federal agencies with potential for significant environmental impacts (e.g., CEPA and NEPA); coordination of annual drawdowns in state-owned lakes; conducting studies and serving on task forces required by newly enacted state laws; facilitating partnerships with private businesses to accomplish pollution prevention; and much more. Specific accomplishments follow:
- **CT Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) Compliance**
  - Proposed new DEEP Environmental Classification Document, which was published in the CEQ Environmental Monitor for a requisite 45-day public comment period.
  - Held 5 training sessions on public scoping/CEPA comments on state agency actions over two weeks reaching over 75 staff members.
  - Reviewed 19 CEPA projects initiated by other state agencies.
  - Provided comments on 4 NEPA projects initiated by federal agencies.
  - Provided assistance for 2 DEEP CEPA projects.
- **Environmental Reviews**
  - Submitted comments on behalf of DEEP for 7 projects proposed to the CT Siting Council.
  - Reviewed 55 applications for two rounds of Department of Economic and Community Development's (DECD) Community Investment Fund.
  - Reviewed and scored 14 applications for Department of Agriculture for Farmland Restoration, Climate Resiliency & Preparedness Grant.
  - Reviewed 19 applications for DECD's Brownfield Remediation Grant
  - Reviewed and scored 7 proposals for the Long Island Sound Study's Future Fund grants program.
  - Evaluated and scored 13 bids (12 solar facilities and 1 fuel cell) to Shared Clean Energy Facilities (SCEF) Request for Proposals in partnership with BETP and electric utilities.
  - Participated in over 50 Concierge pre-application meetings organized by IPP.
- **Federal Grants**
  - Created a process to share and organize BIL and IRA information across the agency, which includes consulting an administrative grant tracking file from the Bureau of Central Services

(BCS) and creating an Office of the Commissioner grant tracking database and Power BI dashboards and reports to visualize grant activity across the agency.
    - To hear about grant updates from across the State Government, participated in weekly meetings with the CT BILT team and leads from other agencies, like DECD, Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), Office of Policy and Management (OPM), Department of Housing (DOH), and Department of Transportation (DOT).
    - Launched a communications and transparency plan, which included a weekly BIL/IRA grants digest, distributed internally by email, and a BIL/IRA grant updates website, which is online for public transparency.
    - Hired durational Federal Grants Policy Advisor to bring greater expertise and focus to DEEP's ongoing efforts to secure, utilize, and distribute federal grants.
- **Lake Drawdown Coordination and Aquatic Herbicide Authorizations**
    - Coordinated with Environmental Quality and Environmental Conservation branches as well as with stakeholders (e.g., Eversource, Lake Associations, Municipalities) to approve 10 drawdowns at state-owned lakes.
    - New "Policy to Draw Down State Owned Impoundments" and online application for drawdown requests was launched in July 2023.
    - Reviewed and administered six authorizations for herbicides on state-owned lakes for compliance with liability and compatibility with boating and fishing events.
- **Planning/Coordination**
    - Coordinated DEEP's meetings with OPM and input into the State's Draft 2025-2030 Conservation and Development Policies Plan.
    - Participated in the annual negotiations with the U.S. EPA on the federal/state priorities and commitments list (P&C list), annual report updates, and with Quality Assurance Project Plan and management updates.
- **Pollution Prevention (P2)**
    - Launched, with federal funding, the *BetterBev* program in conjunction with other New England states to provide free technical assistance and recognition to craft beverage manufacturers that implement environmental sustainability actions. This included:
        - Development of the BetterBev brand and program promotion (program name, logo, tagline, regional press release, social media posts, published articles, webpage).
        - Designing an environmental checklist, application form and eligibility requirements for CT's BetterBev program.
        - Participation in BetterBev by 4 breweries (3 eligible for recognition), resulting in over 700,000 gallons of water conserved, energy projects with CO2 reductions that equal 70 cars off the road, preservation of farmland including 50 acres of northeast grain-shed, and over 1 ton of plastic waste avoided.
    - Conducted pollution prevention site visits at 4 breweries, resulting in approximately 10 recommendations each that would reduce pollution and have cost savings for the business; continue to track implementation.
    - Developed new guidance document, *Connecticut Bottle Deposit Requirements: What Craft Beverage Manufacturers Need to Know,* to assist businesses in compliance with CT's bottle bill law.
    - Continued to assist state agencies with achieving the Sustainable Materials Management goals set out in Executive Order 1/GreenerGov CT and the requirements of Public Act 23-170 related to source-separated organic materials, including the Department of Corrections and DAS.

- P2 coordinated DEEP's Green Lodging Certification program, saving energy, water, GHG emissions, and solid waste generation.

