

COMMISSIONER OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

2003 ANNUAL REPORT
to the
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

in compliance with

General Statutes of Connecticut
Section 23-8 (b) State Goal for Acquisition of Open Space

March 2004

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to the
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
per
GENERAL STATUTES OF CONNECTICUT, SECTION 23-8(b)
STATE GOAL FOR ACQUISITION OF OPEN SPACE

GOAL

Section 23-8(b) of the General Statutes of Connecticut states that, "The goal of the State's Open Space Acquisition Program shall be to acquire land such that ten percent of the state's land area is held by the state as open space land and not less than eleven percent of the state's land area is held by municipalities, water companies or nonprofit land conservation organizations as open space land..."

The Commissioner of Environmental Protection is charged with the responsibility of developing a strategy for achieving the state's goal in consultation with the Council on Environmental Quality and private nonprofit land holding organizations.

STATUS

The aerial extent of Connecticut's land mass is 3,205,760 acres. Thus, ten percent of the state's land area is 320,576 acres. To have twenty-one percent of the state's land preserved as open space would require 673,210 acres to be held by the state, municipalities, private land conservation organizations, and water companies as Class I and Class II watershed land.

The State has acquired approximately 249,019 acres as open space land in its system of park, forest, wildlife, fishery, and natural resource management areas. Thus, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) currently holds 78 percent of the 320,576 acres targeted for state open space acquisition. The land acquired by the State includes a conservation easement on 9,025 acres and a conservation restriction on 890 acres acquired as part of the Kelda purchase in the previous calendar year. The total acreage acquired also reflects the completion of the acquisition of a conservation restriction on 5,383 acres and the fee acquisition of 145 acres of the Childs Property located in Norfolk and Canaan.

It is estimated that nonprofit land conservation organizations own 52,391 acres in Connecticut. Municipalities in Connecticut are estimated to own 69,026 acres of land as open space. Class I and Class II water company lands in Connecticut currently total approximately 105,884 acres. Together, open space acreage held by these entities is 227,301 acres. Based on a target of 352,630 acres in total open space holdings for these entities, they have achieved 64 percent of their targeted open space goal.

The 249,019 acres of state open space represents 8% of Connecticut's land area, and the 227,301 acres of open space held by municipalities, non-profits and water companies is

7%. This results in a total of 476,320 acres held as open space, 15 % of Connecticut's land area.

ACQUISITION NEEDS

To meet the goals set forth in statute, the State of Connecticut must acquire an additional 71,557 acres of open space and encourage the acquisition of 125,329 acres by municipalities, private nonprofit land conservation organizations and water companies.

ACTION 2003

I. Planning:

- A. **Property Review.** Although additional funds were not approved, the DEP continued to review and evaluate properties eligible for purchase through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program (RNHTP). During the past year, 37 properties have been reviewed. Of the 37 properties reviewed, 11 were approved for acquisition. The number of properties submitted for review as possible acquisitions is significantly less than in previous years. In 2001, 161 properties were reviewed with 48 approved for acquisition. In 2002, 122 properties were reviewed and 33 approved for acquisition. This reduced number of applications is attributable to the lack of funds available for acquisition through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program.
- B. **Open Space Inventory.** The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) contracted with Applied Geographics, Inc. (AGI) to create a Geographic Information System (GIS) using spatial and attribute data for all parcels that meet DEP criteria for protected open space. When completed, the information will encompass all 169 Connecticut municipalities. To date, data for thirty-six shoreline municipalities has been gathered. The GIS database will provide an accurate measurement of the State's open space lands and will measure the State's progress in meeting Connecticut's goal of preserving 21% of its total acreage as open space by 2023.
- C. **N.U. Property Review.** The DEP continued to coordinate the review of Northeast Utilities Properties in accordance with the MOU signed on April 12, 2000. A draft of the "Conservation List" of those parcels identified as desirable for purchase as open space was forwarded to Northeast Utilities (NU) in October 2003. The draft list currently includes 213 of the 849 NU properties reviewed for possible purchase should those properties become available. The next step, which involved the distribution of the material to all of the municipalities and conservation organizations in the state, was initiated by NU in November 2003. Municipalities and conservation organizations were given an opportunity to expand the Conservation List subject to a joint review by DEP and NU. DEP expects that the Conservation List will be finalized during 2004.

