

Water Utility Coordinating Committee

The General Assembly passed “An Act Concerning a Connecticut Plan for Public Water Supply Coordination” (Public Act 85-535) in 1985. The Legislature found that “in order to maximize efficient and effective development of the state’s public water supply systems and to promote public health, safety and welfare, the Department of Public Health shall administer a procedure to coordinate the planning of public water supply systems.” Statutory intent, as well as for Statutes 25-33d through 25-33j and the associated regulations; is to encourage public water suppliers, regional planning organizations and government to work together to resolve water supply problems and related issues. The act provides for a coordinated approach to long-range water supply planning by addressing water quality and quantity issues from area-wide perspectives in regional coordinated plans.



Seven management areas for water supply planning were delineated based upon similar identified water supply problems that lent themselves to area-wide analysis and solutions including proliferation of small water systems, groundwater contamination, and over allocated water resources. A priority order was adopted by the Commissioner of Public Health after public comment, agency input and a series of public hearings. A Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) is convened by the DPH and comprised of representatives from public water systems and regional planning agencies in each delineated management area. To date WUCCs are established in four of the seven delineated management areas; the Housatonic (convened June 11, 1986), Upper Connecticut River (convened March 24, 1987), South Central (convened November 4, 1987), and Southeast (convened August 5, 1998). The Housatonic, Upper Connecticut River, South Central, and Southeast completed their regional coordinated plans in September 1988, March 1989, April 1990, and March 2001; respectively. The Southeast plan was approved by the DPH on February 19, 2002. Remaining WUCCs to be convened are (in priority order) the Northeast, Northwest, and Southwest areas. Water utility representatives and local officials use a team or consensus approach in the WUCC process to solve problems in a management area. Once convened a WUCC management area has two years to prepare a coordinated, area-wide water supply plan. The group has vested interest in a regional coordinated plan and its implementation because it is their plan not a State conceived solution. Coordinated plans are built from

individual plans of public water systems required pursuant to CGS 25-32d modified by regional requirements. A coordinated plan must assess water supply problems and conditions in the management area, designate recommended exclusive service areas, and integrate individual water utility plans into a cohesive area-wide plan that emphasizes cooperation and coordination between public water systems. WUCCs were intended to reconvene periodically to revise coordinated plans to reflect changing status of individual system plans and current planning at the time. An iterative process is vital for successful living documents; constant vigilance and regular updates are required to address future water supply needs, potential conflicts over future sources, competition for service areas, areas of growth where public water is currently not available, changing status of individual water systems, economic impacts on demographics, and environmental impacts on our drinking water supplies.

BENEFITS OF THE CT PLAN

Adequate potable water resources for industry and commerce are of great importance for continued economic growth of the state. Correspondingly, regional coordinated plans for the state's four remaining WUCC areas must be completed and all coordinated plans must be revised periodically. Statewide public water supply needs and issues are defined and addressed in the coordinated process as are the coordinated municipal management efforts that are required when watersheds and water supply aquifers traverse political boundaries. The WUCC process is a mechanism to define and address area-wide or inter-municipal water problems such as when new sources of supply are required in the future but the potential high quality sources required for human consumption are not located where the water demands exist. A process structured to overcome political boundaries and promote public water system interconnections will be required for successful minimum stream flow releases and efficient water use. The two-year WUCC process brings systems together to discuss supply issues and needs and is a suitable mechanism to improve statewide water system coordination and enhance regional water supply planning.