Policy Priorities

Water is a public trust resource. It is our heritage, to be passed on to the next generation. Rivers Alliance advocates for sound water policies at the state and federal levels, provides education on water resources, and stands ready to assist any person or group striving to protect water.

State Legislative and Funding Priorities

Make real progress on addressing PFAS! Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a serious human and environmental health concern. We support the following efforts to address threats from this “forever chemical.”

- Ban on use of PFAS in aqueous fire-fighting foam (AFFF) for training purposes and phase out of PFAS in AFFF.
- Phase out in food packaging - With no firm resolution to phase PFAS out of consumer products, food packaging in particular, remediation efforts will never end and there will be no meaningful reduction in exposure of Connecticut’s citizens to PFAS. Legislation to phase out PFAS in food packaging similar to that passed in Washington State in 2018, and work toward an eventual phase out in all consumer products is essential.

Protect [insert any living thing and aquatic resource here] from pesticides. We must get a handle on the regulation and use of pesticides as well as ban those that are a threat to environmental and human health.

Don’t let another opportunity to address our Solid Waste crisis go to waste! Why would Rivers Alliance care so much about solid waste policy? A strong and sensible solid waste policy means a reduction in littering and illegal dumping. Those who have participated in a river cleanup have seen first-hand that single-use plastics and polystyrene are a REAL problem for our waterways and, ultimately, our oceans. We support bills that will implement or accomplish the following:

- Modernize the Bottle Bill!
- Add more items to CT's robust Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs – Particularly for tires and pharmaceuticals
- Ban polystyrene for food packaging and ban un-encapsulated polystyrene dock floats
- Reduce, phase out, and ban single-use plastic items
Give communities an opportunity to utilize tools they need to manage stormwater and address aging infrastructure. Enable communities to establish stormwater authorities. Such legislation would give communities the option to establish a stormwater utility that would generate revenue for infrastructure and other activities necessary to reduce pollution to our rivers and streams (and ultimately Long Island Sound) from stormwater. Stormwater utilities can provide new efficiencies and economies of scale with integrated stormwater management that will benefit all the stakeholders.

Add soil health to our statutes. Soil health is fundamentally important for watershed health and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Soils is also the basis for our Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act. However, because of the way our DEEP is set up, there is no division that really looks at soils at this time. The Soil Conservation title of the General Statutes (Sec. 22a-314 et seq.) needs to be updated to reflect the actual work of the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation and the conservation districts, to expressly provide for soil health, and to task DEEP with recognizing soils and soil health as a resource to be protected.

Give water companies the tools and incentives necessary to encourage demand-side conservation and wise water use. If water utilities do not have to choose between generating revenue and encouraging their customers to conserve water on a daily basis and implementing restrictions during drought, there would be more water for our rivers and streams. Furthermore, all category of utilities should be able to take advantage of these programs.

Protect good laws and regulations for water policy and environmental protection. Here are just a few, but the possibilities are many:

- Maintain protections of our drinking water watershed lands
- Keep the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act intact
- Defend Connecticut’s policy on Public Trust
- Fight efforts to undermine DEEP’s authority to protect our environment

Maintain funding for and oppose “raids” on important programs.

- The Clean Water Fund supports DEEP’s financial assistance to municipalities for projects addressing wastewater needs. Upgrading our aging wastewater infrastructure can be a financial burden on our communities but doing so improves water quality in the rivers and streams in which we recreate and improves the health of Long Island Sound. We must maintain the current level of funding.
- The Passport to Parks program has brought much needed funding to State Parks and other recreation-related divisions of DEEP as well as CEQ and our Conservation Districts. We must ensure that this revenue stream remains strong and its beneficiaries are not undermined.
- Protect the Community Investment Act, which generates funding for state programs for open space, farmland/dairy production, historic preservation, and affordable housing. The best way to protect water quality is to preserve open space and forest land.
- Support funding for a statewide PFAS testing program for water and fish.