- **Special Reports, Stakeholder Engagement, and Taskforces**
  - Pursuant to Public Act 23-204 (section 140), facilitated DEEP's efforts on a report to the General Assembly that studied the feasibility of, and recommended options for the provision of, public recreational access to the Batterson Park property located in the city of New Britain and the town of Farmington in consultation with the City of Hartford and other interested municipalities. Submitted report to the General Assembly in January 2024.
  - Pursuant to Public Act. 24-144 (section 12), started coordinating a report on the CT Siting Council due to the CT General Assembly by December 31, 2024. The report must examine the Council, focusing on its ability to balance the need for the facilities that the Council oversees and the need for timely and thorough administration of the Council's duties with the need to protect the environment, public health and safety.
  - Participated in multiple stakeholder engagement groups garnering input from the regulated community on topics such as solar development, offshore wind, and environmental justice. Notably, ERSI has coordinated quarterly meetings of the Commission on Environmental Standards (CES) since fall, 2023. The CES, established through Public Act 19-71, provides input from legislators, commercial fishers, energy conservation organizations, and others to DEEP's procurements for offshore wind energy.
  - Represented DEEP on the Hydropower Task Force established through Special Act 23-8. The final report of this Task Force was submitted to the Energy & Technology Committee on April 1, 2024.

Office of Legal Counsel

- Supports the agency's diverse and multi-faceted work. Legal personnel are assigned to provide services to the Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy (BETP), the Environmental Conservation (EC) Branch programs composed of the Bureaus of Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources, and the Environmental Quality (EQ) Branch programs composed of the Bureaus of Air Management, Materials Management and Compliance Assurance, and Water Protection and Land Reuse. The Office of Legal also has a legal unit known as Transactional Management and Regulatory Affairs (TMRA), which is dedicated to addressing the agency's transactional needs, including land use matters, and supporting the agency's regulation promulgation efforts.
- Responsibilities of the legal office include: addressing the day-to-day legal questions of agency personnel; drafting and reviewing policies, regulations and legislation; interpreting and advising on statutes, regulations and policies; providing support in federal and state litigation matters in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General; addressing the approximate 1000 or more public records requests received annually; drafting and reviewing transactional instruments such as personal service agreements, contracts, procurement documents and grant awards; addressing inquiries related to compliance with the Code of Ethics; providing support on petitions for declaratory rulings; representing the commissioner's interests in administrative proceedings before the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission (FOIC), the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) and more.
- **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) –** A new FOIA platform known as GovQA was rolled out on April 3, 2023, to assist with the agency's handling of public records requests. Prior to

GovQA's implementation, the agency had received nearly 300 requests. From its effective date through December 31, 2023, the agency received 686 records requests, all of which have been addressed and closed. From January 1, 2024 through end of August 2024, DEEP has received an excess of 800 requests of which more than 500 have been addressed and closed.

- Key accomplishments of the legal team supporting the **Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy** include:
  - **Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnership Grant (GRIP) -** On August 6, 2024, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) selected a proposal submitted by Connecticut and its neighboring New England states to receive $389 million through the competitive Grid Innovation Program (GIP). BETP legal worked closely with the Office of Energy Supply and Infrastructure to submit the application and will continue to work alongside the supply department as DOE lays out next steps for the award process. The proposal, Power Up New England, includes upgrades to points of interconnection in Southeast Massachusetts and Southeast Connecticut that will prepare the transmission system for additional offshore wind. Power Up New England also includes an initiative to deploy an innovative, multi-day battery energy storage system in Northern Maine to enhance grid resilience and optimize the delivery of renewable energy.
  - **Residential Renewable Energy Solutions (RRES) -** BETP legal and BETP staff, as part of the Multifamily Housing Working Group, successfully advocated for the inclusion of affordable housing in the Residential Renewable Energy Solutions Program (RRES). RRES is a statewide program that provides renewable energy tariffs to compensate residential solar owners for the power their systems produce and provide to the local electric grid. In July 2024, the PURA adopted recommendations from DEEP and other members of the working group regarding expansion of the program to accommodate affordable housing. This expansion allows developers and landlords to offer tangible benefits to low-income tenants through building upgrades, such as greenspaces and community amenities, EV charging stations, and balanced ventilation systems, providing tangible benefits from the RRES tariff.
  - **Solar for All Grant -** The U.S. EPA awarded DEEP with $62.45 million under its Solar for All initiative entitled "Project SunBridge: Connecting Communities to a Solar Future." The grant money will be used to expand solar energy investment in low-income and disadvantaged communities, with a focus on multi-family affordable housing units. BETP legal partnered with BETP staff to submit the grant application and to facilitate stakeholder input sessions to solicit feedback on program design.
  - **Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) -** BETP legal helped the Office of Affordable Housing Energy Retrofits expand the WAP program to serve multi-family properties. BETP legal assisted with research of the U.S. Department of Energy guidance and federal statutes and regulations, as well as drafting and issuing a Request for Proposals, and a contract for a new Program Operator. BETP legal also assisted in creating a new Operations Manual for a Multi-Family Program and with reviewing subcontractor procurement policies, subcontracts, landlord agreements and tenant communications.
  - **Geothermal Pilot Project -** BETP legal helped the Office of Affordable Housing Energy Retrofits obtain and implement a competitive federal grant for a District Geothermal Heating + Cooling Deployment in a CT Environmental Justice Community. BETP legal helped BETP staff set up the program, drafted and ran RFPs, and drafted several contracts to coordinate the program among a coalition. The coalition included UConn, a housing authority, a municipal utility, an engineering design firm, and a non-profit, all of which will play a critical part in carrying out the pilot program design.
- Key accomplishments of the legal team supporting the **Environmental Conservation Branch** programs (Parks, Environmental Conservation Police, Boating, Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife) include:

- Achieved positive outcomes relating to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and working with programmatic personnel and constituency groups to devise solutions to assure compliance with the ESA. These efforts have required awareness of and engagement in wildlife education, law enforcement coordination and constitutional protection awareness and education.
- Worked with Division of Wildlife personnel to enforce wildlife regulations associated with animals held in captivity and potential impacts to public safety, and this effort ultimately resulted in the closure of a facility that was out of compliance with DEEP regulations.
- Reviewed and updated law enforcement agreements to assure a framework for good coordination with lake authorities to support public safety efforts.
- Supported the effort to create bear agricultural damage permit applications and materials, Black Bear Agricultural Damage (ct.gov).
- Successfully represented DEEP personnel in hunting license suspension hearings.
- Advised on a variety of Environmental Conservation-related legislation, regulations and policies.
- Offered extensive litigation support in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General before the Office of the Claims Commissioner or within the state or federal courts concerning claims ranging from property damage, personal injury and wrongful death to constitutional matters.

- Key accomplishments of the legal team supporting the **Environmental Quality Branch** programs (Air, Waste and Water) include:
  - Supported programmatic personnel on significant regulatory initiatives.
  - Engaged in extensive stakeholder outreach in conjunction with programmatic personnel on matters designed to control pollution and better safeguard the public's health and safety.
  - Represented programmatic personnel in a variety of permitting and enforcement proceedings.
- Key accomplishments of the legal team supporting the **Transactional Management and Regulatory Affairs** (TMRA) office include:
  - Provided support across all three branches on Requests for Proposals (RFPs), grants, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), Personal Service Agreements (PSAs), as well as legal work related to agency-wide real estate and land use matters.
  - Supported the roll out of a new contracting process utilizing IT software Planner Boards to capture efficiencies where possible in contract drafting, streamlining approval flows and ensuring collaboration among Legal, the Business Office and Program staff for more clear and accurate legal transactions.
  - Successfully worked on contracts for over 35 grant programs and drafted other Personal Service contracts that have resulted in executing over 600 agency contracts for Fiscal Year 2024 worth well over $300 million dollars. Created a dozen templates for on-going grant programs to ease drafting for Programs. Drafted over 38 Bond-funded STEAP & Urban grants.
  - Worked on two multi-state federal grant applications that resulted in the award of over $154 million dollars for the State to implement a heat pumps program and to advance a clean corridors initiative.
  - Provided legal support on real estate issues, land acquisitions, leasing, and property management matters (including notice of over 40 encroachments in FY 2023 and resolution or closure of nearly half) and two major easement agreements supporting over $800 million in critical transportation and energy infrastructure projects.

- In conjunction with LAM, developed updated materials and procedures for encroachment resolution agency-wide.
- Reviewed and assisted with a variety of regulatory packages and continued active maintenance of the DEEP regulations website.

Office of Communications

- Provided internal and external Communications support and consultation for the three DEEP branches and Commissioner's Office programs.
- Over 3000 social media posts across DEEP's 11 social media channels.
- Over 100 press releases issued to print, television., and radio media contacts.
- More than a dozen unique media inquiries facilitated and supported on a weekly basis.
- Provided 24/7 communications support for entire agency, in particular for the Environmental Conservation Police, Parks Division, Wildlife Division, and Emergency Response Unit Spills Division.
- Spearheaded ongoing transition of agency to Campaign Monitor to create a uniform method of sending newsletters and email blasts to stakeholders.
- Planned and supported multiple public events per month.
- Graphic design, branding, and marketing support for the three DEEP branches and Commissioner's Office programs.