



The Quinnehtukqut Connecticut Chapter

The Monthly Newsletter for Events, Information, and Action



WELCOME TO THE FEBRUARY 2018 ISSUE

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 - ~ WEDNESDAY, 28TH: GO GREEN STUDENT RALLY
 - ~ THURSDAY, MARCH 1ST: NW CT DEMOCRATIC GOVERNOR'S FORUM
 - ~ SATURDAY, MARCH 3RD: GET CHARGED ABOUT ELECTRIC VEHICLES
- **POETRY**
 - ~ TROWELS INTO VOTES
- **DONATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS TEAM, LEGACY PLANNING, SOCIAL MEDIA**

REQUEST FOR CONTENT

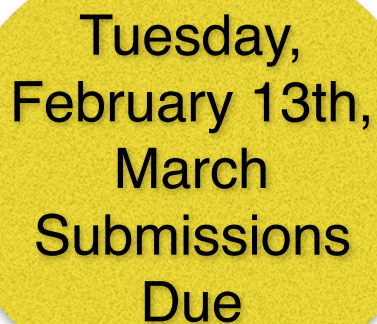
All Connecticut Sierra Club members are invited to contribute to the *Quinnehtukqut*. We accept articles, book reviews, puzzles, events, photos, poems, etc. Articles, limited to 500 words, should be on a subject of local or national interest to the Connecticut Chapter membership. The goal of the newsletter is to inform, educate, motivate and involve our members.

To submit newsletter articles, letters to the editor, etc. for the *Quinnehtukqut*, send to ctsierraq3@gmail.com. To post information to the website or social media, send content to connecticut.chapter@sierraclub.org.

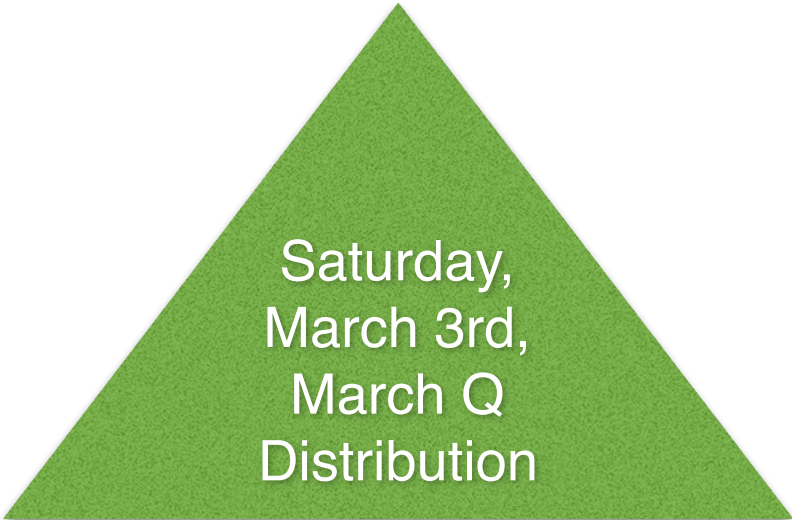
Here is the newsletter calendar for the next two 2018 submission dates. Please read dates carefully. The calendar is intended to make it easier for you to plan your *Quinnehtukqut* contributions for publication.

The *Quinnehtukqut* is distributed at the beginning of the month.

MARCH CALENDAR

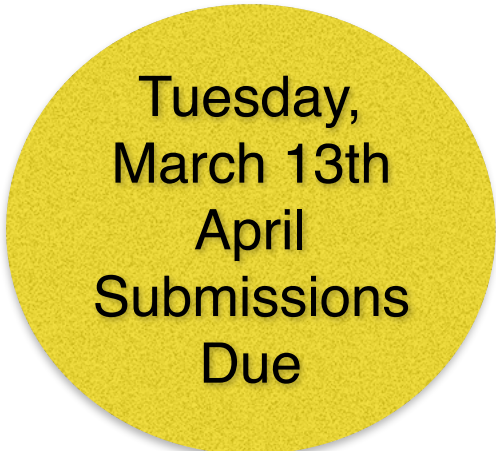


Tuesday,
February 13th,
March
Submissions
Due

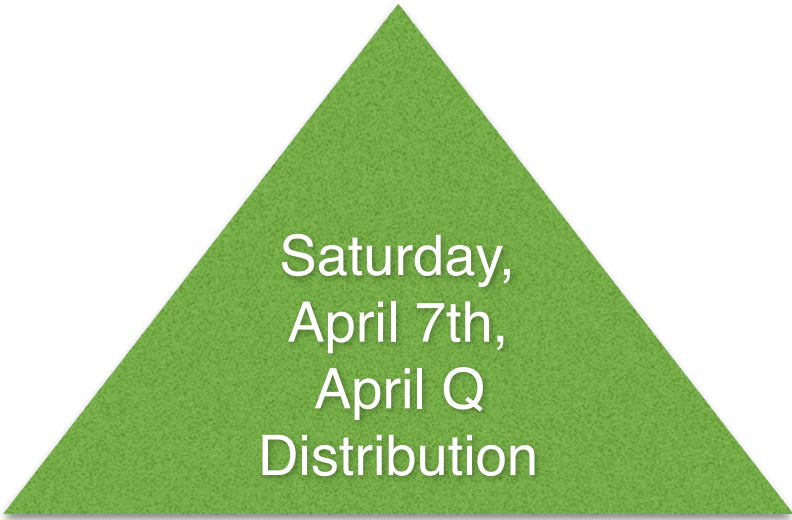


Saturday,
March 3rd,
March Q
Distribution

APRIL CALENDAR



Tuesday,
March 13th
April
Submissions
Due



Saturday,
April 7th,
April Q
Distribution

All decisions regarding use are made by the Communications Committee.

