WEBVTT

1 00:00:01.110 --> 00:00:04.740 <v Male Speaker>Thanks for coming to today’s seminar.</v>

2 00:00:04.740 --> 00:00:06.240 Today I’m very, very excited

3 00:00:06.240 --> 00:00:10.200 to have Dr. Rebecca French come here.

4 00:00:10.200 --> 00:00:12.712 Dr. French is the director of

5 00:00:12.712 --> 00:00:13.773 the Office of Climate Planning.

6 00:00:13.773 --> 00:00:18.773 This is new office from the Commissioner.

7 00:00:19.236 --> 00:00:22.237 She also was the commissioner of the

8 00:00:22.237 --> 00:00:23.070 Management

9 00:00:23.070 --> 00:00:25.800 Department for Energy and Demand production,

10 00:00:25.800 --> 00:00:26.730 for short, DEP.

11 00:00:28.170 --> 00:00:33.170 and her first charge is to administer the "Governor’s

12 00:00:33.489 --> 00:00:36.314 Council on Climate Change”

13 00:00:36.314 --> 00:00:37.988 and crucially Dr. French has served as

14 00:00:37.988 --> 00:00:42.321 as the Director of Resilience for the CT De-

15 00:00:42.321 --> 00:00:46.084 of Housing and the the Director of Community

16 00:00:46.084 --> 00:00:46.917 for the

17 00:00:48.138 --> 00:00:49.138 Institute of

18 00:00:50.995 --> 00:00:54.149 Resilience and Climate Adaptation

19 00:00:54.149 --> 00:00:57.655 (audio cuts in and out) 2018

20 00:00:57.655 --> 00:01:00.750 and Dr. French to also spends a year in in

21 00:01:00.750 --> 00:01:02.640 Congressional Science Fellow

22 00:01:02.640 --> 00:01:05.220 in the office of U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders.

23 00:01:05.220 --> 00:01:08.418 Then, starting out as Policy Advisor to the

24 00:01:08.418 --> 00:01:13.259 in the areas of energy, environment and agri-

25 00:01:13.259 --> 00:01:15.683 (audio cuts in and out)
Here today to talk about climate policy especially for climate change mitigation policy.

(audio cuts out)

Hi everybody. The mask on. Can everyone hear me?

Good. What other Letting. Yeah, the. Hold’s. Yeahs aligned to have. Oh, okay.

Great.

Oh that So, So good afternoon. Very happy to be here.

I’ll be talking about policy that have been adopted basically going out of the Governor’s Council on Climate Change.

I’m gonna talk a little bit about what that council is. I’m definitely gonna talk about mitigation. I’m also gonna talk a little bit about adaptation and resilience.

Counsel covers both areas and then the brief presentation I’m also then happy to answer questions about this or about really anything to my background or curiosity you have.

All right.
There we go. Okay.

So the Governor’s Council on Climate Change is created through executive order from Governor Lamont.

There was a Governor’s Council On Climate Change under the previous governor, but it focused only on mitigation.

Governor Lamont expanded it for the first time to include both carbon emissions reduction or patient and adaptation resilience.

The left is Governor Ned Lamont. The right is Commissioner Katie Ducks, she is my boss.

The head of Department of Energy and Protection.

So again had two objectives for this council from the governor.

Monitor report and the state’s implementation of greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies.

