

Council on Environmental Quality

At a Glance

BARABARA C. WAGNER, Chair
Karl J. Wagener, Executive Director
Established - 1971
Statutory authority – CGS Sec. 22a-11
Central office - 79 Elm Street,
Hartford, CT 06106
Number of employees – Two
Recurring operating expenses – \$162,824
Organizational structure – Nine-member appointed council

Mission

The Council on Environmental Quality's three main duties are to prepare and submit to the Governor the official annual report on the status of Connecticut's environment, to advise other state agencies regarding construction programs, and to receive and investigate citizen complaints. It also has specific responsibilities under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act, or CEPA (Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 22a-1 through 22a-1h), and other statutes. The Council is within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for administrative purposes only. Members of the nine-person Council are appointed by the Governor (5), Speaker of the House (2) and President Pro Tempore of the Senate (2). Members serve without compensation.

Public Service / Improvements / Achievements 2011-2012

The Council submitted *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*, the official annual report on the condition of the state's environment, to Governor Dannel P. Malloy in June 2012. To help the public make sense of potentially confusing and conflicting technical data on environmental trends, the Council continued its use of straightforward environmental indicators that clearly chart the state's progress. The report also assessed the overall effect of these environmental trends, and highlighted information about Connecticut's natural resources that became apparent following the destructive storms of 2011. November 2011 saw the 40th anniversary of the Council's first meeting.

All reports are published on the Council's website. By encouraging people to read its reports online, the Council has been able to eliminate printing and thereby conserve money and resources. The Council's total expenditures in FY 2012 were lower than in FY 2008. Citizens can receive e-mail notices of all new publications, as well as public meetings, by signing up for free e-alerts through the website.

Twice each month the Council publishes the *Environmental Monitor*, an online publication that replaced the Connecticut Law Journal as the official publication for CEPA notices. All state agencies post their required environmental notices on the *Monitor* website. The *Monitor* is distributed to all municipal clerks as well as any citizen who subscribes to e-alerts through the website. This electronic publication saves considerable sums by eliminating printing and mailing costs. Working with other agencies, the Council modified the *Monitor* in 2011 to include notices that are published when agencies determine that an environmental impact evaluation is not required for a project; these determinations are made pursuant to a new administrative process after consideration of comments from other agencies and the public. Such notices helped the state to save several hundred thousand dollars and avoid unnecessary project delays in FY 2012.

The public is welcome to attend the Council's monthly meetings, and citizens are encouraged to report complaints or concerns about Connecticut's environment at any time. The Council regularly holds meetings and public forums in various regions of the state and invites the public to speak. Many citizens and municipal officials spoke to the Council in Mansfield in July 2011. Throughout the year, individual citizens, municipalities, and organizations contacted the Council about possible violations and other concerns, and the Council investigated and helped to resolve cases involving groundwater contamination, construction of telecommunications towers in sensitive areas, dumping on state lands, pesticide spraying on state lands, pollution from outdoor wood furnaces, storage of hazardous waste on state property, and many others.

In November 2011, the Council held a well-attended public forum at the Legislative Office Building that focused on potential recommendations to the legislature. The Council's final list of recommendations for legislation – the annual supplement to *Environmental Quality in Connecticut* – was submitted to Governor Malloy and the General Assembly in January 2012. Several recommendations were adopted and signed into law, including a substantial revision to the state's approach to land conservation.

The Council also undertakes special projects, often resulting in special reports or detailed memos, which are posted on its website. In FY 2012, these included short reports on regulation and compliance. In January 2012, the Council took the unusual step of submitting comments to DEEP on the proposed renewal of an air quality permit for one of the most polluting power plants in the state; the Council's action resulted in a revised permit that calls for less air pollution and more testing of the plant's emissions.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The Council is required to submit the annual report to the Governor on the status of Connecticut's environment with recommendations for changes to state environmental laws and programs. Those reports and additional, special reports are available on the Council's website (www.ct.gov/ceq). The Council sends the *Environmental Monitor* twice monthly to all municipal clerks, as required by CEPA.