TELL A FRIEND

If you agree with the Sierra Club principles of exploring, enjoying and protecting our state, country and planetary environment, and you enjoy reading the *Quinnehtukqut*, why not tell a friend? Invite people to join the Sierra Club. It's easy. Go to our website [CT Sierra Club](#) and click the blue JOIN button in the upper right corner. Follow the directions.

You can also give memberships as gifts. It's a wonderful way to honor your friends and family or perhaps enlighten them.

For gift memberships, go to:
[Sierra Club Membership](#)

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

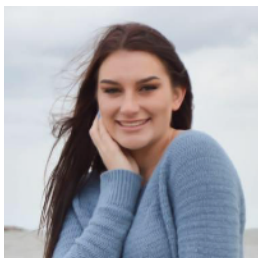
New ExCom Members Take a Bow

As a member of Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club you exercised your right to elect five members to the Executive Committee (ExCom) for a two-year term. Here are the results of your votes.



Martha Klein, Chair, has been elected to a third and final two year term and will continue in her current capacity as Chair.

New to the ExCom are four people. We welcome and introduce:



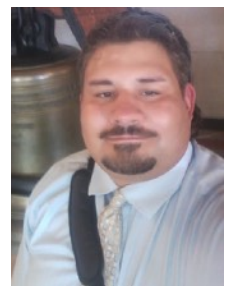
Katrina Ceceri



Lori Fernand



Ann Gadwah



Angel Serrano

We're delighted to have them join the ExCom and look forward to their input and output.

Here are a few highlights about each new member:

Katrina's interests: Hiking, public relations, recycling, bottle drives, clearing the land vs. keeping trees, impacts on the environment

Lori's experiences: Nonprofits, aiding elected officials, research, fundraising, recycling, hiking, protecting our natural legacy

Ann's passions: Help humanity, protect the planet through clean energy, volunteer on political campaigns, organize rallies for community activism

Angel's background: Environmental studies, environmental health, advocate of policies for sustainability, citizen lobbyist, relationships with Hartford politicians

See their full biographies at: [CT Sierra Club Chapter Leaders](#)

Our Chapter's Busy January

Over the last month, your Connecticut Chapter submitted comments to the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) regarding their investigation into Eversource and UI over accusations of possible market manipulation.

Sierra Club also submitted comments to PURA regarding the proposed change in time of day metering by Eversource, to encourage users to switch from peak to off-peak usage hours. The national legal team also submitted comments regarding PURA and DEEP's plan to procure future nuclear power from Millstone, which we advised against. Instead, the Sierra Club encouraged DEEP and PURA to increase the state's renewable portfolio standard, so that more energy can be obtained from carbon-free, clean energy sources, which nuclear is not.

We monitored the plan to build the unneeded NTE Killingly Energy Center gas powered plant, which despite being denied by the Connecticut Siting Council, is still moving forward. Eversource is seeking permits from DEEP to build a few miles of brand new pipeline to connect NTE to a source of fracked gas, and we have been carefully monitoring the announcement of the determination of these permits.

CT Chapter members were at the Women's March on January 20 in Hartford, which was attended by crowds in the thousands. This marked the second anniversary of the Women's March which took place the day after the inauguration of the perhaps most environmentally destructive president in U.S. history. Sierra Club values are embodied in the fights for social justice and environmental issues.

We attended the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters Summit on January 25th in Hartford, where a majority of the state's political and/or environmental organizations gathered to agree on a plan of top priorities for the coming legislative session.

A certain person deserves mention for helping us complete the End of Year appeal. Clare Lake is an exceptional volunteer, who gave weeks of her time to make sure that all our generous donors received our thanks. Thanks to you, Clare!

(To donate to our chapter, go to [CT Sierra Club](#) and click on the red DONATE button in the upper right corner. Your donations enable us to continue the chapter's Activities.)

TAKE ACTION NOW

Oppose Trump's Drilling Plan

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is holding a hearing on the Trump Drilling Plan.

The Trump Administration has released a proposal that would open up waters off the coast of Connecticut to offshore oil and gas drilling and exploration. This is the time to speak out to send a strong message of unified opposition to new offshore exploration and drilling. Please attend the hearing and/or send your testimony opposing this plan.

Attend the Hearing

Date: Tuesday, February 13th

Time: 3:00pm to 7:00pm

Location: Hartford Marriott Downtown

200 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford CT 06103

Sponsors: CT Sierra Club, CT LCV and Surfrider

Submit Comments

Online Comments: www.regulations.gov

FAQs: www.regulations.gov/faqs

Telephone Help Line: 877.378.5457

Note: *Due date for comments is March 9, 2018*

2018 STATE ELECTION AND LEGISLATIVE SESSION

2018 State Elections: The Importance of Political Engagement

by Ann Gadwah

In November of 2018, every single House seat, Senate seat and the Governorship will be up for grabs in our great state of Connecticut. On the positive side, every voter in the state will have the opportunity to let her/his voice resound at the ballot box. We, as environmental warriors, share the opportunity to cry out, to elect people who are as passionate about saving our planet as we are.

Right now, the Democrats hold a slim majority in the House of Representatives, Republicans and Democrats have the same number in the Senate (Democrats maintain control because Lt. Governor Wyman breaks the tie) and Democrat Dan Malloy is



Connecticut State Capitol, photo credit: jglazer75

our governor. The state has been voting more Republican in the past few elections and the Democrats are in danger of losing their majority in both the House and Senate and losing the governorship.

Issues for Voters

Voter concerns range from high taxes, a budget deficit, companies and people moving out of the state at a high rate, staggering inequality and the highest achievement gap in the country. People don't see Democratic leadership as being able to solve these problems. A generic candidate poll shows the Republicans coming in at 35% and the Democrats coming in at 22% for the governorship. We are currently considered a purple state.

