



Department of
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

*Connecticut State Open Space
2017 Annual Report*

Prepared in accordance with
Section 23-8(b) of the General Statutes

Connecticut's Open Space Goal

Recognizing the threat of loss or degradation of natural resources to land-use change and development, the General Assembly set a goal of preserving **21%** of Connecticut's land base as public open space (CGS Section 23-8). The Connecticut Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Plan set a target to meet this goal by year 2023. To reach this goal, **673,210 acres** across the state needs to be acquired as open space. Of the total open space goal:

- **10% (320,576 acres)** shall be held by the State of Connecticut (DEEP), and
- **11% (352,634 acres)** shall be held by DEEP's land conservation Partners (municipalities, non-profit land conservation organizations, and water companies).

At the end of 2017, DEEP and its Partners together held a combined 505,809 acres as public open space, or 75.1 percent towards achieving the total statewide open space acquisition goal.

To reach their goals, DEEP must acquire 61,615 acres and DEEP's Partners must acquire 105,786 acres to reach their open space targets.

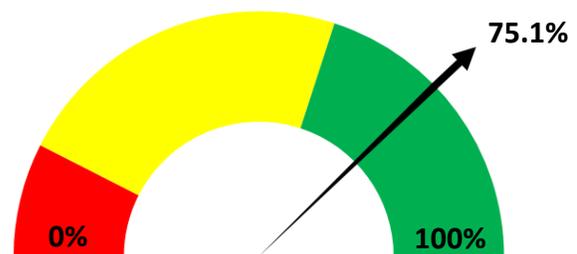
State (DEEP) Open Space:

As of December 31, 2017, DEEP held an estimated 258,961 acres of land in its system of Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Management and water access areas, or 80.8 percent of its open space goal. Of this, approximately 238,425 acres have been acquired in fee title. Acquisition of less-than-fee interests are atypical and include the purchase of easements and conservation restrictions.

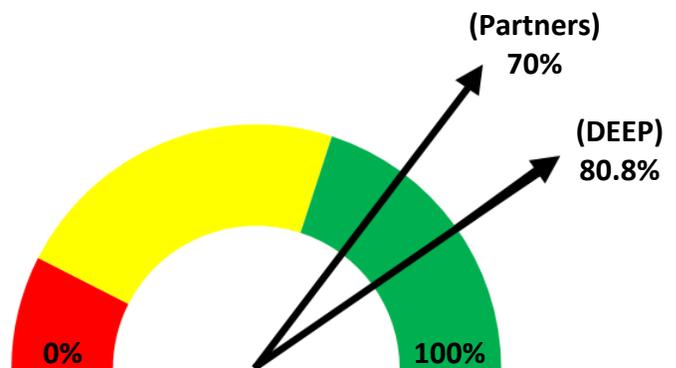
Partner-held Open Space:

As of December 31, 2017, DEEP conservatively estimates that its Partners held 246,848 acres, or 70 percent, of their share of the statewide open space goal. Of this, non-profit land conservation organizations held about 65,545 acres, municipalities held 83,594 acres, and water companies held 97,710 acres as open space.

2017 Status Statewide Open Space



Total: 505,809 ac.
Need: 167,401 ac.



DEEP-held: 258,961 ac.
Need: 61,615 ac.

Partner-held: 246-848 ac.
Need: 105,786 ac.

Front cover: “Autumnal Mountain Sunrise” by Robert Pagini, winner of the 1st Annual Diana Atwood Johnson OSA Photo Contest, held in partnership with the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in 2017. Photos submitted to this contest are taken on lands protected under a DEEP open space grant.

2017 Statewide Open Space & Land Acquisitions

In 2017, DEEP acquired 753 acres of land under the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program, the primary vehicle for adding land to the State’s system of Parks, Forests, Wildlife areas, water access areas, and other open spaces. These lands were acquired with generous assistance from federal and private funding sources and private donations, leveraging about \$3.85 for every State dollar spent (Appendix A).

With over \$4 million in funding assistance from DEEP’s Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program, municipalities and non-profit land conservation organizations were able to complete 14 projects, protecting almost 900 acres in 14 towns across the state (Appendix B).

