

State All Wet On Lake Protection Efforts

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All talk and no action. We accuse politicians of doing this all the time. But rarely can we pin down such a clear-cut case as the one involving Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's stance on preserving and protecting the quality of Connecticut lakes, a subject dear to my heart. First the talk. "I, Dannel P. Malloy, Governor of the State of Connecticut, do hereby officially proclaim July 15–22, 2012, as Lakes Awareness Week in the State of Connecticut. I urge all citizens to join me in appreciating the valuable resources that are Connecticut's bodies of water." This comes from his recent official proclamation posted on the website of the Connecticut Federation of Lakes.

This makes sense. In Connecticut there are more than 3,000 named lakes, ponds and reservoirs valued as aesthetic, economic, environmental and recreational resources. At least 100 — Alexander, Bantam and Candlewood to name just a few — are critically important to local communities as taxable property and as relief from the summer's increasing heat. The economic and recreational values of such lakes derive largely from their water quality.

Now the inaction. For five years, the Connecticut Lakes Grant Program has been dormant, meaning there's no source of state funds available to help communities protect their lakes and mitigate problems. This flies in the face of the state's claim that maintaining the quality of lakes is a policy goal, and the inclusion of this goal within the 2013 to 2018 state plan.

Commissioner Daniel C. Esty of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection reached back to 2007 when the legislature authorized \$687,805 for lake protection, funds that were never rescinded. Esty asked that these funds be authorized in March by the State Bond Commission.

Nothing happened. Gov. Malloy took this item off the agenda. The Connecticut Federation of Lakes appealed to the governor on behalf of hundreds of communities and lake associations in a letter from its president, Larry Marsicano, a professional lake scientist and manager. He begged Gov. Malloy to follow through on the pledges made before he became governor. Again, nothing happened. The hypocrisy by the state of saying one thing and doing another continues.

A related story from the New Hampshire towns of Tufonboro and Wolfeboro prompted this column and might help shame Connecticut into doing something. On June 30, I attended a meeting of the [Mirror Lake Protection Association](#). Though beautiful, Mirror Lake is quite ordinary, and its association typical of those around the country, being composed of an aging population of residents galvanized by a threatening event.

During late summer of 2008, the usually unpolluted lake experienced a bloom of blue-green algae that released toxins into the water, requiring state officials to publish an advisory against swimming and other water-contact activities. Taken aback, the association's president, Dusty Davies, sought and received a grant from the state Department of Environmental Services (funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Clean Water Act, Section 319) to identify causes and suggest solutions. Thanks to strong state support — co-leadership, expertise, sample-processing and funding — they are now well on their way toward mitigating the situation using a combination of individual, private, town, state and federal resources.

This is hardly socialist country. GOP candidate Mitt Romney summers on adjacent Lake Winnepesaukee in Wolfeboro. He marched in its July Fourth parade. In this land of "Live Free or Die," a state commitment to lake protection makes good economic sense. The same should be true for Connecticut where the lakes are in worse shape and more threatened.

In general, I like what Gov. Malloy is doing. But here, he's missing the boat.

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