



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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NEWS RELEASE

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### CONNECTICUT'S ENVIRONMENT IN 2008:

#### **MANY CLEAR IMPROVEMENTS; SOME NEW STRATEGIES NEEDED**

HARTFORD – Connecticut residents are reaping massive dividends from the creation and steady enforcement of state and federal regulatory programs. However, in contrast to many very positive trends, the state is lagging in programs such as land conservation that require public investment, and new approaches are needed.

These were the messages in the Council on Environmental Quality's annual environmental status report delivered today to Governor M. Jodi Rell.

Council Chair Barbara Wagner of Glastonbury noted the following clear trends in her letter to Governor Rell:

- Connecticut's air was the cleanest it has been in decades.
- Nearly all of the drinking water delivered by water utilities met all standards, a product of watershed protection regulations that many states do not have.

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- The state's population of Bald Eagles is surging, a result of state and federal agencies banning the use of DDT and similar chemicals more than 30 years ago.
- Coastal beaches were better for people (fewer closings) and for piping plovers (more nests) in 2008.

Wagner also wrote in her letter, "In contrast to these very positive trends, we can see where the state is lagging: anywhere large sums of public investment are required, including sewage treatment and land conservation. Unfortunately, this was true even before the current financial crisis. Connecticut has been fairly consistent in maintaining its Clean Water Fund, but progress inevitably is slow due to the scale of the sewage problem. When it comes to the conservation of land for future [agricultural](#) and public uses, slow and steady investment will not get us to our goals."

"A new strategy for land conservation is required, and a new strategy is possible. The Council is not recommending details of a new approach in this report but is calling attention to the need and the opportunity."

The annual report, *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*, is a paperless web publication. The CEQ is required by law to submit this comprehensive summary of the state's progress in protecting and improving the state's air, water, land and wildlife.

The Council uses a set of about 30 environmental indicators to track the

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state's yearly progress. This year it added one to its stock of leading indicators: the number of Connecticut households that purchase "green" electricity, which has been rising steadily. In general, the leading indicators, which help to predict future environmental conditions, were mixed, but energy efficiency by households and businesses showed significant gains.

"Connecticut is a leader in promoting energy efficiency, and holding to this course will yield great dividends in the years ahead," Wagner concluded in her letter.

The Council also added an indicator showing the rising temperature of Long Island Sound under the heading "Does the Sound Have a Fever?" Rising surface temperatures are believed by scientists to be very much related to the decline of the lobster population and summertime water quality.

"These tough economic times have created environmental opportunities" said Wagner. "Overflows of raw sewage to our rivers will be greatly reduced as state and federal stimulus funds are mustered to construct the much needed separation of storm sewers from sanitary sewers. Bus and train services can be increased to provide efficient transportation alternatives while people are demanding these less expensive options."

"Good environmental practices are often the most economical long term decisions." Wagner added.

*Environmental Quality in Connecticut* can be viewed in its entirety on the Council's web site at [www.ct.gov/ceq/AnnualReport](http://www.ct.gov/ceq/AnnualReport).

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The Council is a nine-member board that is independent of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) except for purely administrative functions. The Chair and four other members are appointed by the Governor, two members by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and two by the Speaker of the House. Established in 1971 alongside the DEP, the CEQ has published dozens of reports on state environmental problems and solutions, and resolved thousands of citizen complaints. Many reports have resulted in major changes to state policy that continue to yield dividends years after publication.

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