We’ve been working on that in Connecticut for quite a while and we haven’t done as much on implementation and assessing...
and preparing for the impacts of climate change. And I come more from the resilience space. So when someone says mitigation to me, someone is like, are you talking about hazard mitigation? Which is resilience? Or are you talking about mitigation meaning reducing public emissions. So, saying mitigation today, reducing emissions, stabilizing levels of heat, track house gases. This is the quick snapshot slide of the Governor's Council on Climate change process where buzzy was very much involved in this as a member of the Public Health and Safety working group, which was one of seven working groups that did the lion’s share of the work of the Governor’s Council. There are 23 appointed members. So it’s are appointed either because they are commissioners, so the head of their agencies. So there’s 10 different agencies serving on the Governor’s Council. The other half of the council is organization, non-governmental organizations, industry representatives, a municipality and a council of government,
which is Connecticut’s equivalent kind of, of county
government.
We don’t have county government technically we have regional
planning bodies called councils of governments and,
but again,
the working groups are really where we develop policy
and, the concepts.
Met, learned about all these different topic areas of
mitigation, working natural land science, technology equity,
environmental justice infrastructure and land use,
public health and safety and financing options for
adaptation.
Together, those working groups had about 231 people.
They represented over a hundred organizations and they held
186 meetings,
which is a little much,
(Dr. French laughing)
but this is in 2020.
So they had just started meeting before the governor
declared the stay at home emergency public health emergency.
That sent everybody home from state government and we went
entirely online.
And so I think that was kind of one of the interesting outgrowths of doing work in the pandemic. A lot of other people's jobs had kind of paused and we actually had a lot of participation in these zoom meetings from folks who were just working from home or not working at all, not able to work at all. The result of that huge effort was this HH working group produced an individual report with recommendations overview, of sort of issues but also a list of recommendations for policies. Those policies were submitted to 22 members of the council and together they made up this report with 61 actions, each of which have multiple cards. So it's really more about 200 recommendations. We put this out in January, 2021, presented to the governor and it's up to him to take action on, wanted to implement those recommendations. And so I'm gonna talk about what happened as a result of those recommendations and things that were very closely related. Skipping around a little bit out of order,
I’m gonna talk about legislative passage, but I’m gonna start kind at the end of 2021. Governor decided to sign executive order 21-3. These are 23 actions to implement. These are 23 actions recommended by the Governor’s Council on Climate Change. They used the equity lens that we incorporated into all recommendations were meant to be viewed through an equity lens. And we had training on equity, environmental justice to help all the working groups make sure that was a key part of anything that they did or at least evaluate that issue and how a policy might impact it. It was informed by the best available climate science. The report includes a summary of sort of key climate impacts. Connecticut expects to phase between now and 2050 and it took a whole new government approach. So often in Connecticut people think the DEP does everything. Climate not so. We do a lot, we do a lot. We’re the energy and environmental. We’re in the few,
not the only,
maybe one of the few states that combines their energy and
environmental agencies into one single agency.
And the main reason we did that in 2011 was because
of climate, cause climate branch, both areas.
But there's like 10 agencies involved in Governor's Council on
Climate Change. Assurance, Emergency Management,
Department of Public Health, Department of Transportation,
not gonna name anymore but you have lots of,
Lots of agencies in there.
Each of them had a recommendation that related to what they
do.
So here's some examples from transportation from this
executive order 21-3 we get called for a statewide battery
electric bus fleet by 2035.
Basically immediately directing DOT to cease purchasing
anymore diesel buses,
which is what a lot of our buses were on today.
So we're stopping that right now.
And then the fleet will transition over the next
12 years
190 00:08:55.740 --> 00:08:56.940 to
191 00:08:56.940 --> 00:08:58.413 entirely electric.
192 00:09:00.630 --> 00:09:04.807 And also looking at our vehicle miles, travel
vehicle miles,
193 00:09:04.807 --> 00:09:09.480 travel reduction target and setting one.
194 00:09:09.480 --> 00:09:13.816 So this little graph over here is showing trans-
portation is
195 00:09:13.816 --> 00:09:17.070 our largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in
196 00:09:17.070 --> 00:09:19.703 Connecticut.
197 00:09:19.703 --> 00:09:19.613 There consequently,
198 00:09:19.613 --> 00:09:22.833 it’s also a major source of public health haz-
ards.
199 00:09:23.880 --> 00:09:25.950 The city, city of Hartford,
200 00:09:25.950 --> 00:09:26.937 I just drove down from
201 00:09:26.937 --> 00:09:29.237 has the highest asthma capitals in the country
202 00:09:30.300 --> 00:09:32.370 and they’re on major transportation corridors.
203 00:09:32.370 --> 00:09:35.880 What’s in the intersection of haven? Anyone in 95,
204 00:09:35.880 --> 00:09:38.610 everyone’s driving gas fired gas power vehicle,
205 00:09:38.610 --> 00:09:41.400 and releasing a lot of particulate matter.
206 00:09:41.400 --> 00:09:44.460 Knox ozone, not to mention carbon dioxide.
207 00:09:44.460 --> 00:09:47.880 So anyways, I know you know all that,
208 00:09:47.880 --> 00:09:49.410 but this is what’s interesting.
209 00:09:49.410 --> 00:09:52.800 Even as transportation has become more fuel
efficient,
210 00:09:52.800 --> 00:09:55.110 you’d expect emissions to go down.
211 00:09:55.110 --> 00:09:56.490 What’s also been happening however,
212 00:09:56.490 --> 00:10:00.240 is that our vehicle miles travel is going up
that has offset
213 00:10:00.240 --> 00:10:03.930 and even exceeded the efficiency gains that
we’ve made and
214 00:10:03.930 --> 00:10:08.280 our cars being able to drive longer on less fuel.
So basically, unless you go a hundred percent electric, in which case your vehicle miles traveled doesn’t matter, guess for other reasons they matter, but in terms of congestion, but they won’t matter in terms of emissions. so while you’re still driving gas, you need to reduce those vehicle miles traveled to keep offsetting your efficiency of having better transportations. We did see a drop of the pandemic in these numbers, but it’s actually come back and then some. So. You think maybe with more people working from home. Some of habits changed, but we have actually not seen a major reduction in vehicle mile travels. Still wrapping my head around that. But that, that’s what the data says. Don’t know exactly the why. That’s how that’s worked. This is then some snippets. This is another one from Department of Administrative Services. So our Department of Administrative and Services in Connecticut,
is the one who leases all of our state buildings,
they do our state vehicles that I just drove down in.
(clears throat)
So they really control all the governments most,
most of the governments emissions and the decisions that
they make for purchasing and construction,
they do all of that.
So we are looking at how we can adopt in our state or state
buildings,
a retrofit plan, for existing fossil fueled emitting
heating/cooling systems
to be able to transition them to systems without
emitting
without carbon emitting fuels.
And then we’re also going to look at all new construction
and major renovations targeting fiscal year
and after this is a major,
major shift,
in state buildings
and how we do those.
The retrofit is gonna be quite challenging.
I think that’s why we,
we had this down to develop a plan because it’s such a
monumental task that DS is like,
I can’t really tell you what kind of a policy we should develop onto that because we haven’t really looked at this very closely. So they’re in the planning stage and that plan should yield, this is what we can actually do, these are targets that we can actually set for transitioning our existing building stock, to be operating without carbon emitting fumes. New construction should be a little easier to do than retrofit. So again, you know, our buildings are not, you know, this is how much of a dent is going to make in overall greenhouse gas initiative in the state. But probably somebody else knows the answer to that from the "GreenerGov" project, But the main thing is it’s leading by example. So the state is a big purchaser who spent a lot of money because we can move the needle, we can advance technologies, can bring down prices for other people by our purchasing power. That’s what lead by example can do. The federal government is doing similar things like this similar to my administration.
So another thing we did was establish the first Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council, "CEEJAC", we love acronyms. This is to advise the commissioner of DEP. They have started meeting and they’re again just looking at issues within DEP but this was related to some legislation that didn’t pass. But there was a recommendations that call for a greater role for a more formalized role for equity environmental justice work within our agency, which Commissioner Dykes has really been a champion of since she became the commissioner. And looking at this more closely. So you can find more information about who is serving on the "CEEJAC" and all their meetings are open to the public. So if anybody’s interested in attending a meeting and listening in, we’re always welcome to do that. Okay. The executive order also called for, well this is in statute we have to do a comprehensive energy strategy. But it said that the comprehensive energy strategy should address these issues, identify strategy,
drive more affordable heating and cooling for Connecticut, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and improve the resilience of the state’s energy sector to extreme weather events.

