

August 24th, 2014 - Jenny Dickson - Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Wildlife Biologist.

Subject Matter: On this Dialogue edition Jenny Dickson, a wildlife biologist with the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, was the guest discussing the state's wildlife populations. She told that it's certainly a time of the year when they get a lot of calls from the public about unusual wildlife sightings or questions they have about different animals' behavior. One of the animals that people are seeing more and more of these days are bears in Connecticut. Ms. Dickson says they estimate Connecticut has a growing population of about 500 bears right now. She says these bears are active moving around eating trying to build up their fat reserves for hibernation this fall. Dickson says they do welcome calls from the public who see bears as they can track their travels in the state. She says they are also interested in hearing from people if they have had damage from bears, which helps them get a little more information about what bears are doing and what trouble they might be getting into. Dickson cautioned people that because bears are actually looking for food not to feed their pets outside, don't put garbage out until pickup day, and don't have birdfeeders out at this time of year as bears will find them. She also added to clean grills really well or bears might pay that a visit as well. But Dickson says black bears generally are not aggressive towards people and have coexisted with people for quite a while. She says people should not feed them though, and make loud noises and back up slowly if they encounter a bear.

Another animal that is growing in population in Connecticut told DEEP wildlife biologist Jenny Dickson is the moose population. She says they are primarily in northwest and north central Connecticut, but occasionally they wander further south. Dickson says moose are very large animals and if they move towards major roadways or interstates can cause a big risk to motorists. So Dickson says they do try to monitor if moose are moving around to places that are more developed than forested.

Jenny Dickson says coyotes in Connecticut is another population that has grown pretty dramatically over the last 10 years in the state. She says we now find coyotes in every town in the state and they do get a lot of calls from people either seeing them or hearing them howl. Dickson advised listeners that if they see a

August 24th, 2014 - (Dickson continued) - coyote in their neighborhood not to leave their cats or small dogs out at night because they could be prey for coyotes.

DEEP wildlife biologist Jenny Dickson also told that Connecticut has a very large population of whitetail deer in the state and continues to grow. She says deer will certainly eat just about anything in their path, so they get a lot of calls from landscapers and farmers about deer eating their crops. Dickson also stated that the increased deer population does provide added risks for Lyme disease and tick borne illnesses ... and then of course there's the road collision hazard they can present sometimes.

A wildlife species that Jenny Dickson says they are excited to be seeing more of these days in the State of Connecticut are bald eagles. She told that Connecticut has had a phenomenal year for bald eagles with well over a hundred coming to the state. Dickson says it also has been a great year for nesting bald eagles with more nests this year than they've ever had before in almost every corner of the state. Another bird in the state that DEEP is looking for people to help them document by reporting their sightings are roosting chimney swifts. Dickson told that chimney swifts are a small songbird and many times people will see them entering or exiting a stone chimney. And if the public sees them the state DEEP would love to know about it as this species has been challenged in recent years. Also she told the state DEEP would like to know of any bobcat sightings in the state. Dickson says Connecticut has an estimated 600 to 800 bobcats in the state, which is probably a surprise to many people because they are quiet and stealthy, and normally pose no threat to people.

August 31st, 2014 - Aaron Kupec - Public Affairs Manager at the Connecticut AAA.

Subject Matter: On this show Aaron Kupec, Public Affairs Manager at the Connecticut Triple-A, discussed travel for the Labor Day holiday weekend. He told that nationally Triple-A was projecting that 34.7 million Americans would be traveling at least 50 miles from home for the Labor Day holiday period ... defined as Thursday through Labor Day Monday. Kupec stated that for the New England region they were looking at 1.77 million people traveling at least 50 miles from

August 31st, 2014 - (Kupec continued) - home, which is up 1.6% compared to last year. He says one of the reasons helping to boost this increase is significantly lower gas prices than Labor Day 2013. Kupec told they are finding that more people are traveling ... not so much because they have a higher income ... but because they are choosing to take out the credit card and charge one last summer vacation for the year. As for problems on the road, Kupec says the amount that Triple-A responds to is often weather dependent with either a really hot period or really cold period spiking calls for emergency road service. Kupec says Triple-A has what's called a super number, so no matter where you break down in the U.S. or Canada, they'll be there to rescue you. The super number is 1-800-AAA-HELP.