DEEP Land Acquisitions:

12	753.64	\$3.85
Properties acquired for new State open space	Acres of open space protected by the State	Match dollars leveraged for every State dollar spent

State Funding to Partners:

14	895.27	\$4.28 million
Partner projects completed under the State’s open space grant program	Acres protected by Partners under the State’s open space grant program	Grant funding assistance to Partners from the State

SINCE 1998

47,000+ acres

preserved as open space under the **Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program.**

36,000+ acres

protected by municipalities, non-profit land conservation organizations, and water companies under the **Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program.**

550+ Partner Projects

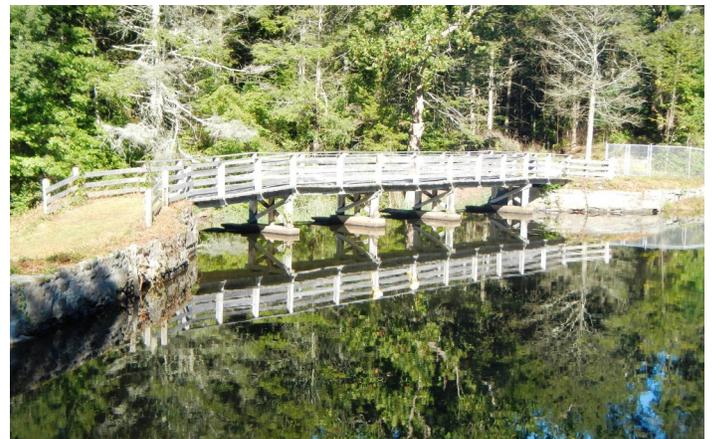
reviewed and approved for funding under the **Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program.**

\$125+ million

provided in State funding to partners under the **Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program.**

New Land added to Menunketesuck Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Clinton/Westbrook

In 2017, Harriet Sciongay generously sold an additional 5.95 acres of property to the State of Connecticut, providing DEEP with improved access for maintaining Chapman Mill Pond and the surrounding 150 acres which make up Menunketesuck WMA. Purchased from Ms. Sciongay in 2013, the Menunketesuck WMA provides significant habitat for amphibians, birds, turtles, rare plants, and migratory fish, including the alewife. Currently in operation, DEEP constructed a fishway at Chapman Mill Pond dam to help fish pass upstream along the Menunketesuck River.



2017 DEEP Open Space Acquisition Actions

State Property Acquisition Review:

DEEP evaluated **31 properties covering 1,765 acres** eligible for State purchase through the [Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program](#). Over 100 properties covering thousands of acres have been reviewed and approved for acquisition, but DEEP lacks the funding and staff necessary to immediately move forward on all of these projects. The current real estate market favors buyers of open space due to a decline in new housing construction.

Statewide Open Space Mapping and Inventory:

DEEP continued developing the [Public Use and Benefit Land Registry](#) pilot (Land Registry) through its ongoing partnership with Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) to train students in using geographic information system tools and populating Land Registry parcel information.

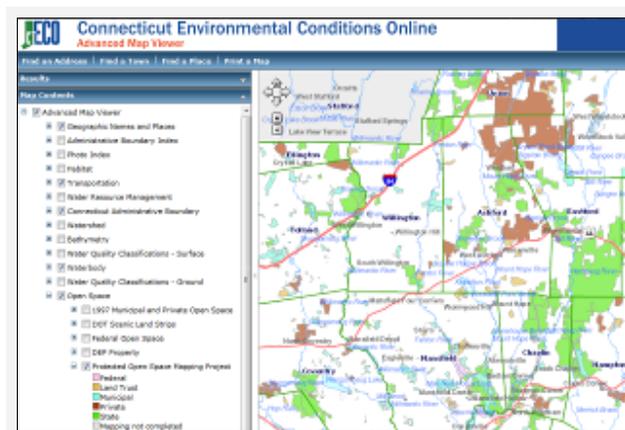
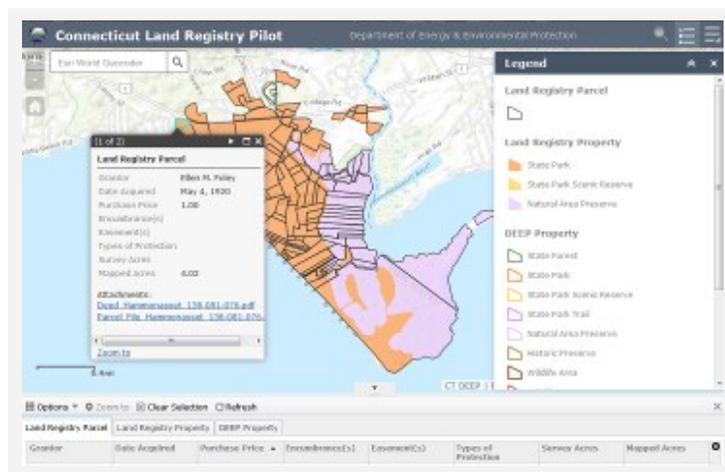
With continued funding assistance through a US Fish and Wildlife Service grant, DEEP-held Wildlife Management Areas are a focus of this parcel data population.