Fuel commodity price spikes and other disruptions. Remember we wrote this in December 20, December, 2021 before the Ukraine War, it’s before everything going on with that. so this last part’s becoming more important. But affordable heating and cooling is a big issue that’s also being impacted by global events and, also just overall grid resilience, so, This is a very high level strategy report being led by a new policy advisor, Becca Triech, who joined us few months ago. This is ongoing right now. We had two technical sessions last week, I’ll actually show those technical sessions. So they’re, they’re doing these sessions really to educate largely in part DEP staff, but the general public as well. Though these are very, very technical sessions with like experts for Department of Energy, industry experts, academic experts, talking about all these different areas in
a very technical way. But it’s also going to lead into broader sort of policy, concept development and listening sessions. Sort of the impacts of energy issues. But we’re, we’re looking very much at de-carbonization spending a lot of time on heat pumps, thermal, meaning heating and cooling, de-carbonization, electric demand response, alternative fuels, natural gas planning policies, which is a big deal and carbon pricing and low carbon incentives. So it’s a very tall order, broad high level report but this should yield quite a few new recommendations. Onto some, this is another action from the executive order that we’ve implemented. This is more adaptation, resilience side of things. My office is actually taking the lead on this personally. This is the creation of a DEP Climate Resilience Fund, which is basically we have with the, especially with the passage, although we were going to do this before the, that bill passed in Congress.
Now it's especially important that the bipartisan infrastructure law that was passed last spring, it's getting mixed up because the Inflation Reduction Act also passed, so, getting confused last year and that had actually a huge amount of funding for resilience in that infrastructure law.

Very strong bipartisan support for resilience actually because storms do not discriminate at all on where they hit. And there's broad agreement that who wanna address that issue even if they do not believe that it’s caused by climate change or it’s by climate change. So in Connecticut, again we’re seeing the very broad based support for resilience funding and this is going to help municipalities, community organizations do, do planning and also project development to make sure that we can actually help get more of that federal funding into Connecticut to do more projects. Things like some of the images you see here, this is Meridan Connecticut. It’s called the Meridan Green.
It's actually a rail station over here. This area used to be an old mall and flooded all the time because the river broke, you see here, it was buried underground in a cement box, and every time there was a heavy rainstorm that box would back up and the flooding would back up cause there wasn't enough space for the river to do what rivers need to do, which is actually flood. They're supposed to go over their banks, have flood planes, have anywhere to go so it would back up the sewer system comes all kinds of back up into the mall it's a brownfield site, anyways, had all kinds of problems. So they took the river out of the cement box, made it a park, gave it a space to flood. So this is park that floods and when there’s a storm. But by doing that it changed the flood plain and allowed for additional economic development and redeveloping area that would’ve been flooding but now does not flood anymore as a result of creation of this park. And here's another solution just called the living shoreline,
It's about basically using natural systems or hint at natural systems. There's some rocks breaking up wave energy that can reduce over open and which is exacerbated by sea level rise.

And here's just some examples of problems. These are houses that were damaged at Sandy that are right along the shoreline and hear the very typical situation in Connecticut. Underpasses under our rail line. They inherently go lower so you can get the clearance. It's the first place that floods, this can actually cut off entire neighborhoods from evacuation routes. Very, very common to the point where they actually, like there's places in Branford that flood, like people time their commutes by it because they know they can't get under the bridge and stuff that day. That's happening today.

Hey, we're also working to develop an environmental justice mapping tool. It's very exciting project we have, we have a definition of environmental justice communities in Connecticut.
which again is actually really unique to Connecticut. Most states do not have any statutory definitions of what is an environmental justice community. It’s making it very difficult for them to like figure out who to prioritize and why that kind of debate within their legislatures. But our definition is largely about economics. And so we wanted to have a more comprehensive approach to.

