

**Groton Utilities and Connecticut Department of Public Health
Watershed Protection Plan and Implementation Project:
For the Benefit of Our Region and Connecticut**

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” - Benjamin Franklin

Background and Need:

Connecticut’s public water supply reservoirs encompass 17% of Connecticut’s land area. This means that 1 in approximately every 6 acres of Connecticut’s land area is located on a public water supply reservoir watershed. This suggests a tremendous responsibility and opportunity for Connecticut’s public water suppliers. Groton Utilities (GU), as steward of greater than 15 square miles of public water supply watershed in Groton and Ledyard desires to work with our partner communities, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH), the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CT DEP) and other public and private stakeholders to develop a ***Source Water Protection Plan and Implementation Project*** for GU’s public water supply reservoirs (the Project). With intense pressures toward increased development in the region it is important to implement comprehensive source water protection.

The State of Connecticut through its public health and environmental protection statutory authority and regulation, has demonstrated tremendous foresight with respect to public water supply watershed protection. Connecticut remains the single state in the United States to continue a prohibition on sewage treatment plant point discharges within the watershed of a surface water supply reservoir. The CT DEP places high priority on the protection of public water supply watersheds. The CT DPH maintains stringent control over the sale and use of water supply lands and in 1974 mandated filtration of all of Connecticut’s public water supply reservoirs. The Connecticut Office of Policy and Management also places exceptionally high priority on source water protection through recently proposed revisions to Connecticut’s Conservation and Development Policies Plan that includes source water protection as a basic public health protection mechanism that must be preserved. State regulation and policy however, are not sufficient to ensure well-planned watershed development and protection for our region. This must be accomplished at the local level where well-planned public water supply watershed protection and management can bring unparalleled benefits to the communities where GU’s watersheds are located.

Project Goal:

The goal of the Project will be to identify critical areas where protection and management is needed on GU’s watersheds and to implement “Smart Growth” principals, Best Management Practices and Low Impact Development (LID) that will safeguard human health, ensure environmental and economic health, and preserve the watersheds’ natural beauty, today and for the region’s future generations. Watershed security, which has become critically important, will be incorporated throughout the Project. The project will also serve as a pilot project supporting the State’s source water protection initiatives and providing a source water protection model for Connecticut’s 125 other communities with water supply watersheds.

Groton Utilities Role:

Groton Utilities (GU) will serve as project manager, offering technical and administrative support, as well as coordination and liaison services to the Project partners and stakeholders. GU is a municipally owned not-for-profit utility company supplying water and other services to Groton and the surrounding communities of Noank, Groton Long Point, and Ledyard. GU will soon become a regional supplier with the completion of a water main interconnection across the Thames River to serve Montville.

The extension of water service across the Thames River will improve GU's ability to provide water service to the region and accomplish an important regional goal. GU provides water to the United States Navy Submarine Base, Electric Boat, and Pfizer Corporation.

Project Partners and Stakeholders:

The following partners and stakeholders have thus far been identified as important to the success of this regional project: The CT DPH, CT DEP, CT OPM, Planning and Development departments from the Towns of Groton, Ledyard, and Preston. The Project will also need support and input from stakeholders including the citizens of Groton and Ledyard, and governing boards, public works, public utilities, the regional planning agency, and community groups including the Groton Open Space Association (GOSA), the Thames River Watershed Association, public water systems and private business.

Method and Approach:

The project will utilize Critical Control Point management planning (CCP). EPA has selected CCP as the method of choice for planning watershed protection and development. CCP is long-term implementation planning that identifies specific actions and controls for critical areas within a watershed. It emphasizes long-term water quality protection, minimizing risks to public health and as such safeguards human health. DPH has adopted this planning method and will use CCP planning in its watershed protection initiatives. This Project will utilize CCP; involving all stakeholders in the plan's development and long-term implementation, identifying regulatory and non-regulatory methods of watershed protection, and assigning responsibility for overseeing watershed management activities. At least six regionally significant needs will be addressed by the Project: assurance of safe drinking water, open space preservation, Low Impact Development (LID) in environmentally sensitive watershed areas, *Smart Growth* development applications, improved quality from non-point source discharges to Long Island Sound (LIS) and maintaining reasonable costs for water treatment.

Statement of Commitment:

GU, the partners and stakeholders commit to securing the future of GU's watersheds through a ***Source Water Protection Plan and Implementation Project***. The result of the Project will be to enhance the quality of life in our communities for countless generations to come.