

Regulation of Aquifers, Seismic Activity, and Protected Species

By: Janet Kaminski Leduc, Chief Attorney
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Issue

Which agencies regulate or monitor aquifers, seismic activity, and protected species in Connecticut?

Summary

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and municipalities jointly regulate aquifers in Connecticut through the Aquifer Protection Area Program. A variety of state and federal agencies monitor seismic activity, including DEEP's state geologist. DEEP oversees the regulation of state-listed protected species, while the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has jurisdiction over federally listed endangered species.

Aquifer Protection Area Program

Connecticut's Aquifer Protection Area Program is meant to protect major public water supply wells in sand and gravel aquifers to ensure a plentiful supply of public drinking water, according to DEEP's [program website](#). DEEP is the lead regulatory agency for the program in accordance with state statutes.

Among other things, the law requires DEEP to establish state land use regulations and standards, approve aquifer protection area maps and local regulations, and develop guidance materials ([CGS § 22a-354a et seq.](#)). The regulations restrict development of certain new land use activities that use, store, handle, or dispose of hazardous materials and requires existing regulated land uses to register and follow best management practices ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 22a-354i-1 et seq.](#)).

By law, municipalities are responsible for appointing an aquifer protection agency, inventorying land uses within the aquifer protection area, designating the aquifer protection area boundary, and adopting and implementing local land use regulations. The local aquifer protection agency regulates land use activities within the aquifer protection area by registering existing regulated activities at businesses, issuing permits for new regulated activities, and overseeing regulated facilities ([CGS §§ 22a-354e, 22a-354o, 22a-354p & 22a-354s](#)).

Seismic Activity

DEEP, through the Connecticut Geological Survey, investigates and studies earthquakes and geologic events to understand seismic activity in the state. The state geologist coordinates the [Connecticut Geological Survey Program](#), which compiles geoscience information, provides mapping services, and develops interpretive maps and reports for use in environmental policy, resource management, hazards mitigation, and educational outreach.

Additionally, the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection manages emergencies, including issues related to earthquakes and their impacts. The department, through the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, maintains information related to earthquakes on its [website](#), including an earthquake preparedness [checklist](#).

On the federal level, the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) monitors and provides information on seismic activity nationwide.

Protected Species

The state's Endangered Species Act declares it as a state policy to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance any endangered or threatened species and essential habitat; creates a program to protect endangered and threatened species; and makes DEEP the lead agency to oversee the program ([CGS § 26-303 et seq.](#)). As noted on its [website](#), DEEP (1) identifies and lists species according to their level of risk and (2) reviews the listed statuses every five years.

Federally, the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) has jurisdiction over federally listed endangered species.

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