We all know the stance the current Republican administration occupying the White House has on environmental protection. President Trump and Secretary Pruitt's EPA cannot strip away protections fast enough and the Department of the Interior cannot wait to hand over our public lands and oceans to the fossil fuel companies. We would like to think we are safe here in Connecticut from the brunt of these attacks, but we may not be.

Political Activism Crucial

It is imperative that as environmental voters we are politically engaged this election cycle. Do your research on the candidates for Governor, Senator, and Representative. The Connecticut League of Conservation Voters puts out a lovely scorecard yearly rating every member of the General Assembly, so you can see how your representatives vote on environmental issues. If they aren't up to snuff, find out how their opponent rates. For a 2017 scorecard, go to: [2017 Scorecard](#).

In addition, look for Gubernatorial candidates who strongly believe in environmental protection. You can find their views by reading their websites and listening to what they say in interviews and press conferences. Also look for candidates endorsed by our state's environmental groups, including the Sierra Club. We have a real opportunity here in Connecticut to reject the anti-environmental agenda of the Trump administration and to show that we can be a national leader in conservation. Let's show them that environmental voters are a voting bloc to be reckoned with in 2018. Let's get to work.

If you are interested in learning more about the political endorsement process, please contact anngadwah@gmail.com or call (860) 733-2249.

Ann Gadwah is a new member of the Executive Committee of CT Chapter Sierra Club.

Protect Our Air, Climate and Public Lands

by Roberta Paro

2018 is the year Connecticut residents get to decide if we will lead on protecting our air and climate, renew a commitment to protect our public lands and reach our goal to put 21 percent of our land into protected open space by 2023.

Over the past year the Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club has gained more than 1,000 members and strengthened our partnerships with allied organizations. We are a force to be reckoned with. To that end, we need you to tell your state



Photo credit: [Energize CT](#)

legislators how to make the protection of our environment a priority. Here are the three things you can do to get ready for the 2018 legislative session, which starts February 7th and is scheduled to end May 9th.

Three Activist Actions to Take

First, use the Connecticut Assembly's web site to learn who your legislators are. Click on the link to your legislator's web site and find out which committees they serve on and how to contact them.

Put your legislators' phone numbers and email addresses in your electronic device(s) making them easily accessible to contact.

Second, study the following two documents to learn how a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) ensures progress towards 100 percent clean energy. We are advocating for a comprehensive clean energy strategy that will include an RPS of 50 percent by 2030. See: [Increasing the Connecticut Renewable Portfolio Standard](#).

Also, read the frequently asked questions document about a constitutional amendment that would protect public land in Connecticut. This document is available at Connecticut Forest and Parks' web site: [CT Woodlands](#)

Third, take some time now to develop your story. This will be very useful when we need you to submit written testimony in support or opposition to a specific bill. The legislature is only required to give five days notice of a scheduled public hearing, so it is better to prepare now. Enough written testimony in support or opposition to a specific bill may make the difference in whether a bill is voted out of committee for a vote by the entire legislature or is not.

The Value of a Personal Story

Here's an example of a personal story: My interest in the environment developed from a family health perspective. My youngest brother was diagnosed with asthma as a child and when I was able to draw the connections between air pollution and the links to respiratory health, I decided I needed to become involved in making our environment cleaner to help my brother breathe more easily.

Why do we tell personal stories? Social psychologists and others who study human behavior have learned that people take in information when it is presented as a story. So telling a brief story about why or how you became interested in the issue will help your legislator open up to what else you have to say.

In addition, values language helps people open up to the reasons we want them to support our position. For example the words caring, responsibility and protection are all about shared values we have related to protecting the natural world. Use them whenever you are writing and talking about the issues we are working on—Clean Energy and Land Protection.

Develop Talking Points

Identify the three main points on the RPS that you would like to make with your legislators. Having them written down will help you identify the crucial points you want to express and will give you confidence.

Next, spend some time developing your ask, which should be in the form of a 'yes' or 'no' question. If your legislator won't commit to a 'yes' or 'no' on a specific bill, ask her/him if you can send in additional information. Then, follow up in a week or two.

Determine your legislative ask regarding:

- the RPS
- protecting state public lands with a constitutional amendment

Finally, while all polluters and developers have their own lobbyists, their numbers pale in comparison to the numbers of people who care about the environment. A little preparation will allow you to successfully convey your message and be a lobbyist. Stand up and make your message heard!

Remember, constituents put legislators into office and decide whether they stay in or get voted out. What you do matters. Let's make 2018 a successful legislative session for our beliefs. Thanks for your help.

If you are interested in participating in an in-district lobby team to advocate for legislative issues, contact roberta.paro@sierraclub.org or call 860.857.0976.

Roberta Paro is Co-Chair Legislative Team, CT Chapter Sierra Club and former Chair of the Executive Committee.

CONNECTICUT'S ECONOMIC HEALTH

RCOGs Make CT Policy on Environment and Infrastructure

by James Root

A little known manifestation of Connecticut state government is a nine "Regional Council of Governments" or 'RCOGs that cluster towns geographically into an administrative planning group. These multi-municipal entities execute, and often create, a lot of the state environmental and infrastructure policy in a more perspicuous manner for the collection of the 169 towns and cities they represent.

Each town or city sends its first selectman and mayor to the roughly bi-monthly meetings of the RCOGs. Transportation entities (like Housatonic Regional Area Transit, my RCOG) are also represented. Since a restructuring in 2014 by the parent state agency, the Office of Policy Management (OPM), the RCOGs have overlain pre-existing (and newly created) Metropolitan Planning Organizations-known by yet another acronym of (MPOs). Danbury, for instance, in the Western RCOG, is known as "WesCog" and consists of two MPOs designated, and correspondingly named, for the "Housatonic Valley" and the "South Western" 'gold coast' of Connecticut, (HVMPO) and SWRMPO).

