



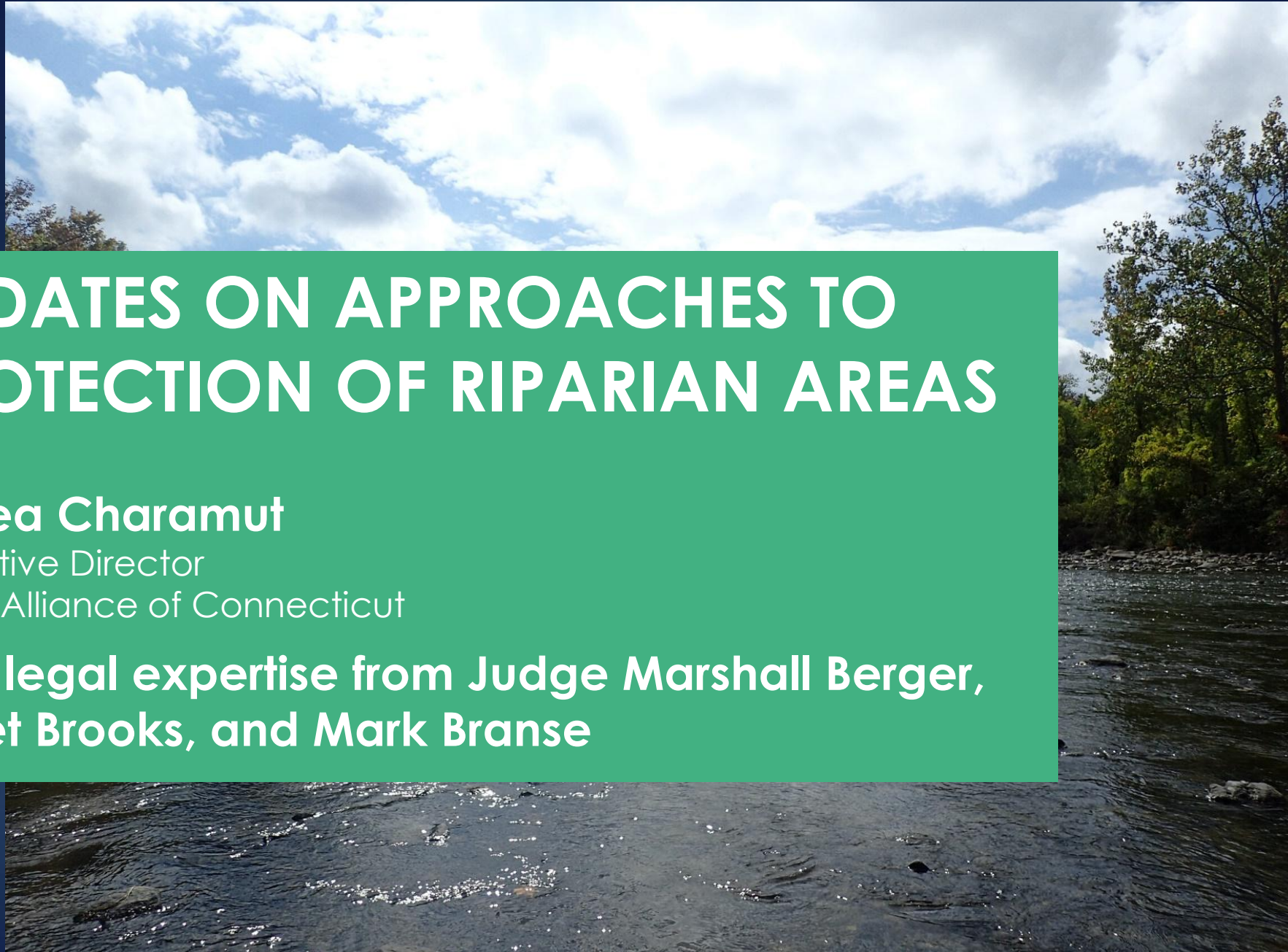
UPDATES ON APPROACHES TO PROTECTION OF RIPARIAN AREAS

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Executive Director

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

**With legal expertise from Judge Marshall Berger,
Janet Brooks, and Mark Branse**





Wild Edges: Healthy Waters

You already know why buffers matter.

Today is about what's happening at the state level and learn how we can equip you with the tools and authority to better protect them.



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Recent storms and Legislative Attention



Do you think that your commission currently has the authority and tools necessary to protect natural vegetated areas along our waterways?



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Special Act 25-12: An Act Concerning Riparian Areas

The Connecticut General Assembly established a formal working group to:

- Review existing buffer-related statutes, regulations, and agency practices.
- Identify gaps, inconsistencies, and barriers to local protection.
- Make recommendations to the legislature to support stronger, clearer buffer protections.



Vegetated Riparian Buffers Working Group

Charge:

- Review other states approaches as well as existing statutes, regulations, and case law.
- Identify barriers to protection and consistency.
- Make recommendations to the legislature for integration into policy and permitting.
- Examine DEEP resources dedicated to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses program.



Vegetated Riparian Buffers Working Group

Consensus Items (thus far):

- Focus on watercourses. Wetlands are outside the scope of this discussion.
- One-size-fits-all approach for buffer widths is not appropriate. Any recommendations should allow flexibility to reflect site conditions while maintaining strong protection goals.



Vegetated Riparian Buffers Working Group

Consensus Items (thus far):

- Recommendations should aim to ensure clear and unambiguous implementation by local land use commissions.
- The intent is to preserve existing non-invasive vegetation along watercourses — not to require restoration on previously developed sites. Restoration can be encouraged through incentives and voluntary programs, rather than new mandates.



Vegetated Riparian Buffers Working Group

Consensus Items (thus far):

- DEEP needs additional staffing and resources to effectively support local commissions and implement any new buffer protection requirements.