Aaron Kupec of the Connecticut Triple-A told that there was good news for those traveling by car for the Labor Day holiday period. He says gasoline prices have been going down as of late. Kupec says it was only 2 months ago right before the July 4th holiday period that Connecticut was experiencing the highest 4th of July gas prices in 6 years. But now he says we are experiencing the lowest Labor Day gas prices in 4 years. Kupec pointed out that this is despite a lot of global unrest in places like Russia, Ukraine, and the Middle East. But he says we really haven't seen it affect oil production as crude oil prices have been trending downward over the summer ... which not a lot of people expected. Kupec told that only a couple of months ago gas prices here in Connecticut going into the 4th of July holiday period were averaging \$3.98 a gallon and now that has gone down to \$3.74 a gallon for the Labor Day holiday period. Kupec had even more good news ahead for motorists, as he told that on September 15th the switchover begins from the summer blend gasoline to the winter blend gasoline, and typically he says the winter blend costs a little less. As far as where people were headed for traveling during the Labor Day holiday period, Kupec told that Cape Cod, Maine, the Rhode Island shore, Niagara Falls, and day trips to Connecticut's own shore are the most popular destinations.

Aaron Kupec, Public Affairs Manager for Triple-A, told that beyond Labor Day there are many people that like to take vacations in the fall too. He says it's called the "shoulder season" where people can get good deals and the crowds aren't as great ... which is why people like them. He told that fall cruises, Disneyworld and Disneyland, and New England fall foliage leaf peeping are popular sites.

August 31st, 2014 - (more Kupec continued) -

Another thing that happens at this time of year is children returning to school and Aaron Kupec told that drivers need to be aware of this. He cautioned drivers to slowdown in school zones and be alert for children crossing. Kupec also warned drivers never to pass a school bus with its flashing lights on. He told that it's not only dangerous for the safety of the school kids ... but if you get a ticket you'll pay a steep fine of 465-dollars!

September 7th, 2014 - Christopher Murphy - Connecticut U.S. Senator.

Subject Matter: On this show Connecticut U.S. Senator Christopher Murphy discussed several issues facing Congress including the one that has most Americans frustrated: Congress' own gridlock to the point where it gets very little done these days. Senator Murphy told that it's more than just an irritation as he feels the process is fundamentally broken. He says they barely take votes in the Senate and the House is mostly just theater with legislation just brought up to highlight talking points. Murphy says there's very little communication between the two chambers. Now he says that doesn't mean things don't get done as they just passed a bill correcting flaws in the veteran's system with both Democrats and Republicans on board. So Senator Murphy says there occasionally is bi-partisan approval, but not as often as it should be. He says they need to find some ways to work together. Murphy says people are sick and tired of the way things have been in Washington. He says if they don't fix the way that Washington works and the way campaigns are financed, then they'll lose a generation of people's faith in politics.

Senator Chris Murphy says with this being an election year he doesn't expect much to be done in Congress before the end of the calendar year. He feels they should do a budget, but that they'll probably only pass a continuing resolution to keep the government operating. Senator Murphy also feels Congress should have a discussion on what we are going to do in the Middle East with ISIS, which has been beheading Western journalists. He says this terrorist group is the most important issue facing the world today and it would be wise of Congress to spend time working with President Obama on a plan to combat this growing threat.

September 7th, 2014 - (Murphy continued) - Senator Murphy says this has to be done in conjunction with other Arab nations. He agrees though that the U.S. does not have an appetite for putting U.S. troops on the ground in Syria to fight ISIS after the U.S. military commitment in Iraq for 10 years and losing thousands of lives. And in the case with Iraq, Murphy says we did it largely alone and that can't happen again in fighting ISIS.

Another crisis area in the world is the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Senator Chris Murphy has been to the Ukraine and he feels Russia's President Vladimir Putin has a desire to re-establish the Soviet empire. Murphy says Putin is trying to punish countries for trying to join Europe instead of his economic association. He says Putin creates these conflicts which he did in Georgia and Moldova, and now he's doing it in Ukraine. Senator Murphy says Putin is trying to break Ukraine and so it's up to the United States and Europe to put pressure on him to back-off. He says Russia's economy is hurting with the ruble at an historic low against the dollar. Senator Murphy says at some point Putin is going to realize that the internal price he's paying from economic sanctions may not be worth the external military bravado.

Meantime back here in the United States Senator Chris Murphy told that college costs are breaking the backs of families today. He says so many can't afford to go to college and even if they do they are graduating deeply in debt. Murphy says the biggest problem is the sticker price for the tuition for colleges and universities themselves and not the interest rate on the college loans. He says no one has held these colleges' feet to the fire to say you've got to do better. Senator Murphy says they give out 140 billion dollars of federal aid every year and he says they need to say to colleges if they want that money they need to commit to keeping tuition increases at or below inflation. Murphy says they also need to assure they produce degrees that are worth the paper they are printed on so that their graduates can afford to pay back the student loans rather than default on them. Senator Murphy also says that students should also be able to re-finance their student loans, much like homeowners are allowed to do.