ECSU is also assisting DEEP in producing a GIS datalayer of more than 500 projects funded under the State's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant program.

To eventually be hosted by [Connecticut Environmental Conditions Online](#) and added to the Land Registry, digitized grant-funded open space parcels are being quality checked prior to release for public viewing.

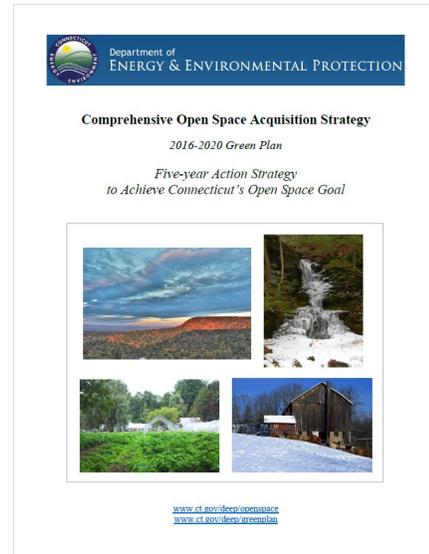
DEEP launched the Land Registry in 2015 to inventory and eventually show all existing protected open space in Connecticut, pursuant to Public Act. Modeled from other national protected area databases, the Land Registry is capable of providing information for lands owned by DEEP, other state agencies, municipalities, and land conservation organizations. The Land Registry allows users to browse state-owned lands and research, view, and download copies of parcel information, including deeds, surveys, and management plans. Greater levels of detail are available as the map zoom level is increased.

As more parcel data is added, completing the Land Registry should accelerate land conservation by aiding open space and grant funding planning, engaging conservation partners, and providing a more comprehensive and transparent database.



Connecticut's Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy (the Green Plan):

The Green Plan was released by DEEP on February 14, 2017. It is a statewide planning document developed in partnership with municipalities and numerous conservation organizations to guide land acquisitions towards achieving the state's open space goal. A new feature to the Green Plan is a **5-year Action Strategy**, which should drive the protection of lands key for watershed and coastal resources, fish and wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and buffers to climate change. The Action Strategy sets priorities and target acreages for land acquisition through year 2020, such as large forest blocks, trail linkages, and tidal marsh upland migration areas. Readers can gain additional information throughout the plan on existing open space in the state, grant funding programs, and more.



Racker Road, Shenipsit State Forest, Stafford

As set forth in the Green Plan, over the next several years DEEP will take action towards implementing the Plan, including:

- Establishing methods to in-take and track State and Partner acquisitions that conform with the Plan's targeted land cover types and acreages;
- Revising the State's main land acquisition and open space grant program evaluation procedures to conform with the Plan's priorities; and
- Planning and holding public outreach and stakeholder engagements to promote the Plan and improve future versions.

2017 State Assistance to Land Conservation Partners

The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

In 2017, 14 projects were financially completed with over \$4.28 million in assistance from the State [Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program](#) (OSWA), permanently protecting 895.27 acres (**Appendix B**).

In the fall of 2017, DEEP announced grant awards totaling over \$6 million for 23 project applications submitted during the 20th grant round (**Appendix C**).

Subsequently, DEEP opened the 21st grant round and will announce awards in the fall of 2018.

OSWA leverages State, local, and private funds to create a cooperative open space acquisition program. OSWA provides grants to municipalities and non-profit land conservation organizations for the acquisition of open space land, and to water companies for the acquisition of Class I and Class II watershed land.