RCOGs as Future Necessity of CT Government

The RCOGs are professionally run and conduct a lot of critical planning-especially with regard to infrastructure (i.e. water, power, and transportation). The crucial financial planning of most major public works, including the critical organization of grant applications for state and federal money for these projects, is handled and executed by the regional councils.

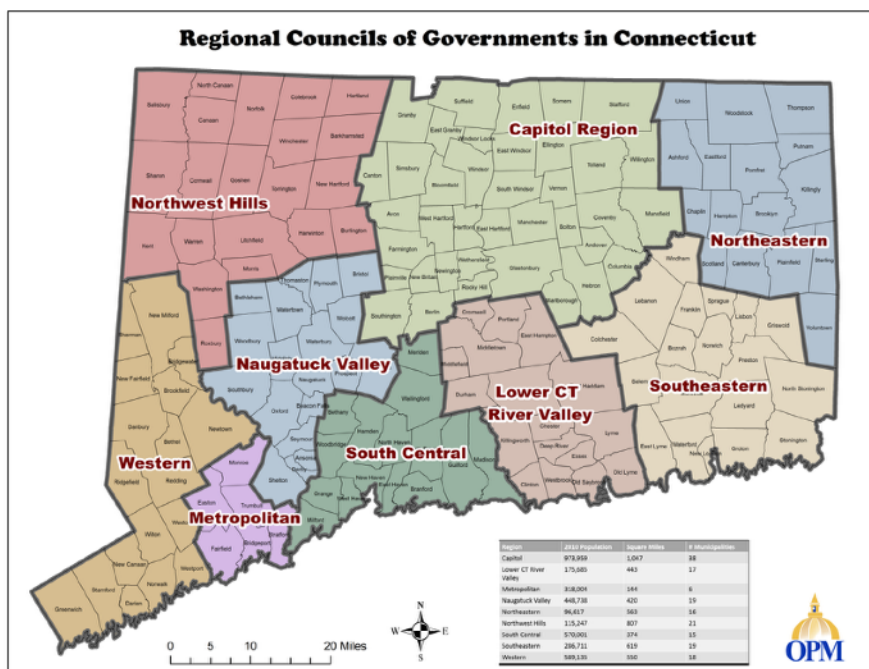
In stripped down focus on resources, both natural and man made, the RCOGs are very likely a forerunner of the necessary government of tomorrow-especially in densely 'municipalized' Connecticut.

RCOG Funding

The annual funding source is state grant-in-aid (SGIA) to support planning activities. Each RCOG is entitled to receive a base grant of \$125,000 and \$.50 per capita supplemental payment based on the most recent census. The funding source derives its revenue from 6.7% of the Hotel Tax and 10.7% of Car Rental Tax. [Regional Planning Grant-in-Aid](#).

RCOGs welcome and accommodate the public. A visit to your local RCOG should be very informative for any serious minded CT resident. Additionally, there are almost always guest speakers, from government and businesses to non-profits, on topics relevant to current RCOG issues. More information on the Regional Councils of Governments can be found at <http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?q=383046>.

James Root lives in Danbury and is a member of CT Chapter Sierra Club.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEAT

Is Our Planet Facing a Sixth Extinction?

by Chase Brownstein

The diversity of life on Earth has noticeably declined over the last century. Extinction rates for groups like amphibians and insects are climbing, as gigantic bergs calve off the grand ice covers of the poles, deforestation sweeps away tracts of the rainforests that belt the globe and companies rip up grasslands in the pursuit of crude oil. Scientists have been forced to make a saddening and ominous conclusion: we are facing a mass extinction.

Tools for Repair

There are tools at our disposal to mediate the effects of what we've wrought. We can revitalize old habitat, protect more great spaces and tackle issues like genetic diversity among a species by using novel techniques never before at our disposal. We can also look to the past, examining how prehistoric ecosystems responded to the catastrophes they faced. This study of past mass extinction events falls into my discipline: paleontology.



Dinosaur National Monument from above. Preserving spaces like DNM is essential for the continuation of the science of paleontology and many other disciplines.
Photo credit: Chase Brownstein

Some of the most complete records of these past chaotic events and their aftermath may be found in the western United States, where the jagged, uplifted cliffs of the Rockies preserve the remains of creatures that lived and died around the time of the Cretaceous-Paleogene mass extinction — the famous smiter of the non-avian dinosaurs about 66 million years ago—among others.

Sediments Tell the Story

The sediments preserved within the Grand-Staircase National Monument in southern Utah are especially notable. In recent years, paleontologists working in that remote corridor of the American west have been able to reconstruct entire ecosystems of past time. The layers at Grand Staircase-Escalante also correspond to several major extinctions in Earth's history, including the Permian-Triassic mass extinction (also known as the "Great Dying") of 250 million years previous and the Cenomanian-Turonian anoxic event, which saw major declines in oceanic diversity and took place 20 million years before the rise of *T. rex*.

Ecosystem Change and Recovery

Understanding how ecosystems changed and recovered in the past is certainly essential to predicting how they might change now. Unfortunately, the current administration seems to disregard the importance of these sediment deposits. As we've watched in sadness, huge portions of the Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments have been cut, opening up the precious sediments contained within them to exploitation by mining and drilling. See: [Why SVP Is Suing Over Monument Reductions](#).

These moves by the federal government have been met with due resistance. I was overjoyed to see larger organizations like Sierra Club band together with smaller ones like the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology to fight these decisions. We must work hard in the days ahead to support the work of these groups by donating to them and supporting their work, spreading the news of their actions, and calling our congresspeople and government officials and urging them to support the conservation and preservation of America's great spaces. We must do so, for access to one of the greatest tools in fighting the sixth extinction is at stake.