This was a recommendation of the Equity Environmental Justice Working Group and consequently led by former Yale Professor Marianne Engleman Oto, who’s now the head of the new Office of Environmental Justice at EPA. Did not realize how big a deal she was until she was working with us. So it’s been really exciting to be like, wow, our "Equity Environmental Justice Recommendations" were written by the new head of the EPA. That’s really great. Feel really confident that we’re doing some good stuff here. So this environmental justice mapping tool will incorporate
health data. We’ll come up with an environmental burden.

A lot more factors that in addition to incomes, which could influence a community’s vulnerability to things like climate change. But to any, any issues.

This is another closer to home program for you.

The Urban Forestry Climate Equity Grant program. These are pictures from the Urban Resources Initiative in New Haven.

The Tree Planting Initiative, which is I think in partnership with Yale School of Forestry. Excuse me,

it’s not called the Yale School of Forestry.

Yale School of the Environment formerly the Yale School of Forestry,

And we have, we launched a pilot program that I hope will continue very confident

it will continue, to fund water tree planting and capacity

building activities around the health

and use of trees,
which is really a growing solution for some of the impacts of climate change has had, particularly related to heat, but trees do all kinds of good things. They increase property values, they mitigate storm water flooding, So we're really pushing into this a lot more deeply as DEP. We just have one urban forester, but she’s doing a lot of great work. She’s a Yale grad. I didn’t go to Yale, but, the equity, we’re also looking at equitable energy efficiency. So we do a lot of work in energy efficiency at DEP. The best way to reduce emissions is to not use energy at all. So we have had energy efficiency funds. You pay utility bill in Connecticut, you are paying in towards the energy efficiency fund for Connecticut. Those resources are used to subsidize, subsidize technologies, subsidize home equity audits, home energy, excuse me,
home energy audits that go into people’s homes and rental spaces and look at how they can reduce their energy use. But oftentimes those home energy audits can’t result in actual putting in more energy efficient actions. Because if there is any issue related to, say there’s asbestos in the home or there’s mold or there’s lead, any of those issues make the, the utilities will not do anything to that home to install energy efficiency improvements. So we launched a program using our some of our recovery dollars, the Weatherization Barrier Remediation Program, and that’s trying to address some of those issues which are public health issues in themselves for air quality, but they also mean that you can’t work on energy efficiency until those are addressed. Okay. Put this one out here, because we’re also very happy that the Connecticut Department of Health received the first, its first CDC BRACE Grant, building resilience against climate effects. This is a small program that CDC runs,
but it’s the only one focused exclusively on public health. I hope that the federal government continues to invest in this area. I think it’s important. I think public health, the intersection of climate is a really cutting edge area. So I really applaud all of you for being part of this program. And particularly in Connecticut. I think we’ve took used public health as a major lens through which we see all of our work, which is unique as I’ve talked to other states. But this is basically a planning process of how you might look at public health issues of the intersection of climate. And it’s gonna provide some funding for director of this office to part researchers. Again, Dr. Bos, one of the partners on this. So is the Connecticut Institute Resilience and Climate Adaptation. And so where to come on this, we’re also looking, we’re also investing a lot energy storage.
we’ve covered a lot of different kinds of ways you can lower emissions, building retrofits, de-carbonization. Doing battery storage is actually also really important to our overall grid resilience and being able to balance this as we transition to more and more renewables, especially rooftop solar. We’re trying to get people who have that to also put in battery storage so that we have a place for energy to go when it’s not by them or a way for the grid to store energy in a distributed way so that it can then be used to replace, for example, we have peaker plants in Connecticut. These peaker plants are, when we have really high demands, really cold day, it’s really hot day, really high demand for energy. That’s when we actually turn on our dirtiest fuel sources, unfortunately. These tend to be diesel burning gas plants I think one of them is located in New Haven. So we wanna get away from using those peaker plants as much as possible. Those are very expensive. So if we can do more and more energy storage that will help
reduce the need for those peaker plants because it’ll allow us to just manage that grid energy, put it in a place where we want it, and then just release it when we need it on those peak, peak storage days.

And it can also be a resilience strategy because these battery storage, if you’re homeowner or rental, it can be a backup power source for you building for at least a short amount of time.

So this is like the incentive program that’s ongoing. I think this has been very popular. I actually think it might be sold out at this point.

So giving residential customers a 200 per kilowatt hour premium maximum project incentive is $7,500. Very generous.

We’ll do the same for commercial industrial partners who are doing this, who have performance incentive payments. Again contributing that grid during critical periods.

So we’re trying to incentivize people to help us and be partners with us on building more resilient grid and,
and we have additional incentives in for low-income customers. So that’s that equity lens built to our programs, not having this just be the same across the more progressive programs. We did a lot. This climate change adaptation, this was a one of the recommendations. So now we’re going to legislative wins. This passed in the 2021 year. This was the only major climate legislation that passed in 2021.

