

# Council on Environmental Quality

## *At a Glance*

**Susan D. Merrow, Chair**

**Karl J. Wagener, Executive Director**

**Established - 1971**

**Statutory authority – Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 22a-11**

**Central office - 79 Elm Street,**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

**Number of employees – Two**

**Recurring operating expenses – \$155,745**

**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 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, including the Chair), Speaker of the House (2) and President Pro Tempore of the Senate (2). Members serve without compensation.*

## **Public Service / Improvements / Achievements 2012-2013**

The Council submitted *Environmental Quality in Connecticut* – the state's official annual report on the condition of the environment – to Governor Dannel P. Malloy in April 2013. To help the public make sense of potentially confusing and conflicting technical data on environmental trends, the Council continued its use of easily understood environmental indicators that chart the state's progress clearly.

January 2013 saw the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council's first annual report on the state's environment. The April 2013 annual report commented on that first report: "The 11 typewritten pages offer a (grimy) window on a Connecticut that is forever in the past. Most readers of this [current] report have never breathed anything as bad as the air breathed by Connecticut residents during the early 1970s and probably never will. To write that first report, members and staff relied greatly on subjective judgments. Reliable data were scarce. Today the Council has access to much more data to analyze the state's lingering and persistent environmental problems (though, as noted throughout this report, some data still are lacking), and its reports should be expected to be more precise and unerring. To fulfill that expectation, the Council was as busy in 2012 as it ever has been."

This year's report offered readers a choice of three formats; the "gold" version displayed data through interactive charts while the other versions were more suitable for printing. The report emphasized the role of rising temperatures in Connecticut's changing environment and listed key steps to a better environmental future.

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. Residents can receive e-mail notices of all new publications, as well as public meetings, by signing up for free e-alerts through the website.

The Council's total expenditures in FY 2013 were about eight percent lower than in FY 2008.

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 a notice that is published when an agency determine that an environmental impact evaluation is not required for a project; these determinations are made pursuant to a new administrative process that includes comments from other agencies and the public. This new process was fully implemented in FY 2013 and helped the state to save several hundred thousand dollars and avoid unnecessary studies and delays for two dozen projects in FY 2013.

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. 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, conservation of state-owned lands, invasive species and many others.

In November 2012, 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 2013.

The Council also undertakes special projects, often resulting in special reports or detailed memos, which are posted on its website.

### **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](http://www.ct.gov/ceq)). The Council sends the *Environmental Monitor* twice monthly to all municipal clerks, as required by CEPA.