Chase Brownstein is Research Associate at Stamford Museum and Nature Center and a member of CT Chapter Sierra Club

CONNECTICUT'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

CES Missing Connecticut's Clean Energy Future

by Lisa Jaccoma

The energy future of Connecticut is at a critical decision point. As the state finalizes plans for its Comprehensive Energy Strategy (CES), we are about to choose the makeup of our energy portfolio and decide how firmly we plant our feet in the past or in the future. Are we planning to condemn ourselves to decades of dependence on fossil fuels, or are we going to join the extraordinary innovation occurring in the clean energy technology sector?

Single Energy Source Plan

We have seen the state's plan—and we have found it wanting. It is heavy on a future dominated by a single source of energy, natural gas and its attendant hundreds of miles of planned expanded pipelines (to be financed by ratepayers) at a time when the peer states in our region are diversifying and innovating clean energy sources such as wind, solar (of all types), battery storage, microgrids and electrification of their transportation sector.

So, will we choose to embrace the overwhelming array of newly available clean energy models, or retreat into a static, uncompetitive, centralized model, committing us to fracked natural gas and limited choice for decades to come? Unfortunately, it seems we are about to choose dirty fuels and stasis over newly abundant, efficient, clean technologies and choice.

Our State is on the brink of approving and implementing a Comprehensive Energy Strategy (CES) that commits us to decades of costs, sunk into unnecessary gas infrastructure, with only a marginal role for especially distributed renewables like solar and storage. We are at a moment when choice of energy source is more varied, accessible and economically viable, yet our state turns away.

Failures and Risks Loom Ahead

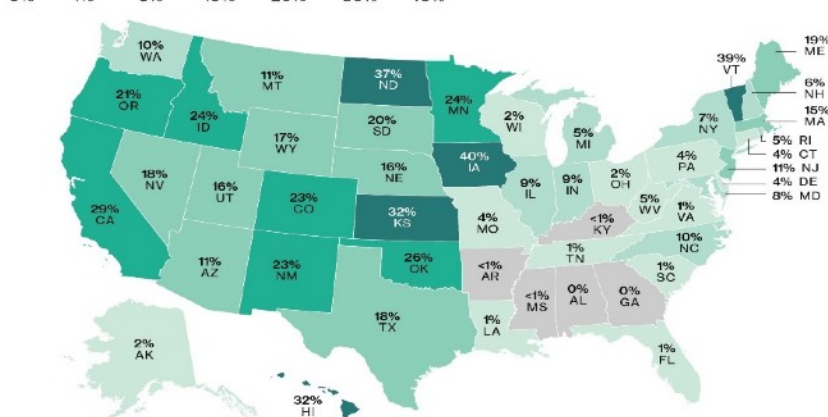

Aside from the obvious economic inefficiency of increasing the entire state economy's reliance on a single fuel source known for volatility in price, there is the obvious concern of gas supply interruptions or increased risk of market manipulation. In addition, there is the potential that Connecticut could fall farther behind the growth and innovation curve in a sector with more job-creating potential than we've seen in any sector since the growth of the Information Economy. Solar and wind jobs have both grown in double digits throughout the past decade and employ a combined 300,000 plus jobs now nationwide.

Within our region, states like Massachusetts, New York and Rhode Island are increasing their goals for renewable energy implementation as well as their targets for CO2 reduction. New York has increased its Renewable Portfolio target to 50% renewables by 2030, and companies and investment have flooded into the state while Connecticut falls farther behind.

Green Power

Abundant wind and open space help give Iowa the cleanest energy mix.

Share of electricity generated by wind and solar



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

Bloomberg

Meanwhile, Connecticut is in terrible danger of missing its CO2 reduction targets. The state's budget woes have negatively impacted the Connecticut Green Bank's ability to provide energy efficiency programs (a bright spot in the past) and our Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) commitment funds can best be described as under-committed. As a coastal state with hundreds of millions of dollars in housing stock and infrastructure at risk, as well as potential inland effects along our rivers and in our farming communities, we have a very specific self interest in reducing our risk to climate impacts.

Decarbonizing our own economy, while increasing innovation and joining the clean tech growth sector are all reasons to look forward in our energy planning. Increasing diversity of choice and the job creating potential of the clean technology ecosystem is precisely what Connecticut's economy needs right now.

Lisa Jaccoma holds a Master of Science degree in renewable energy and utility scale solar power and is a member of CT Chapter Sierra Club.

MEMBER ACTIVISTS

Military Outdoors Program Trains Leaders

by Colin Bennett

The inaugural Outdoor Leadership Training of the Sierra Club's Military Outdoors program (SCMO) in the Northeast took place last summer. The program, developed by the Sierra Club, is a requirement for members who lead overnight outdoor trips for the Club. I represented the Connecticut Chapter as one of 41 people from across the country. Our goal: complete the four-day training held at [Veterans Base Camp](#), a non-profit training center in Chaplin, CT.

Training is required for all Sierra Club members who want to lead outings. The summer program had three specific goals: help volunteers plan safe and successful outings; enhance confidence in leading outings; and demonstrate that outings can inspire the conservation mission of the Sierra Club. The training focused on hands-on experiences and giving each participant a chance to lead activities and discuss logistics. The participants learned technical skills like map reading and first aid and equally important soft skills like mindfulness, empathy and team building.

The Daily Agenda

During the day, the participants spent the morning in class learning about the fundamentals of outdoor leadership. After class, we went outside for time on the trail where we practiced scenarios based on realistic situations we might encounter while leading outings. Participants also cooked meals together using dutch ovens and at night around the campfire, we shared stories of adventure, as well as memories of our military pasts.