adaptation and resilience tends to be a little easier to set up something called the "Storm Water Authority", which basically allows them to set up a fee structure for dealing with the pollution and flooding related to storm
And examples of things you can do is put in bio swells and municipalities are exploring this. We’re seeing, we saw, we’ve seen another one pass. We have one in New London, we passed another one in New Britain, Connecticut. In this DEP Climate Resilience Fund I’m working on, we see many municipalities tell us if they’re interested in that, so we expect to fund some more planning projects around starting up storm water authorities. It also expanded the Connecticut Green Bank, which is very famous for leveraging private dollars with a small amount of public dollars to get investment into the clean energy space. There now can establish an environmental infrastructure fund and work in the environmental space. I’m most interested in their work in adaptation science and this also does something much more esoteric than several municipalities, but only if you’re really in the weeds it gives you additional authority to do all municipalities had this thing called.
Forgets word oh words, they now can have prevention, climate resilience and erosion control courts. And it basically gives them kinda authority they need to build, fund, finance, maintain, operate, any kind of climate resilience project. Which I'm not gonna go into why that's important, but it's important to have those authorities. It's kinda like all the getting all the ducks in a row for this kind of stuff does get into like what can a municipality do? What can a state do? What can a COG do? How do we figure out who can do what, and how they work together? This is some additional outreach work that was done by, it's been done by partner organizations to try to get more interested authorities it does appear to be working, which is great. Okay, now into the year 2022. So like I said, we basically just had a climate adaptation win in 2021 but going into 2022, one of the reasons the Governor
went through executive word 21-3 was he was trying to set a standard for the legislature, which was like, look, this is everything I can do as a Governor. This is like maxes out my executive authority on pretty much everything related to climate. I can't do more than this without you telling me that I can do more than this to my agencies that I oversee can do more than this. So you have to put some things in the statute so you're able to pass what was has been an executive order was in the executive with created the Governor’s Council On Climate, it’s now a statute, so whoever’s the next Governor of Connecticut, which be decided tomorrow will still be subject to this, that we have to have all of our electricity supplied to our electric customers in Connecticut has to be from zero carbon emissions. That has to be done by the year 2040. We are already 65% of the way there with a mix of nuclear
and renewable solar. By the time we bring on some major wind procurement, we've already done a state would be 91% carbon free in Connecticut, which is just amazing. So this 2040 goal, it's very much reachable. So, this is very doable. People say like you can't do this. It's really close to getting there already within a few years. this really excellent news and was very pleased to see this did is it, it supported distributed energy generation that allows people who can’t put solar on the roofs to buy into a centralized solar array like this one in Bloomfield, Connecticut.
And this one is 1.62 megawatts a solar panel and it provides energy savings to 50 customers who have bought into this. So particularly people can’t put on their house, have too much shade, she’s not compatible. Whatever reason they can buy into an offsite solar installation and get the same benefits as someone who mounted on their own roof.

This was the big one. Okay, so there’s I’m not gonna go into it too much, a long story, but we tried to pass it 2021 something called the "Transportation And Climate Initiative" which was supported by Governor Lamont. So it was about basically trying to do what we do. We’re part of something called the "Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative”, that trades carbon credits from our power sector. Trying to do something very similar to that in the transportation sector.

Did not pass, was a quite a well organized opposition to it, particularly from fossil fuel industry. So there was a lot of conservation about that, not passing both for the executive brand and legislative champions of it.
And so this act kind of grew out of that. The Transportation And Climate Initiative would've provided a sustainable source of funding to do a lot of good things like have electric school buses, electric public transportation, more charging for electric vehicles.

And so we decided to push that as much or they, the legislative champion decided to push that as much as possible.

And they did actually also look at Executive Order 21-3 for ideas from this.

Sometimes the executive branch can use an executive order tee up policies and the legislature will actually look at those. Oh I like that too. Putting you in law now, so everybody has to do it no matter who the governor is.

This is a very short summary of everything this bill does.

I think it was on your assigned read list so you can look
more into everything this bill does. But a bill that was introduced by the Governor was incorporated into this bill that was championed by the chairs of the Environment Committee and the Transportation Committee that Connecticut can adopt. California’s emission standards for medium and heavy duty vehicles. This is an efficiency standard. It’s not zero carbon but it’s an efficiency standard that will really move the needle on some of our most heavily emitting journey vehicles that being trucks, buses, it establishes grant programs for sigma modernization, zero emission school buses, zero emission, medium heavy duty trucks. So basically we’re doing subsidies using state dollars, giving some property tax exemptions for zero emission buses and EV charging. We have an existing program for the acronym is CHEAPR, it’s a rebate program. It’s like on the hood rebates for electric vehicles or low emission vehicles.
And so now it’s gonna incorporate incentives for people with low incomes, our justice residents. It’s also going to include micro mobility like electric bicycles for people who want to use those. It may not carve out a high percentage of residences leasing hardware to not own a car, and so realizing our program really wasn’t serving them, at all, so, this is one of the ways we’re helping it serve those communities as well. If you’re not using cars.

Establishes right to charge for renters and unit owners and condominiums, common interest communities. I have people on my team who live in a condo with, they’re like, I’d really like to buy an EV.

There’s no place for me to charge it cause I don’t have a garage that I can plug it right in. I’m a single family homeowner. I can use my own garage. It’s very easy for me to get an EV and have a way to charge it. And I, yeah, my research analyst can’t do that right now. There’s no, there’s no EV charging in her building.
So it’s trying to fix that and also just prohibiting like you can’t say no we’ll never allow EV chargers.

So this is lot and there’s even like things in here that are not in here the, I didn’t even do this, but like we have to convert all of our, our state fleet all to electric.