In exchange for grants, DEEP receives a conservation and public access easement over the property acquired to ensure that it is protected and available to residents as open space forever. Class I watershed land is sometimes exempt from the public access requirement for public health reasons. DEEP is willing to accept limited public access (at the discretion of the Commissioner) when a conservation easement is purchased on land where it would be disruptive of active agricultural activity.

To help DEEP support its partners in reaching their open space goals, the State Natural Heritage, Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Review Board convenes several times a year to review OSWA project selection criteria, policies, and procedures. The Review Board also makes State open space program recommendations to the Commission and others each year.



West Aspetuck Scenic Wetlands Preserve, Kent

In 2017, the Kent Land Trust permanently protected the 25-acre West Aspetuck Scenic Wetlands Preserve through \$100,000 in assistance from a State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant. The property, located on Segar Mountain and Kenico Roads in Kent, is downstream of North Spectacle Lake and is within the upper reaches of the West Aspetuck River. This river is designated by DEEP as a high quality Class AA stream. The forested portion of the property hosts historic stone walls and views overlooking the 9-acre wetland pond. The property has a loop trail for public passive recreation and wildlife viewing. The property's acquisition was also funded with assistance from the federal Department of Fish and Wildlife Service under the Highlands Conservation Act.

The Urban Garden and Community Green Grant Program

In 2017, four cities were awarded a total of **\$112,716** in funding from the State Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Program (UGCG) to maintain local green spaces and community gardens (**table below**).

Since 2007, this program has provided over \$1 million in grants in cities including Bridgeport, Hartford, Enfield, Putnam, Norwalk, and New London. Addressing multiple open space needs in densely populated areas, these grants are designed to help renovate municipally-owned lands into new or enhanced green spaces for recreation and local food production in city neighborhoods. Among other amenities, grants can be used to fund greenhouses, ADA-accessible walkways, and gardens for use by children, people with disabilities, and senior citizens.

2017 Awards—State Urban Garden and Community Garden Grant Program		
Project Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Amount
FRESH New London	McDonald Park Gardens	\$20,000
New Haven Urban Resources Initiative	Cherry Ann Park Improvements	\$44,200
KNOX Hartford	Enfield Street Community Garden Irrigation	\$16,016
Town of Bloomfield	Filley Community Garden	\$32,500
Totals		\$112,716



**Enfield Street community gardens
KNOX Hartford**



**Mercer & Williams Street
community gardens
FRESH New London**

Appendix A

State Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program Acquisitions January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017

Property Name	Town	Fee Acreage	Easement Restriction or R.O.W.	State Purchase Share	Cooperator Share	Cooperator	Purpose of Acquisition
Marchand	East Hampton	22.00	NA	\$115,000	NA	NA	Addition to Meshomasic State Forest
McNamara	Lyme	123.15	NA	\$610,000	NA	NA	Addition to Nehantic State Forest
Tilcon	Groton	199.67	NA	\$67,750		\$333,500 — NPS, Land & Water Conservation Fund \$266,000 — George Dudley Seymour Trust Fund \$117,750 — Groton Open Space Association	Newly-designated Candlewood Hill Wildlife Management Area
Phillips	Stafford	15.27	NA	\$90,000	NA	NA	Addition to Shenipsit State Forest
C&J Custom Homes, LLC	Coventry	40.1	NA	\$90,000	NA	NA	Addition to Hop River State Park Trail
GF&G	North Haven	23.70	NA	\$0		\$190,000 — George Dudley Seymour Trust Fund and The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, Quinnipiac River Fund	Addition to Quinnipiac River State Park
Geer Trust	Ledyard	104.87	NA	\$0	\$396,000	USFWS, Pittman-Robertson Fund	Addition to Rose Hill Wildlife Management Area
Sciongay, Phase II	Clinton, Westbrook	5.95	NA	\$41,000	\$459,000	George Dudley Seymour Trust Fund	Addition to Menunketesuck Wildlife Management Area
Corpridge Land Company, LLC	Rocky Hill	14.45	NA	\$0	\$1,372,750*	NA	Donated addition to Dinosaur State Park
Cedar Woods Estates	Voluntown	196.70	NA	\$0	\$745,000	USFWS, Pittman-Robertson Fund	Addition to Pachaug State Forest
Goodspeed Airport, LLC	East Haddam	0	57.12	\$0	NA	NA	Donated Scenic Easement and Development Rights
Mellon	East Haddam	7.77	NA	\$0	\$22,000*	NA	Donated water access area on Connecticut River and Chapman Pond
Totals		753.64	57.12	\$1,013,750	\$3,902,000		

