

Connecticut's Inland Wetlands Program Plan



Years 2010-2014

1st Edition December 2010

Prepared by the:
Wetlands Management Section
Inland Water Resources Division
Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

Pursuant to:
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The Environmental Protection Agency



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Connecticut has a long history of protecting its water and land resources. In 1972 the state legislature enacted the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act (IWWA) Sections 22a-36 through 22a-45 of the Connecticut General Statutes. With this landmark legislation, the Connecticut General Assembly recognized that the inland wetlands and watercourses of Connecticut are an indispensable and irreplaceable but fragile natural resource with which the citizens of the State have been endowed. Furthermore, the inland wetlands and watercourses of Connecticut are essential to the well being of its citizens, and that it is necessary to balance the need for the economic growth of the state and the use of its land with the need to protect its environment.

The IWWA creates a regulatory process to consider the impacts of proposed activities on inland wetlands and watercourses. Such regulatory process is separate and distinct from similar federal laws and processes. Further, in keeping with the home rule political culture of Connecticut, the IWWA provides for implementation by the state's municipalities. In fact, section 22a-42 of the IWWA states in part that "it is hereby declared to be the public policy of the state to require municipal regulation of activities affecting wetlands and watercourses...". Therefore the majority of inland wetland and watercourse regulatory decisions are made by Connecticut's municipal inland wetlands agencies; state agency actions, which are regulated by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP), account for less than 1% of such annual regulatory determinations.

As the management of inland wetlands and watercourses in Connecticut is largely the result of the collective regulatory decisions of the state's 170 municipal inland wetlands agencies; the CTDEP is organized to assist Connecticut's municipalities, along with its citizenry, in understanding and administering the IWWA. There is a continual need to improve the knowledge and decision-making ability of local volunteer inland wetlands agencies that are in the position of creating and enforcing regulations, ordinances, and permits which protect wetland and watercourse resources. The training of municipal inland wetlands agencies, and the gathering of data on such agencies' regulatory decisions, is a statutory duty of the Commissioner of CTDEP pursuant to the IWWA.

Connecticut's Inland Wetlands Program Plan: 2010 – 2014 (1st Edition December 2010)

Core Element: REGULATORY

Overall Program Goal: To provide clear guidance to Connecticut's municipal inland wetlands agencies and the public on the implementation of the Connecticut Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act (IWWA). The IWWA states that it is the policy of Connecticut to require municipal regulation of activities affecting inland wetlands and watercourses; and that this regulation should balance economic needs with the protection and preservation of wetlands and watercourses. Municipal inland wetlands agencies are populated with appointed or elected town citizens. Often these citizens and the public in general are not familiar with the IWWA and the proper administration and requirements of such law. Further, pursuant to the IWWA, municipal inland wetlands agencies are required to report to the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) all the actions they undertake. Such reporting form and resulting database of information is referred to as the *Statewide Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Activity Reporting Form and Database*. The database allows the CTDEP to compile, assess, and analyze information regarding municipal inland wetlands agency activities affecting inland wetlands and watercourses within Connecticut. The data provide information on wetland and watercourse trends, such as the loss and/or creation of such resources. Such information is used by various state and federal agencies and provides the Connecticut Legislature with important data. There is a need to assess, refine, improve and maintain a modern regulatory decision database. Modernizing the reporting form and database will allow better tracking of wetland disturbances, enhancements, restorations, and creation activities permitted by Connecticut's municipal inland wetlands agencies. This in turn will improve the reporting of wetland and watercourse status and trends data which will also assist in directing CTDEP's educational initiatives.

Objective 1: Build and refine an effective and comprehensive public education and outreach program known as the Municipal Inland Wetland Commissioners Training Program. Such program will strengthen the regulatory capability of Connecticut's municipal inland wetlands agencies and educate Connecticut's citizenry on the importance of protecting and balancing the use of wetland and watercourse resources.

Action (a): Educate and guide municipal inland wetlands agencies and the public

Activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Build and refine an annual training program consisting of basic, advanced and specialized technical training	X	X	X	X	X

Activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Create and provide curriculum text packets to support the annual training program	X	X	X	X	X
Provide periodic review and evaluation of the annual training program to ensure compliance with state law, and that the program curriculum reflects changes in wetland science, etc.	X	X	X	X	X
Explore new training mediums as necessary to ensure overall program effectiveness	X	X	X	X	X
Develop an online training platform comprising of the basic training segment of the annual training program	X	X			
Evaluate the online training platform to determine consistency with goals and objectives, and ease and efficiency of learning			X	X	
Refine the online training platform to ensure an efficient and clear learning method is provided and to implement legal, administrative and resource management updates					X
Refine and update a publically accessible website in which education and outreach documents are made available on important topics such as identification of wetlands	X	X	X	X	X
Produce an annual training report to describe and measure the success of the annual training program	X	X	X	X	X
Refine, update and reprint the successful brochure titled, "Agriculture, Forestry and Wetland Protection in Connecticut" to complement annual training and educate the public		X	X		
Update the <i>Connecticut Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Model Municipal Regulations</i> to assist municipal inland wetlands agencies and ensure consistency with statutory changes and judicial decisions				X	X

Objective 2: Strengthen and improve data collection and management to maximize efficiency, to ensure reporting compliance, to support training program objectives, and to propose and implement future monitoring and assessment program objectives.

Action (a): Evaluate, refine and improve data collection and database infrastructure to meet program goals and objectives					
Activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Identify/reevaluate the goals and objectives of a regulatory decision monitoring program, including modernizing the existing program	X	X			
Define data needs and uses	X	X			
Evaluate data collection methods	X	X			
Develop an initial plan for a modernized regulatory decision data collection method and database infrastructure		X			
Design and utilize a trial of a refined and improved data collection method and database infrastructure			X	X	
Evaluate the trial data collection method and database infrastructure				X	X
Develop a final plan for a modernized regulatory decision data collection method and database infrastructure					X
Complete an annual Status and Trends Report based on the regulatory decision database	X	X	X	X	X