An Added Value

I returned to another SCMO training at the beginning of 2018, this time as one of the trainers. Building on the success of the event in Connecticut, the SCMO program expanded to the beautiful Green



Colin, third from left, presents a certificate of completion to one of his group mates.

Mountains of Vermont for the four-day training, this time at [Zeno Mountain Farm](#). This event was very similar to the previous training, again with more than 40 people from across the country.

In addition, a two-hour discussion around the Club's Equity goals as well as how participants could design equitable and inclusive outings was included as a component. As I serve on the Club's [Equity Support Team](#) and facilitate Equity discussions with Club members across the country, I co-facilitated an Equity workshop with Mel Mac Innis, a colleague from the Equity Support Team.

As we move into 2018, look for more outings opportunities in Connecticut and potentially some opportunities to explore how we can expand our Equity work in our state. In the meantime, find out how to get involved and participate in these programs by visiting the SCMO Facebook page for this area at this link: [Tri-State Sierra Club Military Outdoors](#). And to learn more about the Club's Equity work, visit: [Equity, Inclusion, and Justice at the Sierra Club](#).

Colin Bennett is a member of CT Chapter Sierra Club Executive Committee and is a 12 year veteran of the United States Coast Guard Reserve.

50 by 50 Project, A Grassroots Birthday Gift

by Deborah Roe

I've found that the older I get the fewer material things I want. So, the last thing I want for my upcoming 50th birthday is to receive more stuff. I've decided to celebrate by *giving myself* a different kind of gift-the gift of positive change.

My plan: Give away 50 copies of Al Gore's book, *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power (Your action handbook to learn the science, find your voice and help solve the climate crisis)*. And thus **The 50 By 50 Project** was born.

Using a Book to Fight Climate Change

Giving away free books? Yup! Here's the catch. The books are not for the receiver to keep. Each person receiving a copy of the book is asked to:

- Watch the movie (available at your local library, Red Box or on Amazon)
- Read the book and create an individual action plan
- Take action
- Pass the book to another person

Simple and, hopefully, effective.

Take Action for Climate Change

Many people are interested in working on climate change and are looking for ways to help. In just a couple of weeks, I've given away 32 books. Only 18 more to go! If you're interested in taking actions of significance and posting your actions to our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/50by50project>), contact me at 50by50project@gmail.com. I'll keep giving away books until I run out. Even if I'm out of books, I still encourage folks to follow, like, share and post to the page. I try to post daily with actions that I am taking and also news about climate change.

Also, for those interested, I am leading a two-week program at the **West Hartford Public Library** starting Wednesday, March 7th from 6:00-8:00pm. The first week we will watch the movie. The second week we will discuss the book and create individual action plans. To register for the program that the library has named, "Climate Change—All Hands on Deck," [Sign up Here](#). Or if you're interested in having a similar FREE program for your library or club, contact me at 50by50project@gmail.com.

One last thing, I encourage everyone who wants to take action to carry out your own 50 by 50 project (or 30 by 30, 80 by 80, or what have you). I'm happy to share the materials I have. Let's get this done together!

Deborah Roe is a grassroots activist and a member of CT Chapter Sierra Club

OUR NATURAL WORLD

Protecting Connecticut's Small Bear Population

by Annie Hornish

On a cool fall Saturday in September 2017, two beloved Wilton bears, often seen together, were illegally and cruelly killed, poached by a trophy hunter who was caught in the act removing the bears' heads and paws, so-called "trophies" over which to boast of his so-called "conquests." One curious bear had simply approached the killer's tree stand, and was shot. When that bear's companion meandered over, he was killed, too. Fortunately, someone witnessed the gruesome scene and called law enforcement. The community, that had long enjoyed viewing these non-problematic bears from afar, was and remains rightfully outraged.

To lessen his sentence, the poacher's lawyer claimed his client's mental state was predisposed to killing due to a fear of bears.

Fear Bears vs Protect Bears

Bears should not be feared, but protected from state-sanctioned trophy hunting. Promoting fear of bears to promote trophy hunting agendas is a common tool used by state agencies across the country, including our own Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). But perspective is indicated here: black bear attacks are exceedingly rare and there has never been a fatal bear attack in Connecticut's history.

Fear of bears is promoted when DEEP mischaracterizes bears as behaving aggressively when they are not (and then kills them). Fear is also promoted by keeping public attention focused on bear sightings data rather than the actual population, misleading the public into thinking the bear population is far higher than it actually is.

DEEP promotes public reporting of bear sightings in an aggressive manner and then seemingly uses the numbers to blur the fact that, per a March 2017 UCONN study, there are only 500-700 bears statewide. Only a small percentage of these 500-700 bears constitute the approximately 6,000 sightings a year. Agency signage to request the reporting of bear sightings have even been posted where bears should be, like within the McLean Game Refuge in Granby, a large wildlife sanctuary. DEEP and trophy hunting proponents also regularly suggest that "exponential growth" of bear populations will occur, which is patently untrue: bears are a slow-to-reproduce

species due to a variety of limiting factors. Visit [Humane Society - Bears](#) or [Bear Smart](#) to learn more. Connecticut's bear population is simply too low to survive a trophy hunt.

Words of Wisdom

Senator George McLean had wise foresight to protect his donated land, the McLean Game Refuge. In his will, McLean wrote: *"I want the game refuge to be a place where trees can grow unmolested by choppers and trout and birds and other animal life can exist unmolested by hunters and fishermen, a place where some of the things God made may be seen by those who love them as I loved them and who may find in them the peace of body and mind I have found."* Senator McLean had the wisdom to understand that nature needs no assistance in self-regulation of populations, and that nonviolent coexistence can bring peace of body and mind... something utterly absent in the cruel world of trophy hunting.