September 14th, 2014 - Doug Schwartz - Director of the Quinnipiac University Poll.

Subject Matter: On this Dialogue show Doug Schwartz, Director of the Quinnipiac University Poll, discussed their new poll on the gubernatorial race. It's the first poll they've done on the 2014 race that actually matches up the two final nominees: Democrat incumbent Governor Dannel Malloy and Republican challenger Tom Foley. Doug Schwartz told that this poll finds the challenger Foley with a 6 point lead over incumbent Malloy. He says it's not all that surprising as Schwartz told that Governor Malloy has not gotten very good job approval ratings since they started polling on him when Malloy entered office in 2011. Schwartz says Governor Malloy's job approval ratings have been stuck in the 40's and have never been able to get above 50%. So he says their Q-Polls have shown that Governor Malloy is vulnerable in his re-election bid.

Q-Poll Director Doug Schwartz says most people think of Connecticut as a blue state in the Democrats column ... so how could Democratic Governor Dannel Malloy be behind? But Schwartz says don't forget that before Malloy became governor Connecticut had Republican Governors Jodi Rell and John Rowland, and before that Independent Governor Lowell Weicker. It was noted that Malloy was actually the first Democratic governor elected in 20 years. Schwartz told that Foley's 6 point lead over Malloy ... while a lead ... wasn't one that's insurmountable. He told listeners that in 2010 when Malloy and Foley matched up it was Malloy that had a 9 point lead over Foley at this point in the governor's race, and in the end it was just about a dead heat with Malloy winning by just a very small margin ... less than just a percentage point. So Schwartz says there's still time for these numbers to move with 8 weeks until Election Day with debates and political ads swaying voters.

As for why Governor Malloy's job approval numbers have never been that great Q-Poll Director Doug Schwartz says it's the economy. In the latest poll Schwartz says they asked which candidate would do a better job on the economy and jobs and by a very large margin Schwartz told that voters said Foley would do a better job than Malloy. He says voters were also asked their top issue when it comes to this election and by far they responded by saying the economy and jobs.

September 14th, 2014 - (Schwartz continued) - Schwartz says they've been asking questions about voters' attitudes and the economy for 4 years and he says people have felt the Connecticut economy is in bad shape, that it's not getting better, and they blame Governor Malloy. He says the voters also have not forgotten that Malloy raised taxes across the board in his first year in office to reduce the deficit and people didn't like it.

Q-Poll Director Doug Schwartz says in their latest poll Tom Foley leads amongst Independent voters by 13 points ... which he needs because there aren't enough registered Republicans in the state to win it with just the GOP block. He also says that Foley leads amongst male voters by 20 points. Schwartz says a lot of the people they surveyed seem to indicate their vote might not be necessarily a pro-Foley vote but rather an anti-Malloy vote. So Schwartz says that the rest of the way Foley can't make any mistakes or big gaffes that cast doubt amongst the voters about whether he can do the job as governor. Meantime Schwartz says that's exactly what Malloy needs to do to turn the tide in his direction and create doubts about Foley ... either with advertising or in the debates. Schwartz also made note of the fact of a 3rd party candidate in the race for governor, Independent Tea Party and guns rights activist Joe Visconti, who registered 7% in their poll. But Schwartz feels he doesn't have much impact on the race.

September 21st, 2014 - Jason Madrak - Chief Marketing Officer for Access Health CT.

Subject Matter: On this show Jason Madrak, the Chief Marketing Officer for Access Health CT, talked about how it went the first year for Connecticut residents enrolling for healthcare coverage under Obamacare and about the new enrollment period coming starting November 15th. Madrak says they wanted to assess how things went in key areas in year one. He says it was important to see what kind of impact they had on the uninsured rate here in Connecticut. Madrak says they found out that about 54% of those who enrolled did not have any kind of insurance coverage prior to coming on board with them. He says for Access Health CT that was a validation that they in fact had made a sizable impact on the uninsured rate,

September 21st, 2014 - (Madrak continued) - lowering it by half to just 4% in Connecticut. Madrak says in year one overall they managed to enroll about 256-thousand people in coverage. He told that as they move forward one of their key goals is to make sure that all of those people that did sign up for coverage – now renew their coverage. Madrak says that's a challenge they didn't have last year as it was all new membership. But this year they have a dual challenge of renewals and getting new folks in.