That was codified into this law as well. So there’s a few more things that we have that I didn’t have on this list and that was one of the, the Executive Order that was codified. It also expanded our "Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Program" This is a little bit on the adaptation side but also EVs this program which has been incredibly powerful in Connecticut that allows commercial businesses to have a way to pay back investments they might make in putting

They can also use it to pay for EV charging.
We got a bunch of state bond money and general foreign money to support climate smart agriculture. It’s a brand new grant program that’ll be rolling out in about a week. On this that’s going to help our states’ farmers adopt climate smart practices that improve soil health to water retention. So it’s really important in Connecticut, we, it’s a smaller agricultural industry but we’ve been very heavily impacted by the climate impacts in Connecticut. Last summer they were all flooded because we had all those big storms this summer, their crop’s stale because they were, had drought. So they’ve had, we’ve had disaster declarations last summer and this summer for our crops. Flooding and then drought. So it’s really been heavily impacted no matter what the weather is. Definitely becoming a problem in a state that wasn’t really for being that much of a heavy swing in issues related to agriculture. And we’re also, this is maybe going to scratch the beginning of the surface,
it’s a little more focused on the resilience side of things,

but looking at the potential for agriculture and forestry

to do carbon sequestration and storage and how that might play into our greenhouse gas inventory overall.

And finally highlighting that Connecticut has received a lot of attention from federal government.

One way I know this is because we’ve been getting visits from a few agency heads.

This is the head of the Department of Energy visiting a Yukon campus talking about clean energy.

This is the head of the Department of the Interior with Commissioner Dykes and Governor Lamont touring of our reserves along our coast that are owned by the Department of the Interior.

And this is the head of the National Oceanic And Atmospheres Administration coming down to visit us and talk about,

we just established a research reserve that is focused on climate resilience at the, (audio cut out)

I think that is the end of my presentation, there’s a lot more that I didn’t cover that that’s been
Basically just some massive, massive effort.

Really inclusive,

all aspects of things we do in climate in Connecticut is

very interesting to listen to all the stakeholders and try

to balance a lot of different needs both for and against

climate issues.

And so I really encourage you to get involved in that.

We have had students serve all those working groups or just

even listen in it’s great learning opportunity.

It’s really an excellent example of say this is part of your

government made this process very open

and particularly under Commissioner Dykes,

so I think to kind of changed from

it was a little more tight

and small under Malloy and Commissioner Dykes

has viewed it more

as a much broader stakeholder engagement effort

and getting

more voices to the table on concept development.

And I think that has also resulted in this really progress

that you see there because not all these bills were things

that the Governor put forward or state agencies who also do
Many of these things like the "Climate Smart Agriculture" that was picked up by someone who was part of the working group. They brought it to a legislator and said, Hey the Governor's Council on Climate Change report recommended this. I think you should back it if we came out of the stakeholder process, I can point to all these people who support it. Governor supports it, all these agencies said they support it. And that made it really easy for the legislator, easier for the legislator to say this is something that I should do more too. When you have these kinds of reports and this kind of open process, it lowers the barrier for a legislator to know if this is something that they're going to get support for if they, you know, take the political risk of bringing it to the floor and introducing it as policy. This is also I think something that I didn't appreciate in federal government at the state level government in terms of passing laws,
There’s a lot more access and involvement and there’s a very close relationship between agencies and the committees.

It’s really different than when I worked in Congress.

So it, it represents an opportunity to get much more closely involved then you might initially think if you’re working the state level.

So that’s it. I’m happy to take any questions.

The students had summand their questions.

So all the students are already asking questions. Right?

Some of their questions and I think you can ask for your selves. Right?

Okay.

Thanks for coming us and speak with us,

I’m (unclear name)

I’m a student at Yale School For The Environment,

I did the planting trees thing with you guys.

Oh, great, great!
Yeah. So, I see the mention about the waste management aspect, so I know there is like huge waste prices in Connecticut, especially the waste to energy plan. They’re closing, they’re very old. So especially the Harvard one has just closed like two months ago behind Mirror. For information, the ways are now instead of burning them and turning into energy, they’re now sent to out state landfills in Ohio. So that costs a lot of taxpayer money but also cause a lot. They’re sending all the ways to out of state, which is huge burdens to other state. So I feel like why does a rich state like Connecticut have the right to throw trash to states that are less affluent and is Connecticut planning to do anything about this? And I actually worked on turning
municipal solid waste to sustainable aviation fuel in the past year.
So to SEF, also talked a little bit about SEF, So have you thought about this option?
Cause this could be potentially the solution to both
problems, they way we get SEF problems,
and just curious if you know, Connecticut is doing
anything on waste part?
Yes. <v Dr. French>Yes.</v>
So the Office of Climate Planning definitely we had a lot of
recommendations about waste and then mirror conversation
definitely came up in the 2020 Governor’s Council on Climate Change
process.
Another process that grew that kind of started in late 2020
was called the "Sustainable Materials Management Council."
And that brought together municipalities to talk about just
issues because the municipalities were gonna be impacted by the
closing of the mirror plant. Which meant that they all,
all these municipalities had to find a plan where they were
gonna send their, their waste.
It’s not only an environmental issue,
it’s also a huge expense issue for municipalities.