Vegetated Riparian Buffers Working Group

Challenges:

- Overcoming overlapping jurisdictions between IWWC, Planning and Zoning, and Zoning Board of Appeals

What's the biggest challenge your agency faces in efforts to protect vegetation in riparian areas?



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Protection of vegetation in riparian areas should be addressed primarily through:



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**Which tools would be most helpful in implementing protections for natural vegetation in riparian areas?
Please rank the choices with 1 being the most helpful.**



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If the working group could deliver one thing to make your job easier, what would it be?



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What's next and how to stay involved

You are the experts on the ground — your input can help shape what gets proposed.

Information and resources can be found at:

www.riversalliance.org/wild-edges-healthy-waters/

Next working group meeting: Friday, November 21st at 10 am (in person at the LOB or on YouTube.)



Questions?

Legal SWAT team here to assist:

Judge Marshall Berger – Presiding Judge, Retired, CT
Superior Court

Janet Brooks, Attorney at Law

Mark Branse, Halloran & Sage, LLP



CACIWC 2025.pptx

20 - 26 Nov 2025

Poll results

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- Protection of vegetation in riparian areas should be addressed primarily through:
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- If the working group could deliver one thing to make your job easier, what would it be?

Do you think that your commission currently has the authority and tools necessary to protect natural vegetated areas along our waterways?

0 5 4

Yes



No



Not Sure



Protection of vegetation in riparian areas should be addressed primarily through:

0 6 1

Inland Wetland and Watercourses Agencies



Planning and Zoning

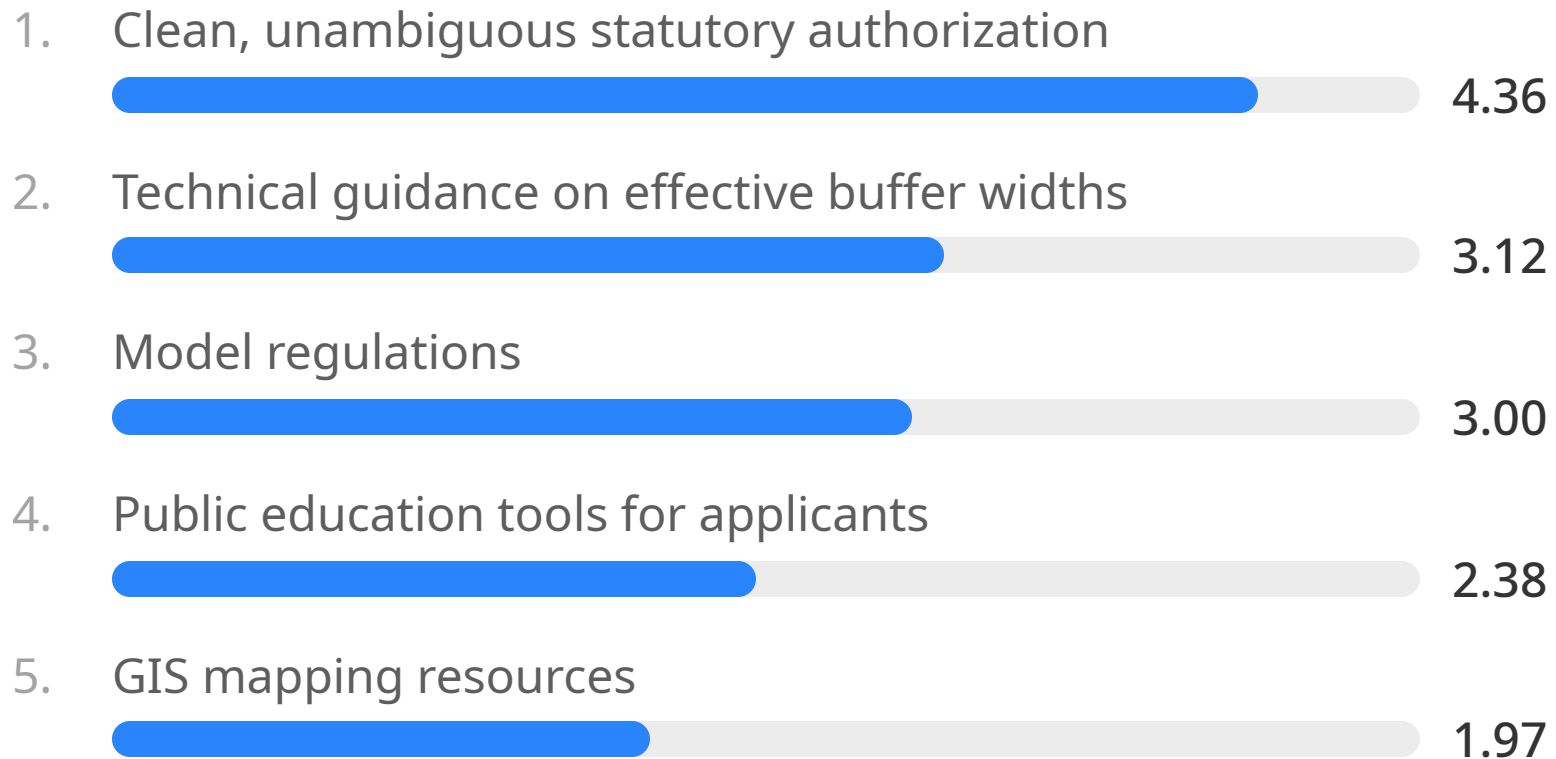


A hybrid, coordinated approach



Which tools would be most helpful in implementing protections for natural vegetation in riparian areas? Please rank the choices with 1 being the most helpful.

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If the working group could deliver one thing to make your job easier, what would it be?

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