Now Connecticut did much better than the national average in signing up people for healthcare coverage. Chief Marketing Officer for Access Health CT Jason Madrak says there are 3 reasons why. He says one of the reasons is they were fortunate to have here in Connecticut a broad network of people, but at a political level down to a community leadership level that partnered with them to make sure they were successful. Madrak says another key to their success was that they got started early and spent almost a year before their launch informing the public about what was happening. He says the 3rd reason is that they were successful on the IT side ... unlike the national website that had loads of technical glitches. Madrak told the Connecticut exchange was functional on day one without the problems that beset people on the national side. He says they are very proud of the Connecticut results, with satisfaction levels up to 80% and people enjoying the coverage they got.

Jason Madrak told on the show that November 15th is the date whereby people can sign up in the new enrollment period. He advised that this year's period goes for 3 months, so it concludes on February 15th which is shorter than last year. Madrak stated that for those folks who are not insured there is not as much leeway this year so they would have to act pretty quickly. He says people should go to their website: www.accesshealthct.com and see what coverage is available and their prices. Madrak also advised listeners to gather any information like tax returns to have on hand for completing the enrollment process. He also mentioned that unlike signing up for health coverage in the past where you might be asked a whole bunch of medical questions, that's no longer the case with the Affordable Care Act. He says in actuality your medical history is almost irrelevant when applying for health insurance. In its place though Madrak told are financial questions which might give some people pause. But he told the primary reason for that is to help out financially to see if people qualify for Medicaid (for individuals

September 21st, 2014 - (more Madrak continued) - that make less than 15-thousand dollars a year) a free insurance program here in Connecticut. Madrak says for those in the 15-thousand to about 45-thousand a year income those people qualify for tax credits which lower the cost of the insurance premiums.

September 28th, 2014 - Richard Blumenthal - U.S. Senator, Democrat from Connecticut.

Subject Matter: On this week's show Senator Richard Blumenthal discussed America dealing with terrorism once again in the world, this time the terrorist group ISIS which was beheading American and British journalists. President Obama decided to conduct air strikes on ISIS in both Syria and Iraq. Senator Blumenthal told that these air strikes have successfully targeted ISIS as well as some other very imminently dangerous terrorist groups like Khorasan, which have been plotting and planning attacks on the United States. He feels that kind of limited targeted kind of attack to prevent harm to the United States is very much worth doing. Senator Blumenthal was also happy to see the very active involvement of the neighboring Arab states in helping to contain, degrade, and destroy ISIS as a threat. The Senator says he continues to have reservations about the risk that we might have American troops in combat on the ground as a result. He also feels President Obama should come to Congress for its approval because without it he will lack the national resolve and public support because this effort may very well continue past his term. Blumenthal says air strikes alone, as a means of containing, let alone destroying and winning back territory is completely unrealistic. That is why the Senator says the support from neighboring Arab states is so critically important on the ground.

U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal was asked on the show with terrorism raising its ugly head again if we're in a situation again where Americans have to be afraid of getting on an airplane going to a big city or traveling overseas? Blumenthal said one of the remarkable achievements over the last 13 years has been the sophistication and accuracy of the U.S. detecting and countering terrorist plots. He says more terrorist plots have been foiled than the public ever realizes with our increased technology and the effectiveness in our surveillance and sources

September 28th, 2014 - (Blumenthal continued) - of intelligence. Senator Blumenthal says we are vastly more proficient than we ever were in our history. Having said that however the Senator told there's still a real fear to be apprehensive as these terrorist groups are a dangerous bunch and we need to be mindful of that. Blumenthal says we are basically always in an arms race with the terrorists, as well as in a cyber war. In some ways Blumenthal told the cyber threats are even more dangerous than the physical bomb-making threats. He says cyber attacks, if ever successful, can disrupt our financial system, our utilities, our transportation network, and communications system.

One of the areas that Senator Richard Blumenthal feels needs changing in the U.S. is to make college more affordable for students and to make it easier for them to repay their student loans. He says many young adults are being denied a shot at the American dream because they are deeply indebted by student loans. Blumenthal says he has proposed to allow these people to be able to refinance their student loans. He says a lot of them have debt at 11% or 12% interest rates and they should be able to refinance them at lower rates ... right now it's 3.86%. Blumenthal says that interest rate should actually be lowered even further as the big banks can borrow from the Federal Reserve at close to 0%. He questioned why we charge students much higher rates and profit from the student loan program, rather than investing in students by allowing them to work down that debt. Blumenthal told that years ago people could work their way through college, but that's not the case anymore as the costs are so overwhelming that most students have to take on debt. But he says this then prevents them from buying new homes, starting families, and beginning businesses which stifles innovation and creativity as well as our economy. So Blumenthal says our country has got to get a handle on college affordability.