So one of the things that we have done and there we do have a director who’s looking at these policy issues and manages this, his name is James Albis, he’s excellent, he’s also a former legislator. So I’m speaking to things that James has talked about and I’m to refer to James, question James as well, but you know, we just announced Awardees for our, our pilot program to try to get more of our organic waste diverted out of, out of the garbage pail and into digestion facilities, composting because organic waste food scraps is the heaviest and it’s of course very wet. So, our cost to municipalities is based on the weight of whatever they throw. So if you get your organics out of there, you can make a huge impact on the overall weight of what
you're throwing out. Of course regular recycling.

So one of the approaches that we're taking is to try to divert as much out of that waste stream that goes, unfortunately you, you are correct that these are going to landfills outside of the states, we don't have landfills. The states, although I'm speaking a little bit outside of my area here.

So that's what I'm referring to James to talk more.

Correct?

But that's my understanding.

We don't have a landfill in Connecticut to send it to.

So that's why it would be shipped outta state.

But the responsibility we're trying to take is get as much out of that's being shipped as possible, does not look like, you know, we'll be doing more for waste of energy.

That doesn't seem very popular.

Obviously the Mirror plant is closed and that was a huge environmental justice issue that was highlighted by the communities there. I'm very happy to see it closed.
They felt like it’s quite evidence to show this, that Hartford been overburdened by multiple plants and sources of pollution. So that why, why are they gonna continue to be a host community? That’s not going in that direction. So that’s one of the things that we’re doing right now getting some pilot scale, a lot more needs to be done to really take this on. But there’s a lot of interested parties. Cause like I said, it’s environmental issue and it’s a huge bottom line issue for towns that are always very concerned about raising costs on their residences. With property taxes and state tax. Speaking from personal experience (Dr. French whispers) (Dr. French laughs) So, um. Yeah. Next question. Any other questions? So yeah, Carol. I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about the
Clean Air Act and the right to charge portion of that act
and if there’s any thoughts about revisions to it to make it
more accessible for renters.

Cause right now there’s a lot of burden cost put on renters to go
through that process.

It’s.

Sorry, say the last part.

It seemed like there’s a lot of burden on renters to fund that whole
aspect of it.

I don’t know right now of any efforts to sort of open back up the law.

I think there were, there were definitely concerns raised during the debate on
the bill about how this could impact affordability for,

for affordable housing, you know, with that drive up cost.

So I think there’s,

probably more on the programmatic side of the
rollout is where we’ll fix, fix a lot of those issues.

Sorry, I can’t speak more to that,
again, there’s,
folks who I can refer who are working on sort of the rollout of that program and how it might actually play out in real time. But a lot of times when these bills get passed and then it goes to the executive branch to implement them, there’s a lot that we can do once we get down to the program side. Cause usually the language and the legislation is fairly broad. It gives the executive agency latitude to design the program where it’s needed and address, and we have stakeholder comment processes to try to get, get at what is not working and what is working and where do we need to just tweak, tweak things here and there. Very rarely does the legislature tell us very specifically, how do you do how to do something. Usually they give broad guidelines and then you figure it out to some level.
I think I saw your hand first, and yours second.

I’m trying to get to as many as I can.

I’m really inspired by the work you’re doing.

So thank you and thank you for being here.

I was wondering you could tell us a bit more about your career path?

Sure.

My bio talked about where I went.

I decided for my education that I wanted to do hard core science.

I was chemist and very still love chemistry and I wanted to do bench top chemistry.

So I have PhD in environmental chemistry and I study crystal growth and how contaminants move around systems and,

but I still use some of that.

It’s actually very useful for carbon storage and sequestration,

which is about how carbon moves around the soils.

So as we dig into that question, I’m like, ah, haha,

I can finally use my chemistry degree.
But I, I knew I also wanted to go into policy. So that’s there.

The fellowships called the AAA Science Technology Policy Fellowships. That’s how I worked in Congress.

I also worked for EPA for two years and that helps transition me from very academic training to understanding how policy works, understanding the science intersection.

A big part of my work, we’re science agency now, I always worked where science is important in all that we do and we have to bring science to bare on all decisions every day at DEP.

So, that’s kind of where it was.

I was more drawn to climate adaptation than the energy side in terms of my specialty in climate because that was really out of being a kind earth scientist that basically, like we’ve known for a long time that greenhouse gases warm up the planet.

So that question’s been answered for a while.

