

EAST LYME COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 8, 2025

Present: Don Danila
Harvey Beeman
Laura Ashburn
Steve Dinsmore, Alternate
Marjorie Meekhoff, Alternate

Absent: Penny Heller
Mark Christensen

Also Present: Rose Ann Hardy, Ex officio

I. CALL TO ORDER. Mr. Danila, Acting Chair, called the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources of October 8, 2025 meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. SEATING ALTERNATES (IF NECESSARY)

MOTION (1): Ms. Ashburn moved to seat Steve Dinsmore for Penny Heller. Seconded by Mr. Beeman. (3-0) Motion carried.

MOTION (2): Ms. Ashburn moved to seat Marjorie Meekhoff for Mr. Christensen. Seconded by Mr. Beeman. (4-0) Motion carried.

III. CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA. There were no additions to the agenda.

IV. CALL FOR PUBLIC DELEGATIONS. There were no public delegations.

V. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 10, 2025 MEETING. The following correction was noted: On page 2, item VIII, c. the last sentence: Mr. Bragaw's name was misspelled.

MOTION (3): Mr. Dinsmore moved to approve the September 10, 2025 Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Minutes, as amended. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (5-0) Unanimous.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- a. In an email communication to Mr. Danila, Ms. Heller reported observing vehicle damage to dunes on the beach by the Niantic Bay boardwalk. It appears that Parks and Recreation employees drove on the dunes and their tires damaged them. Mr. Danila mentioned that Mr. Greg Decker, who spoke under Public Delegations at the

September meeting, has already brought this issue to the attention of Mr. Lokken. However, a second communication from this commission might also be effective in stopping this practice.

MOTION (4): Mr. Beeman moved that a draft Memo to Jerry Lokken, Director of Parks and Recreation, should be prepared for review by the Commission at its next scheduled meeting. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (5-0) Unanimous.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Saving an Iconic Town Tree from Potential Damage due to Beech Leaf Disease.** Mr. Danila reported that Mr. Decker was told that treatment of this tree by a tree service company under the direction of Parks and Recreation had already begun. As a result, no memo about this issue was sent to Parks and Recreation from this commission.
- b. **Maintenance of the ELHS Rain Garden.** High School students spent a few days via Ms. Ashburn with support from Ms. Meekhoff. Ms. Ashburn will meet with Mr. Lund. Ms. Meekhoff will work on plantings and determine future plans.
- c. **2025 RBV Sampling.** The plan is to sample in late October or early November if there is enough steam flow.

VIII. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

- a. **Communications.** Mr. Danila reported that the 2024 RBV report was recently made available on the CT DEEP website. It was disappointing that we had a late summer drought last year. There were only two most wanted species at the Colony Road Latimer Brook site, and 3 at both the Latimer Brook site behind IGA and the Four Mile River site. Cranberry Meadow Brook could not be sampled due to very low water flow. Nearby Eight Mile River tributaries had 6, 7 and 8 most wanted insects. Nonetheless, Mr. Danila thought that our local streams had reasonably good water quality. Penny and Ray Heller and Don Danila will try to get sampling done with help from personnel from the National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Mr. Danila reported that the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters issued an Environmental Scorecard providing their analysis of legislative bills passing or failing and the score card for all representatives and senators who voted on environmentally related bills.

Mr. Danila stated he is on the Fisheries Advisory Council and informed the Commission DEEP is looking for comments on high powered boats producing strong wakes for wake surfing. Mr. Danila drafted comments on behalf of the Pattagansett Lake Association and will make it available to any Commission member who would like to see it. He sent a notice about this issue to both the East Lyme and Waterford Harbor Management

Commissions and WELSCO. He will also send this notice to Mr. Dinsmore, Chairman of the East Lyme Harbor Management Commission.

Mr. Dinsmore stated in the river DEEP has its regulations for excessive speeding but enforcement is needed. DEEP comes to the Niantic River once or twice a year.

Ms. Hardy expressed concerns about East Lyme's lakes. Mr. Danila stated he is concerned about wake boats and surfing in all smaller lakes throughout the state.