Annie Hornish is the Connecticut Senior State Director for The Humane Society of the United States and a supporting member of CT Chapter Sierra Club. Learn more at humanesociety.org and blog.humanesociety.org

PREVENTING conflicts with bears:

- **When hiking**, make noise periodically—blow a whistle, or yell something every few minutes (e.g., "I care about wildlife, and I vote!"). Bears don't want to come across us! Do not leave any food in the wild, including candy wrappers. Keep dogs on leashes!
- **At home**, remove food attractants (e.g., accessible garbage, pet food left outside, spilled bird feeders). Bears come to suburbia due to unintentional feeding by humans. Putting a capful of ammonia in garbage cans can deter bears and other wildlife.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR:



- 1) STOP (do not run!)
- 2) BIG & BOLD: raise your arms over your head, yell/make noise (wear a whistle)
- 3) BACK AWAY SLOWLY

Hold children and control dogs to keep them from running.

Black Bears—Not True Hibernators

by Nora Hulton

As with all things Nature, not all species fit into a neat, tidy category, and there are always exceptions or modifications to the rule. The black bear is one such creature. When asked what the black bear does in the winter, most people respond, “Hibernate, of course!” but, actually, that’s not the case. Although they store up a lot of body fat during the summer and fall to prepare for their long winter’s rest, the bear is not a true hibernator.

A bona fide hibernator’s body temperature, breathing, and heart rate will drop significantly. Core temperatures close to freezing and only three or four heart beats per minute are not uncommon stats for authentic hibernators. The black bear’s temperature does lower, but only about ten degrees, and its heartbeat dwindles from an average of 55 beats per minute to about 14. Remarkable, yes, but not quite as marked as an actual hibernator. Another characteristic of a real hibernator is the inability to be roused by loud noises or jostling during winter slumber. Black bears, while they do drop into a deep sleep, can awaken very quickly during the winter if they’re disturbed or detect a nearby threat. What’s even more amazing is that, once awake, they can take off at a full run to avoid the disturbance. This adaptability has foiled many a state biologist trying to collect data during the winter months.

Bear Den Activity

Denning usually commences in late November, but that may vary depending on the weather in a particular year. The odds of survival are directly correlated to their weight at the outset of winter, especially in the case of cubs. The fatter the bear, the greater the chances of enduring a long, cold winter.

Most bear dens consist of laurel thickets, downed tree canopies, or man-made structures such as abandoned water culverts. Black bears do not eat, drink, urinate or defecate during their denning period. Surprisingly, females give birth during January and February under these extreme circumstances, and the young will nurse off of their slumbering mother. Amazingly, their fat cells break down and provide them with the water and calories needed to sustain themselves and their young. What’s more, the urea found in their stored urine is actually used to build proteins which are instrumental in keeping organ and muscle tissue intact. Consequently, bears may emerge thinner, but more muscular in the spring. Most male bears abandon their dens by mid-March, but the female will usually take a little longer to vacate her winter refuge.

Most biologists are in agreement that bears are not legitimate hibernators, but there hasn’t been a compromise on how to define what it is that bears do in the winter. Several terms that are thrown around are: torpor, winter lethargy, winter sleep or denning. In Connecticut, the survival rate of black bear cubs and yearlings is estimated to be around 70%, so this adaptation, whatever it’s called, seems to be serving the species well.

Nora Hulton is a Connecticut Certified Master Conservationist and a member, CT Chapter Sierra Club.

Three Year Citizen Science Bird Study Launches in 2018

by Michele MacKinnon

Volunteers are being sought for the next [Connecticut Bird Atlas](#), which the Connecticut Audubon Society has declared “the most important bird conservation research project ever in the state.”

Connecticut Bird Atlas Goals

The project’s three-fold goals are to identify the presence of birds, their absence, and the behaviors of birds observed, such as nest building or feeding activities. As the last bird atlas was based on data from the 1980s, this new atlas is overdue. Data gathered will show where specific bird populations reside; it will highlight how populations have been impacted by development and climate change and it will allow better targeting of future conservation efforts.

“This Atlas is something I’ve been talking about for more than a decade. It will help us make better conservation decisions and justifications for protection of key parcels,” declared Patrick Comins, [Connecticut Audubon Society](#)’s executive director. Everyone involved in conservation across the state stands to benefit from the new Bird Atlas. All data collected will be accessible on the interactive [Atlas website](#),

according to Min T. Huang, a Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) wildlife biologist. Having the data online enables the database to be updated beyond the study’s conclusion, giving longevity to the Atlas and the efforts of everyone involved in compiling it.



How Data Collection Will Work

The entire state has been divided into 3.2 mile by 2.8 mile blocks to coordinate data collection efforts. A state block map should be posted on the Atlas website so you can view the blocks in your area. Volunteers will be asked to adopt blocks and spend about 20 hours collecting data over a three year period beginning this spring. Birding enthusiasts and interested parties are encouraged to email CTbirdatlasvol@gmail.com to volunteer or to ask questions.

Volunteers are not required to be expert birders to participate. If you are able to identify common birds and observe breeding activity, your participation will be valuable to the project. Information sessions will be conducted in February and March at the discretion of the Regional Coordinator or based on feedback from volunteers. As of early January, 2018, approximately half the 600 volunteers needed have signed up. Check the Atlas website for more.

Who’s Taking the Lead?

The Bird Atlas project is a joint effort of Connecticut’s (DEEP) Wildlife Division and the University of Connecticut. The Connecticut Audubon Society is a key partner in building support for the Bird Atlas. Bird sanctuaries and ornithological groups have also been contacted to build awareness and marshal volunteer support. They include the Connecticut Ornithological Association and Great Hollow Nature Preserve and Ecological Research Center. Send an email if you want to join in this grand endeavor.