- D. **Water Company Property Review.** The DEP entered into Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with several Connecticut water companies in 2003. The MOU's permitted DEP's review and evaluation of Class I, Class II, and Class III water company land holdings. Reviews were completed for 372 properties owned by the Connecticut Water Company, a major subsidiary of the Connecticut Water Services, Inc. Of that total, 240 properties were identified as desirable for purchase. A review of the Torrington Water Company land holdings was also initiated in 2003 and will be completed in 2004. Pending the availability of a complete listing of company holdings, a review and evaluation will be undertaken for both Aquarion Company and Birmingham Utilities, Inc. in 2004.
- E. **SCORP.** DEP initiated action to develop Connecticut's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This plan will serve two purposes. First, it will be submitted to the National Park Service (NPS) to meet requirements for funding under the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program. This program may provide DEP with approximately \$1.5 million annually to be used to secure open space and to protect and provide facilities for public recreational use.

In addition, the Plan will assess the status of Connecticut's outdoor recreational resources. The plan will serve as a building block in Connecticut's overall strategy for open space acquisition and the development of outdoor recreational facilities.

II. Achieving State Goal:

- A. **State Acquisition.** In 2003, the DEP acquired properties in 28 municipalities. This represents 2,791 acres at a cost of \$22,557,377. Purchases were made through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program, the DEP's principal means for meeting the ten percent open space goal by acquisition of lands for Connecticut's system of parks, forests, wildlife, fisheries, water access and natural resource management areas. A list of properties acquired through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program during calendar year 2003 is included in Appendix A.
- B. **Barn Island.** During the year 2003, the DEP applied for and received a \$1,000,000 grant through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Coastal Wetlands Grant Program to be used toward the acquisition of a 144-acre addition to the Barn Island Wildlife Management Area. In addition, the DEP successfully competed for monies to be awarded from the estate of Sarah Ann Martin totaling \$429,000. A portion of the award, or \$248,900, will go toward the acquisition of the addition to Barn Island. The remainder of the funds will be used for

educational, scientific, and research projects at Barn Island. The Nature Conservancy of Connecticut will donate the remaining \$150,000 needed to complete the acquisition of this addition to the Barn Island WMA. By combining Federal Grant money and private donations, the DEP has succeeded in acquiring a valuable addition to Connecticut's public open space with virtually no state money.

- C. **Childs Property.** The DEP completed the acquisition of a conservation restriction on 5,383 acres of the Childs Property located in Norfolk and Canaan. The purchase of this conservation restriction was partially funded with \$4,151,000 in United States Forest Legacy Funds. The Forest Legacy Program was established in 1990 to promote the long-term integrity of forestlands. Funds are used to protect environmentally important private forestlands that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses and provides for the continuation of traditional forest uses such as forest management activities and outdoor recreation. The remaining funds needed for the purchase of the Conservation Restriction were provided through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program. In addition, two adjacent parcels totaling approximately 145 acres were purchased in fee at a cost of \$400,000. This partnering of State and Federal grant money has resulted in the preservation of 5,528 acres at a cost to the state of \$949,000.

III. Assisting Municipalities and Nonprofit Organizations:

- A. **Grants Awards.** In 2003, \$7,889,974 was awarded to 32 acquisition projects through the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program for the acquisition of 2,270 acres of permanently protected open space land. The grant program leverages state, local and private funds to create a cooperative open space acquisition program. The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program provides grant funds to municipalities and private nonprofit land conservation organizations for the acquisition of open space land and to water companies to acquire land classified as Class I and Class II watershed land. The State of Connecticut receives a conservation and public access easement on property acquired to ensure that the property will be protected and available to residents of Connecticut as open space in perpetuity. Class I watershed land is sometimes exempt from the public access requirement for health and safety reasons. Property acquisitions funded through the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program during calendar year 2003 are listed in Appendix B.