Mr. Dinsmore was concerned about jet skis. Signs say no wake. Speed limits need to be posted.

Mr. Danila stated that wake boats can impact other users' rights and raises sediments. Comments to CT DEEP are due by October 22.

b. Agribusiness Subcommittee. Ms. Meekhoff was informed by Mr. Christensen, who was unable to be present, on October 18 the Samuel Smith Farmstead will have its "End of Harvest" from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be horses, chickens, applesauce making, oyster sampling and cider making. This event is free.

c. SustainableCT Subcommittee. Mr. Beeman reported that much progress has been made on the Energy Portfolio Manager database since the last meeting. By way of summary, he indicated there are 14 town buildings (School and Town) included in the database which encompass a total of 40 different energy inputs. Of the 42 energy inputs, 32 inputs are meters (either natural gas or electricity) and are updated automatically while the remaining 8 sources (oil and propane) require manual updating. Mr. Beeman has manually entered the oil and propane from input obtained from Joe Bragaw and Chris Lund. He has also reviewed the 32 "automatic updates" and found 20 deficiencies (gaps in data). He is currently working with the designated Eversource contact to correct the 20-meter related deficiencies. There is a video conference scheduled for this Friday to help resolve these deficiencies. This will give two years' worth of data in the system.

He was not sure if or when Ms. Heller will be seeking SustainableCT re-certification.

Ms. Ashburn stated the Equity objective of the program needs a representative from every group in town to solve major problems.

d. Pollinator Pathways East Lyme. Ms. Meekhoff reported there will be the following three lecture series in 2026: Jim Arrigoni, Environmental Director of the Lyme Land Trust will give a Naturalist Lecture and Workshop on March 28 at 2 p.m.; Don Danila and Susan Gonzalez will present on Wednesday May 20 at 7 p.m. Frogs & Toads of Connecticut: What Species are Found in East Lyme? They participated in a citizen science program, Frog Watch USA.; Diana Drake, Landscape Designer, Straight Talk on

Smart Gardeners! Why and How Using Native Plants Really Matters. February 22 at 2 p.m. is a tentative date.

Public Works and PPEL are partnering tomorrow to transport two large trees from a large wholesale nursery back to East Lyme. One tree, with a 200-pound root ball will be planted on the berm behind the Community Center. The other tree, of the same size and type, will be planted at Public Works Department. The design has been done by Denise Dinsmore and Ms. Meekhoff. PPEL hopes to have more collaboration in the future. The library tree was purchased by the Library Foundation in memory of Abe Fisher.

PPEL has partnered with Allison Scott of Colonel Landscaping. She will install our native plant designs for home visitation clients.

The prestigious Garden Conservancy is considering PPEL's 4 Church Lane two-acre meadow for their 2026 calendar for visitation.

Bruce Dasinger, longtime resident of East Lyme, suggests that the Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources should be managing Darrow Pond. He lost \$7,000 in his bird/wildlife grassland installation due to Parks and Recreation's lack of proper maintenance.

PPEL is partnering with Lisa Timothy to write a grant to the Eastern Connecticut Community Foundation for native plant species for the large berm behind the Community Center.

First Selectman Dan Cunningham has asked Ms. Meekhoff to create a native plant design for the lawn area in front of the Town Hall.

- d. Chairman's Report.** Ms. Heller was unable to be present, and there was no report.
- e. Ex-officio Report.** Ms. Hardy reported a ballot for the upcoming November election can be found online.

The Charter Revision changed the term of First Selectman from two to four years.

An informal committee is working on America's 250th anniversary. She added they have been approaching local businesses to tie in with this committee's plans. The Light Parade will kick it off. The committee would like to have events throughout the year. The next committee meeting is on October 21 at 6 p.m. in the upper town hall meeting room. She asked if anyone is interested in working on this committee to please let her know.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION (5): Ms. Ashburn moved to adjourn the October 8, 2025 East Lyme
Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Meeting at 7:55
p.m. Seconded by Mr. Beeman. (5-0) Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary

