



## 2024 Candidate Survey on the Environment

**Rich Knotek, Democrat**  
**House District 34**

### 1) **Open Question:**

Although this is my first attempt at statewide office, I am currently a member of the Town Council in East Hampton. Our most recent environmental issue that attracted tremendous public interest was clearly visible run off from development in the watershed area into our "crown jewel", Lake Pocotopaug. This situation, beginning this spring due to the extra-normal rains, caused bitter public outcry at our council meetings especially from lakeside residents. In the primary case, staff and land use advisors confirmed that the developer had used suggested erosion control measures, but the abnormal rains, incessant and heavy, overcame these controls. Public outcry pointed fingers at the council and our land use boards and town staff in often unfair and insubstantially ways. Nevertheless, we needed to act.

At my urging among our caucus, the Council formally requested our Planning and Zoning Commission to consider a building moratorium in the lake watershed area to give them, and all land use boards in town, time to do a thorough review of development regulations to ensure they ably met the challenges of climate change and its destructive tendencies. Further, we instituted our town's first-ever series of joint meetings between our Council, P&Z, Inlands Wetlands and Lake Commission (the latter having been proposed by me when on the Council in the '80's, and successfully adopted) to shepherd through stronger lake protection measures.

As of this date, there is no more pointing of fingers, but a genuine collective working together between these boards to protect our lake and its watershed. Further, our council provided in this year's budget new funding for environmental legal council, and a new position for land use regulation inspection; in addition, we passed an ordinance that streamlined the process of initiating penalties and fees against violators of our land use regulations.

As a result of our actions, we are seeing cleaner watershed feeders into the lake, and our residents are assured that environmental concerns are a top concern in our community.

**2) Climate:**

**Will you support paying for increased investments in clean energy and our electric grid infrastructure to ensure a healthy environment that will reduce reliance on fossil fuel and nuclear energy (and ultimately reduce costs to ratepayers)?**

- Yes

I think success toward this goal will have the best chance to succeed in practical and measured steps. Climate change from now on must be a foremost consideration every day, and we need to make progress in half steps if we can't make progress in big ways all at once. Keeping our eye on the "prize", we need to be relentless.

**3) Nature-Based Solutions:**

**Will you support a stand-alone bill that authorizes and prioritizes the use of nature-based solutions (forests, trees, wetlands, riparian buffers, healthy organic soils, and other natural ecosystems) as the preferred alternative, where appropriate, across all agencies?**

- Yes

While not an expert on the topic, I would be most interested in the nuts and bolts of the application of these nature-based solutions.

**4) Clean Cars and Trucks Emissions Standards:**

**Do you support Connecticut's adoption of the latest California emissions standards for cars and trucks?**

- Unsure

Yes, I definitely support the extension of current Connecticut standards for autos and light-duty vehicles. And, yes, stricter emission standards for trucks absolutely need to be considered. I need to better review the CA emission standards and be sure of their practical application and affect on all constituents.

**5) Environmental Rights Amendment:**

**Will you support an Environmental Rights Amendment to our State Constitution?**

- Unsure

The concept is good. Generally speaking, I do not favor constitutional amendments on issues that legislation can handle sufficiently. Legislation on evolving issues can be handled more nimbly than can a change in the Connecticut constitution, where wording is more straight-jacketed to change.

I would need to consider the exact wording of any proposed amendment before pledging to support it.

**6) Food Waste Diversion:**

**Will you support designating food scraps as a "recyclable" item and requiring large-scale food generators to create plans to donate edible food?**

- Unsure

A great endeavor, particularly with regard to the plan to donate edible food, which I whole-heartedly support.

In promoting such legislation, and especially to ensure that legislation re: food scraps as "recyclable" can be successfully implemented, there most probably needs to be a period of education and voluntary compliance to get our citizens "used to" the process. Having discussed this with constituents, they are reticent to adopt this new recycling concept especially if it is mandated and subject to inspection and fines. This goes back to my belief in "half steps" to get somewhere; if we are able to take a half-step forward to a goal, then we have set the tone and only have a half-step to go in the future. I would support a measured approach here.

**7) Neonicotinoids:**

**Will you help push for legislation to ban the sale and use of neonics for non-agricultural use in Connecticut?**

- Yes

We must work to stop this practice of poisoning our environment.

**8) Rodenticides:**

**Will you support banning the use of certain rodenticides, with a few well-defined exceptions, to help prevent the deaths of its unintended victims?**

- Yes

Absolutely; no excuse not to take immediate action in this area.

**9) Environmental Justice:**

**Will you support a legislative fix to Connecticut's Environmental Justice statutes to include all polluting facilities?**

- Yes

It would only be fair and just to consider such a fix. This may need to be implemented in a "half-step" measure, but it would be a right step toward both social and environmental justice.

**10) Bears:**

**Will you support legislation that requires humane responses to conflicts with wildlife such as providing better support for the public seeking help, removing attractants, minimizing shooting incidents, and strengthening programs to deal with orphaned wildlife?**

- Yes  
Absolutely; I am staunchly opposed to virtually any wanton lethal measures to control bears and any so called "nuisance" wildlife. If human life is threatened in any such situation, that could be an exception, but that notwithstanding, strongly opposed.

**11) Tree Cutting Protocols:**

**Will you support legislation to require stronger science-based tree cutting protocols based on conservation values?**

- Yes  
Absolutely. Let's work with DOT and utilities to implement protections for science-based tree cutting protocols, balancing the dire needs of conservation with the ability of those entities to reasonably perform their duties.

**12) Ranked Choice Voting:**

**Should Connecticut pursue Ranked Choice Voting?**

- Yes  
This is an interesting concept to pursue, and I await the report of the Governor's Task Force on this issue, which I hope will independently investigate and report on any and all benefits and drawbacks of this methodology. Implementation most probably will require a period of education and, perhaps, "beta site" testing in a couple municipalities, but we should take a look at it.

**CANDIDATE COMMITMENT TO WORK ON ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION**

If you support any or all of our top priority legislation during the 2025 session, will you add your name as a legislative co-sponsor?

- Yes  
Yes, and I would hope to help positively provide input on whatever might be necessary to get it over the finish line,

Will you plan to attend our annual Environmental Summit in January?

- Yes  
That would be a good thing to do.

If requested, will you meet with CTLCV at least once during the legislative session to review priority legislation?

- Yes

I am a strong believer that the devil is in the details, and I would definitely welcome the opportunity to delve deeper into the merits of that legislation.