AGENDA 2004

- A. **State Acquisition.** As bond funds are available, evaluate and acquire land through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program. Currently, there

are purchase and sale agreements pending with a total value of approximately \$3,207,517. In addition, over 15 properties are in advanced stages of negotiations for acquisition with an estimated cost of approximately \$18,250,000.

- B. **Grants.** If Bond Funds are allocated for the Open Space and Watershed Grant Program, a "tenth round" of grants to municipalities, private nonprofit land organizations and water companies will be announced in Spring 2004.
- C. **Inventory.** The DEP will continue to work on the inventory of protected open space in Connecticut.
- D. **Water Company Lands.** The DEP will continue to evaluate lands of Aquarion Company, Connecticut Water Services, Birmingham Utilities and Torrington Water Company to determine the resource value and potential desirability of such lands for purchase for open space or passive public outdoor recreation or natural resource conservation or preservation. It is estimated that approximately 15,000 acres are owned by these four water companies in Connecticut.
- E. **Property Review.** The Department of Environmental Protection will begin restructuring the seventeen-year-old process used to determine potential properties to acquire for additional State-owned recreation and conservation lands. The final goal of this restructuring will be to streamline the review process for eventual interactive computerization, thereby increasing efficiency.
- F. **Coastal Lands.** Connecticut's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Plan (CELCP) is a federal grant program established by Congress to better protect coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical or aesthetic values, especially those areas threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses. Congress is encouraging states to work in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) which has established guidelines for CELCP. It is expected that NOAA will conduct a competitive grant process open to coastal states with approved CELCP Plans.

Connecticut's CELCP Plan must be completed by September 2004. The CELCP Plan initiative is being drafted by DEP's Office of Long Island Sound Programs and is currently in its infancy. The first step, which entails a discussion of what comprises "key coastal land conservation needs" has been taken. A process is currently being established through which priority acquisition areas will be identified. A draft list of priority areas that meet the identified land conservation needs will be assembled. DEP's Land Acquisition and Management Division will be involved in a discussion of management issues associated with possible future property acquisitions in order to refine a list of final priority acquisition areas and eventually specific properties. The Land Acquisition and Management Division will be responsible for all aspects of the acquisition process and will work closely with OLISP on applying for matching federal grants under this program.

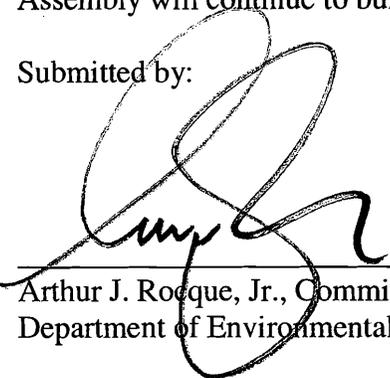
- G. **Forest Legacy.** The DEP will assume a greater role in the Forest Legacy Program. The program, previously administered by the USDA Forest Service, will now be managed by the DEP. Projects evaluated and added to the approved list by the USDA Forest Service will then be referred to the DEP. The DEP will contract for appraisals, title searches, and surveys, as well as, negotiate the purchase price and prepare all the legal documents associated with the transaction. Negotiations for the Stonehouse Brook Project, which has received a federal grant for \$1,093,000, will be completed in 2004, with the closings to occur in 2005. The project involves the acquisition of easements over approximately 825 acres comprised of nine parcels from seven landowners along Stonehouse Brook in the Town of Chaplin.
- H. **SCORP.** The DEP will continue to work towards the completion of its State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and its submission to the NPS for federal Land and Water Conservation Act funding. Through its advisory committee, DEP anticipates significant public interaction in 2004 in developing and finalizing this plan.

CONCLUSION

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, working together with municipalities, water companies and private nonprofit land conservation organizations, has continued the State's progress toward meeting Connecticut's open space goals. Since July 1998, DEP on behalf of the State of Connecticut has acquired or has protected 38,820 acres and has provided grant funding for the acquisition of an additional 16,196 acres.

The Department of Environmental Protection with the support of the Governor and General Assembly will continue to build on this success.

Submitted by:



Arthur J. Roque, Jr., Commissioner
Department of Environmental Protection

APPENDIX A

**Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program
January 1, 2003 through December 31, 2003**

PROPERTY NAME	LOCATION	FEE ACREAGE	EASEMENT, R.O.W ACREAGE OR CONS. REST.	PURPOSE OF ACQUISITION
Aivano Property	Middlefield	3.50		Addition to the Durham Meadows WMA
Ajemian Property	Lebanon	9.00		Addition to Bartlett Brook WMA
Amfran	Plainfield	231.31		Addition to Pachaug State Forest
Aspinook Property	Canterbury	27.56		Access to Aspinook Pond on section of Quinebaug River
Bowers (Bombero)	Scotland	27.25		Addition to the Talbot WMA
Bowers Property	Scotland	9.67		Addition to Mohegan SF
Campanaro Property	Westbrook	22.74		Access to Gatchen Creek and Menunkatesuck River
Childs Property	Canaan	144.93	5,383.00	Addition to Housatonic State Forest.
Conlon Property	North Stonington	24.97		Frontage on Pendleton Hill Brook
Credie Property	Plainfield	57.52		Addition to Pachaug SF
Davis Property	Stafford	169.87		Addition to Shenipsit State Forest
Dutil Property	Plymouth	20.40		Addition to Mattatuck State Forest.
Eagle Land Corp.	Haddam	17.40		Potential park and boat launch in area on Connecticut River just south of swing bridge.
Flaherty Property	Canton	2.04		Add to DEP property along Farmington River
Gadle (Paredes)	Voluntown	90.77		Addition to Pachaug State Forest
Gervais Property	Plainfield	218.99		Addition to Pachaug SF with easement for well and waterline to Seller
Gray Property	North Stonington	48.90		Frontage on Pendleton Hill Brook
Hall Meadow	Goshen & Norfolk	101.56		Near Audabon Society property and the Childs property acquisition
Hart Property	North Stonington	46.99		Addition to Pachaug SF
Kazen Property	Newtown	60.02		Addition to property that surrounds Warner Pond and close to Paugussett SF
Kruglinsky Property	Chaplin	50.86		Addition to Mansfield Hollow WMA
Lasch Property	Scotland	10.20		Addition to the Talbot WMA
Macbeth Ventures	Essex	3.02		Adjacent to Valley RR Steam Train Depot
Naylor Property	Glastonbury	23.23		Addition to Meshomonic State Forest
Oldhaven Associates	North Stonington	7.47		Addition to Pachaug SF
Orrok Property	Scotland & Sprague	88.24		Addition to Talbot WMA and Mohegan SF
Sansone Property	Woodstock	38.75		Addition to Nipmuck State Forest.
Schwenh Property	Hamden	13.50		Addition to Naugatuck State Forest.
Scotfield Property	Voluntown	2.00		Addition to Pachaug State Forest
Sekulishi Property	New Hartford	118.45		Proximate to Cedar Swamp WMA
Sitomer Property	Union	2.60		Addition to both Nipmuck SF and Bigelow Hollow SP
Skarb Property	Haddam	11.91		Addition to Cockaponsett State Forest
Sposato Property	Plainfield	10.02		Addition to Pachaug SF
Steamboat Land Co.	Haddam	12.20		Potential park and boat launch in area on Connecticut River just south of swing bridge.
TNC (AZTEC)	Glastonbury	18.05		Addition to Meshomonic State Forest
TNC (S&K)	Marlborough	28.55		Addition to Meshomonic State Forest
Toombs / Town of Ridgefield	Ridgefield	459.73		Addition to Wooster SP
Town of Southbury	Southbury	554.34		Stand-Alone property on Housatonic River.
Worthen Property	Granby	2.40		Addition to Enders State Forest
Total		2,790.91	5,383.00	