* approximate fair market value of donated property

Appendix B

State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program
Grants Financially Completed by DEEP
January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017

Project Sponsor	Project Name	Town	Acres	Grant Amount
Town of Westbrook	Toby Hill Woods	Westbrook	84.24	\$390,000
Haddam Land Trust	Beaver Ledges	Haddam	136.27	\$209,300
Kent Land Trust	West Aspetuck Scenic Wetlands	Kent	25.33	\$100,000
New Canaan Land Conservation Trust	Silvermine-Fowler Preserve	New Canaan	6.35	\$535,000
Sharon Land Trust	Bention Hill Preserve	Sharon	72.17	\$538,687
Town of Darien	Stoney Brook Park	Darien	1.25	\$137,500
Madison Land Conservation Trust	Class III surplus watershed lands; South Central CT Regional Water Authority	Madison	63.91	\$715,000
East Haddam Land Trust	Bloch Property	East Haddam	12.56	\$49,500
CT Farmland Trust & Morris Land Trust	Farnham Farm Conservation Easement	Morris	128.33	\$422,500
Wintonbury Land Trust	Evans Property	Bloomfield	22.14	\$29,000
Northern CT Land Trust	Nipmuck Woods	Stafford	79.81	\$107,500
Lyme Land Conservation Trust	Hawthorne Preserve	Lyme	82.27	\$260,000
Town of Farmington	South Ridge, Settlement Road	Farmington	90.48	\$578,500
Cornwall Conservation Trust	Evans Property	Cornwall	90.16	\$211,250
Totals			895.27	\$4,283,737

Appendix C

State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program Grant Awards Announced 2017

Project Sponsor	Project Name	Town	Acreage	Grant Amount
Town of Lyme	Johnston Property	Lyme	248.00	\$870,000
Town of Hebron	Calvin Fish Property	Hebron	48.00	\$102,000
Town of Windsor	Mill Brook Open Space	Windsor	99.00	\$1,086,000
Avalonia Land Conservancy	Tri-Town Ridgeline Forest	North Stonington, Preston, Griswold	409.00	\$555,000
Wyndham Land Trust	Bull Hill Preserve	Thompson	254.00	\$172,500
Avalonia Land Conservancy	Green Falls River Glen	North Stonington	86.50	\$195,000
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority	Luft Property	Madison	44.00	\$184,800
Town of Mansfield	Simpson Property	Mansfield	114.65	\$207,000
Town of Stratford	Roosevelt Forest	Stratford	19.00	\$261,240
Town of Sprague	Tenenbaum-Morehouse	Sprague	28.90	\$96,600
Town of Sprague	Peltier Property	Sprague, Franklin	51.40	\$158,200
Watertown Land Trust	Franson Farm	Watertown	26.30	\$119,250
Steep Rock Association	Johnson Farm	Washington	50.53	\$886,500
Essex Land Trust	Doane Property	Essex	18.54	\$166,950
Naromi Land Trust	Eastman Preserve	Sherman	38.00	\$76,500
Avalonia Land Conservancy	Kendall/Thoma Preserve	Preston	177.00	\$195,750
Northern Connecticut Land Trust	Bellante Preserve	Ellington	35.00	\$36,000
Old Lyme Land Trust	Denison Property	Old Lyme	10.70	\$36,113
Aspetuck Land Trust	Belknap Property	Weston	38.35	\$165,497
Colebrook Land Conservancy	Deer Hill 87 Property	Colebrook	87.00	\$81,000
Cornwall Conservation Trust	Matland Tarradiddle	Cornwall	72.00	\$180,000
Town of North Haven	182 Kings Highway	North Haven	29.55	\$200,250
East Haddam Land Trust	Sakolsky Property	East Haddam	19.52	\$17,550
Totals			2,004.94	\$6,049,700