

Committee Name: Environment Committee

Co-Chairs: Eric Hammerling (CFPA) & Frogard Ryan (TNC)

1. How do you propose the Lamont Administration should prioritize the policy goals in this area, and on what timeframe?

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our time, and sea level rise in the Northeast is occurring faster than the global average. Investments today in emissions reduction and climate resilience will reduce storm damage, pollution, insurance and energy costs, create jobs, and save lives. Protecting land, water, natural resources, and reducing waste all support this goal.

Following are the Environment Committee’s top-ranked longer-term environmental priorities:

- Lead the way in designing Carbon pricing that fits Connecticut and the region
- Authorize municipal funding for land conservation, e.g. local buyer’s conveyance fee
- Reduce waste by diverting food/organic waste for local composting
- Curb nitrogen pollution in Long Island Sound nearshore waters
- Improve permit, grant/contract, and procurement efficiency/timeliness at DEEP

2. Which goals are achievable in the first 100 days of the Administration?

Within the first 100 days, the Governor can announce the following priorities:

- Challenge General Assembly to pass State Water Plan in its current form
- Commitment to phase-out single-use plastics such as plastic bags and styrofoam
- Promote CT’s outdoor recreation assets/produce online statewide trails map
- Increase pace of land conservation with DEEP public/private partnership (NY model)
- Help towns use FEMA programs to lower risk/insurance costs in flood-prone areas

3. Which goals will require legislation to move forward? Which items can be advanced through the actions of the Administration alone? What is the fiscal impact of these legislative or executive actions?

Legislative Actions	\$ Impact	Executive Actions	\$ Impact
Pass State Water Plan	None	Leadership on Carbon pricing	Staff time
Phase-out single-use plastics	Save \$	Curb nitrogen pollution in LIS	Staff time
Pilot to ↑ pace of land conservation	\$5 mil	↑ permit/contracting efficiency	Save \$
Auth. local buyer’s conveyance fee	None	Promote outdoor recreation	\$3-5 mil
		Reduce/compost food waste	Save \$
		↑ wastewater treatment systems	Federal \$

4. Are there specific challenges you can identify with regard to achieving the Lamont Administration’s goals, and how would you suggest to address those?

Staff Capacity: Staff levels at DEEP have decreased by 29% over the past decade, and are projected to go down by another 40% through retirements/departures in the next 4 years. Need to both invest in staff capacity, and make it easier for DEEP to contract with partners to get work done.

Stop Fund Diversions: Diversions of “dedicated” funds generated by fees paid by the public – e.g., Community Investment Act, Passport to Parks, Energy Efficiency, and other funds – undermine DEEP’s effectiveness and erode public trust. Political leadership and discipline is necessary.

Keep Bonding for Priorities: Bonding is critical for Connecticut to keep pace with investments in Clean Water projects, Park and recreational trail infrastructure, Open Space protection, etc.

No Rollbacks: Current attacks on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have the potential to reduce air, water, chemical, and other protections. Connecticut must resist these attempts.

Enforcement Needed: Environmental laws are only as strong as their enforcement, and DEEP’s enforcement capacity is severely limited. Need for investment in capacity and cross-training.

5. How will implementation of policy in this area create jobs and spur economic growth?

- The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) has reduced CO₂ emissions, generated \$1.4 billion in economic benefits, and saved \$220 million on energy bills for consumers.
- Outdoor recreation in Connecticut generates \$9 billion in revenues and directly supports 69,000 jobs each year (more than the aerospace/defense industry).
- Connecticut’s state parks and forests attract 9 million visitors, generate over \$1 billion in revenues, and support 9,000 private sector jobs every year.

6. Are there opportunities for cost savings for CT state government in the context of implementing this policy?

- Contracting with partners can reduce staff/operational costs while extending capacity.
- Diverting food waste/organics from the waste stream will save CT \$\$ and create jobs.
- Investments in clean air and water save billions of dollars in avoided health costs.

7. What examples of success from other states, countries, or the private sector in this policy area should the Administration study?

Several proposals in questions #1 and #2 above have models highlighted in the appendix.

8. Are there any other issues/considerations you would like to highlight with regard to this policy area?

This document primarily highlights new initiatives. However, there are several existing programs not mentioned above that are crucial to Connecticut’s environment that we strongly support; e.g., the Council on Environmental Quality; the Long Island Sound Blue Plan; forest, wildlife, and fisheries management programs; and the Governor’s Council on Climate Change.