Michele MacKinnon, is a UCONN Certified Advanced Master Gardener, garden educator and speaker. To contact MacKinnon to ask gardening questions, email beehappygardener@gmail.com. We’ll publish answers in the next edition of the newsletter.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Songbirds of the Northeast

Speaker: John Root, Naturalist, Educator and Musician

Date: Thursday, February 8th

Time: 7:00pm activist letter writing - 7:30pm program

Sponsor: Greater Hartford Group Connecticut Sierra Club

Location: Westmoor Park, [119 Flagg Rd, W. Hartford, CT](#)

Refreshments: Provided

Donation: \$4 requested to defray hall rental

Questions: Email Renee [HERE](#)



Free and open to the public

Overview

John Root will present photographs and recordings of our region's songbirds. He will discuss the role of song in these birds' lives as well as their diet, social behavior and other adaptations for survival. Participants will learn how to provide attractive habitat for songbirds. Questions and comments are welcome throughout the presentation.

Biography

John Root is a Certified Organic Landscaper affiliated with the Northeast Organic Farming Association and an apprentice nurseryman at Tripple Brook Farm, Southampton, MA. He holds a BA in Biology from Oberlin College, has done graduate study in botany at the University of Maryland and UNC Chapel Hill; and is certified as a Secondary School Science Teacher. Since 2005, John has presented nature and gardening programs at public venues throughout New England. In his hometown of Amherst, MA, he operates a daycare facility focusing on nature and the arts, is active in recycling planning and organizes hospice singing visits. In MD and NC he promoted awareness of nature as a camp counselor/director.



Songbirds to See

Photo credit: John Root

FEBRUARY AND MARCH EVENTS

A Teach-In: For a Livable World, Climate Justice Now!

Date: Saturday, February 24th

Time: Noon to 6:00pm

Location: Elmwood Community Center, 1106 New Britain Avenue, West Hartford

Access via South Quaker Lane to Burgoyne Street

Overview:

- Explore some of the toughest questions facing the climate movement
- Learn the necessity of building alliances with those most victimized by climate change
- Attend action-focused workshops designed to integrate those new to the movement into all our state campaigns
- Build a February 28th rally at the Capitol against the limitations of the Comprehensive Energy Strategy (CES)

Speakers:

- **Jacqui Patterson**, Director, NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program
- **Anne L. Hendrickson**, Director, Feminist Population and Development Programs, Hampshire College
- **Martha Klein**, Chair, Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club
- **Alexis Rodriguez**, Fairfield Representative of the Puerto Rican Agenda
- **Sean Sweeney**, Coordinator, Trade Unionists for Energy Democracy

Sponsors: 350 CT, Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club, Hartford NAACP, CT Community Organizing for Racial Justice, Puerto Rican Agenda of CT, Clean Water Action, Eastern Connecticut Green Action, Berkshire Environmental Action Team and No Fracked Gas in Mass.

Free and Open to the Public

Sponsorships: Available to non-profit organizations from \$50 to \$500

Questions: Chris Gauvreau, 350 CT: 860.478.5300

Go Green Rally/ Demand a Better CES for Connecticut!

Date: Wednesday February 28th

Time: 10:00am to noon

Location: Connecticut State Capitol Building

210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford CT 06106

Sponsor: UCONN PIRG Student Group, CT Go Green and CT Sierra Club

2018 Northwest Connecticut Democratic Governor's Forum

Date: Thursday, March 1st

Time: 6:00pm to 9:00pm

Location: Torrington City Hall Auditorium

140 Main Street, Torrington CT

Get Charged about Electric Vehicles!

Date: Saturday, March 3, 2018

Time: 10:00am to 1:30 pm (optional tour follows)

Location: Energize CT Center

122 Universal Drive North

North Haven, CT 06473

Program:

- **Keri Enright-Cato**, DEEP: What is CT doing to support EVs? EVs and electrification of transportation, and DEEP's efforts to promote growth in this area
- **Emily Lewis**, Acadia Center: Acadia's work on electrification of transportation, why it is so important, put EVs into the general energy conversation about renewables, grid implications, and charging ops
- **Alex Rodriguez** or **Wildaliz Bermudez**, LCV Chispa: EV bus campaign and Environmental Justice efforts as they relate to transportation
- **Mark Renburke**, Drive Electric America: Why drive an EV?
- **EV owners panel:** Questions answered
- **Jeff Gross**, Sierra Club EV Lead: Superchargers

Optional tour to Superchargers at 1:30pm and/or tour of CT Energize Center with docent at 2:00pm

Lunch and snacks provided

RSVP before March 1st to Susan Eastwood at: sce4321@gmail.com

POETRY

Trowels into Votes

by J. Roger Guilfoyle

Winter has locked us in its hoary grasp,
The fret of frozen water pipes embedded
in outer walls, glittery ice jammed gutters,
all avoidable. Mother Nature muscling away
man's hubris. A central chimney, plumbing
in interior locations, deep roof over hangs
with the ground, graveled, gently sloping
downward and away from the foundation,
these are already in the builder's repertoire.
Also, siting houses, backs to the northeast,
fronts to the southwest, sensitive to seasonal
wind and the character of cold weather light.

On the hillside behind our house, native
foliage provides grazing for deer, berried
and seeded bushes and pines hospitably
feed and shelter a clutch of wintering birds.
Here Mother Nature is planner, developer.
Time tested, sustainable plantings informed
by ecological and environmental changes
can benefit from our mindful stewardship,
be well served by our thoughtful reading
of gardening manuals, by the rooting out
of non-native, invasive species. The vote
for change, the grass roots movement,
begins outside our windows on the doorstep.

J. Roger Guilfoyle is a poet and writer. He is a Professor (tenured) in the Graduate Communications Design Department at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn NY.



photo credit: Luna Negra, Pinterest



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