The, it’s, it’s been in the policy realm for decades and we just build
1152 00:52:21.480 --> 00:52:23.850 more and more evidence. Yes, this happens, yes,
1153 00:52:23.850 --> 00:52:25.740 this happens, this happens.
1154 00:52:25.740 --> 00:52:27.390 But on climate adaptation and resilience,
1155 00:52:27.390 --> 00:52:29.340 it’s a much more downscale issue.
1156 00:52:29.340 --> 00:52:33.030 And so I got very interested in like what
kinds of data do
1157 00:52:33.030 --> 00:52:36.030 we need from climate science perspective to
build things
1158 00:52:36.030 --> 00:52:37.230 more, to be more resilient.
1159 00:52:37.230 --> 00:52:40.320 And that gets into things like how much rain
are we going to
1160 00:52:40.320 --> 00:52:41.153 get?
1161 00:52:41.153 --> 00:52:44.520 So how big should we build this covert or
this drain or this
1162 00:52:44.520 --> 00:52:45.840 bio swale?
1163 00:52:45.840 --> 00:52:46.673 It’s a,
1164 00:52:46.673 --> 00:52:48.900 that question from a science perspective has
not been well
1165 00:52:48.900 --> 00:52:50.400 answered.
1166 00:52:50.400 --> 00:52:53.100 We’re still on the cutting edge of the as
production climate
1167 00:52:53.100 --> 00:52:53.933 work.
1168 00:52:55.890 --> 00:52:56.723 All right, question? <v Female
3>Yeah. </v>
1169 00:52:56.723 --> 00:52:57.750 <v Dr. French>I’m trying to get every-
body. </v>
1170 00:52:57.750 --> 00:53:01.110 So 1, 2, 3. I’ll try to get, I’ll try to get
everybody’s.
1171 00:53:01.110 --> 00:53:02.010 <v Female 3>So I know that there’s</v>
1172 00:53:02.010 --> 00:53:04.590 been a lot of information presented here.
1173 00:53:04.590 --> 00:53:07.860 I’m curious how this is being translated to
like citizens
1174 00:53:07.860 --> 00:53:10.770 within Connecticut so that they’re aware of
these
initiatives and is it primarily through like advertising or are there more like community level engagement or like outside of the working groups and like participation in those? Yeah, I mean the process that I've been most involved in is the working groups.
The good thing is that many of those working group members are part of larger organizations that have members and they are talking about it with their members, which I find very helpful because I feel like a lot of times people turn to me and say, Can you tell everybody? They're like, do you want me to, to tell everybody or should I do something? So I'm constantly like in that push and pull of like working and also telling. So it's really helpful to have other organizations say, you know what? We'll do some of the telling for you. We'll also communicate that to people, to people that we have plugged to us. Sometimes it's their followers on social media, sometimes it's their mailing list. And so that is one of the ways that we get things out.
But we do, we rely a lot on stakeholder groups and informing them and having those people inform others. And we also do some local engagement. Like for instance, last summer my office partnered with some local community organizations in New London and Gartman held a workshop and we were directly there doing the communicating about things that were going on around climate change. It was excellent and the best part about it is we made some really long term relationships with the people that were our planning committee, but you know, about 30 people showed up. So its, it was a lot of effort workshop for a very small number of people. But the planning process led to a lot of trust built between myself and my team and some local leaders in both those communities. And now they’re serving on our council on “Equity and Environmental Justice.” So they wouldn’t have been serving in there if I hadn’t got know them through that workshop. So it’s,
1221 00:54:56.220 --> 00:54:58.320 this is an interesting balance and something I wrestle with
1222 00:54:58.320 --> 00:55:02.130 every day in terms of what I should be spending my time on
1223 00:55:02.130 --> 00:55:03.813 and allocating my resource.
1224 00:55:06.307 --> 00:55:07.650 <v Male>Hi.</v>
1225 00:55:07.650 --> 00:55:12.030 I’m wondering how you or how Connecticut settled on a
1226 00:55:12.030 --> 00:55:15.840 definition for environmental justice community and if it’s
1227 00:55:15.840 --> 00:55:18.499 applicable to other states or if it’s very
1229 00:55:19.620 --> 00:55:21.480 <v Dr. French>Yeah, my understanding from this history,</v>
1230 00:55:21.480 --> 00:55:25.860 it goes way back to the nineties when the EPA under the
1231 00:55:25.860 --> 00:55:27.130 Clinton administration
1232 00:55:28.860 --> 00:55:31.620 President Bill Clinton passed an executive order that was
1233 00:55:31.620 --> 00:55:35.010 about environmental justice and public participation.
1234 00:55:35.010 --> 00:55:38.310 And Connecticut was like one of the first states to be a
1235 00:55:38.310 --> 00:55:42.990 part of that and passed in statue our definition of
1236 00:55:42.990 --> 00:55:47.790 environmental justice and what constituted a public
1237 00:55:47.790 --> 00:55:51.120 participation process for those environmental justice
1238 00:55:51.120 --> 00:55:52.020 communities.
1239 00:55:52.020 --> 00:55:55.320 Connecticut was a really early adopter, Edith Bastata
1240 00:55:55.320 --> 00:55:59.370 who still works for DEP is our office of environmental
1241 00:55:59.370 --> 00:56:01.440 justice coordinator, we have an environmental justice.
We've had it since that rule passed in the nineties and,
and she still works there and, and we know we're,
it's kind of had a renewed focus and we're growing that.
You can even except to see sort of more on that
since legislation introduced year did pass,
but I would not be surprised to see that sort of come back
again on how we might define that and understanding
environmental justice and equity issues are having a moment
nationally to say the least.
So
yeah, so that’s,
it really did grow out of the big sort of introduction of
that effort nationally back then.
And, and it was just decided by the legislature how to,
how to do that. And it was,
there was a lot of uniting I think at that time it's been
told,
which is great to have folks who've been working at EPA
since they've been working at DEP since the nineties to
pass this knowledge onto me.
I've been working there since 2020
on, you know,
this history in the state.
But one of the reasons that it looked at income is a major factor is that that actually allowed us to, to look not just at sort of an overall distressed factor, but look at pockets of concentrated poverty in communities in Connecticut you wouldn’t normally expect that. Like there actually are pockets of concentrated poverty in Stanford, Greenwich, which is famously wealthy, right? So, but we actually do have some communities that just in that little area are disproportionately impacted. Well we gotta get out of the room.

Thanks, for coming.