APPENDIX C

OPEN SPACE & WATERSHED LAND ACQUISITION			
GRANTS COMPLETED			
JANUARY 1, 2003 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2003			
PROJECT TITLE	SPONSOR	ACERAGE	TOTAL COST
Kelley Waldren-Willow	South Windsor	156.16	\$315,000.00
Sumner Brook Watershed	Middletown	119.167	\$292,500.00
Village Water Company	Simsbury	17.40	\$211,500.00
Traprock Ridge Protection Property	Wallingford	53.10	\$131,062.50
Baemore Property	Fairfield	38.00	\$450,000.00
Ellison Tract	Guilford	97.00	\$200,000.00
Kruger Property	Thompson	93.60	\$50,000.00
Avery Tract Extension	Redding	66.00	\$650,000.00
O.S. & Watershed Protection	Waterford	30.82	\$90,000.00
Huntington Road - Roosevelt Forest	Wallingford	49.70	\$793,000.00
Scantic River Park Property	Stratford	9.87	\$87,750.00
Neck River Corridor Property	Enfield	33.21	\$24,000.00
Garrison Estate Open Space	Madison	69.75	\$279,000.00
Marks & Mercurio Property	Chaplin	43.00	\$42,500.00
199 Town Farm Road	Lyme	6.00	\$72,500.00
The Neck River	Farmington	47.06	\$583,229.00
Bradley Property	Madison LCT, Inc.	45.24	\$450,000.00
Far Mill River Expansion	Berlin	30.90	\$215,000.00
Orzech Farm Acquisition	Stratford	2.90	\$41,600.00
Weigold Property	Roxbury (Land Trust)	116	\$595,175.00
Granskog Properties	Tolland	32.98	\$52,250.00
Edwards Property	Redding & TNC	116.83	\$797,966.00
Costello Greenway Linkage	Redding & TNC	57.97	\$427,500.00
Meadow	Granby	47	\$71,250.00
Elm Street Open Space	Darien (Land Trust)	4	\$950,000.00
LOT 3, Poplar Bars Road	Enfield	9.77	\$4,850.00
18 Diamond Glen Road	Farmington	10.94	\$110,862.50
Anchor Copponents, LLC	Farmington	9.07	\$75,000.00
184 Town Farm Road	Lyme	4.20	\$137,500.00
Oslander Track	Farmington	32.00	\$366,772.00
Millbrook Open Space	The Nature Conservancy	64.00	\$465,000.00
Case Mtn.-Lappen Property	Coventry	7.37	\$20,000.00
Terre Haute Annex	Manchester	65.1	\$113,910.00
Swendsen Farm	Danbury	14.4	\$76,880.00
Good Hill Farm II	Bethlehem	123.00	\$455,000.00
Vernesoni Property	Roxbury Land Trust	202.00	\$436,370.00
Andrew Kenneth Webster Preserve	Bristol	18.90	\$114,160.00
Meyerhuber Pond	Northern CT L.T. -Vernon	30.70	\$42,700.00
French's Hill Greenway	Guilford L.T.	49.05	\$91,000.00
Lake Laconia Project Phase I	Shelton	107.00	\$546,000.00
Acq.	Westbrook	33.00	\$318,500.00
Hart Farm	Rocky Hill	51.59	\$409,500.00
Steucek Property	Cornwall Conservatio Trust	96.00	\$316,225.00
MacKinnon parcel	Middlefield	37.89	\$92,365.00
The Fairfax Property South	Suffield	36.00	\$122,850.00
East Mather Meadows	The Nature Conservancy	204.00	\$381,518.00
Fairfax Property North	Land Trust of Darien	3.39	\$500,500.00
Senber Property	The Nature Conservancy	64.59	\$210,438.00
Hassig Farm	Redding & TNC	54.75	\$462,000.00
Mount Archer Farms	Litchfield Land Trust	33.78	\$275,000.00
Paffard Woods Project	Lyme	268.40	\$675,000.00
Mitchell Property	Avalonia Land Cons.	61.60	\$247,500.00
	South Windsor	86.65	\$274,500.00
Totals		3162.8	\$15,214,683.00