



Department of
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Connecticut State Open Space 2018 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 2018, DEEP and its Partners together held a combined 507,956 acres as public open space, or 75.45 percent towards achieving the total statewide open space acquisition goal.

To reach their goals, DEEP must acquire 60,911 acres and DEEP's Partners must acquire 104,343 acres to reach their open space targets.

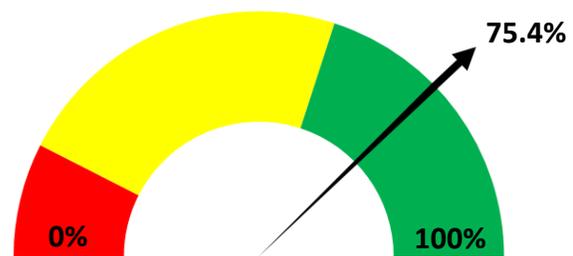
State (DEEP) Open Space:

As of December 31, 2018, DEEP held an estimated 259,665 acres of land in its system of Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Management and water access areas, or 80.9 percent of its open space goal. Of this, approximately 239,128 acres have been acquired in fee title. Acquisition of less-than-fee interests are atypical and include the purchase of conservation easements and restrictions.

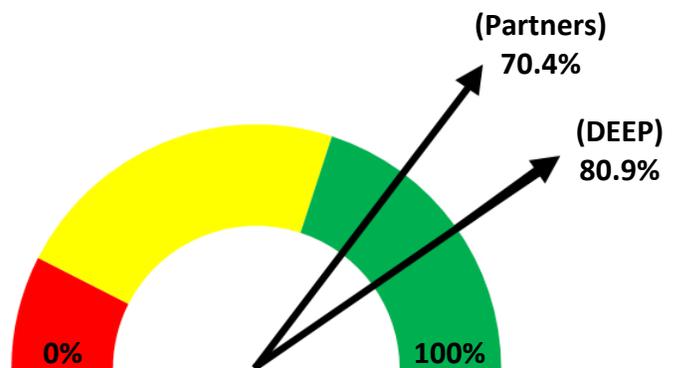
Partner-held Open Space:

As of December 31, 2018, DEEP conservatively estimates that its Partners held 248,291 acres, or 70.4 percent, of their share of the statewide open space goal. Of this, non-profit land conservation organizations held about 66,432 acres, municipalities held 84,106 acres, and water companies held 97,753 acres as open space.

2018 Status Statewide Open Space



Total: 507,956 ac.
Need: 165,254 ac.



DEEP-held: 259,665 ac.
Need: 60,911 ac.

Partner-held: 248,291 ac.
Need: 104,343 ac.

Front cover: "Johnson Farm" by Woody Campbell, Overall Winner of the 2nd Annual Diana Atwood Johnson OSWA Photo Contest, held in partnership with the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in 2018. Photos submitted to this contest are taken on lands protected under a DEEP open space grant.

2018 Statewide Open Space & Land Acquisitions

In 2018, DEEP acquired 703 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 \$1.58 for every State dollar spent (**Appendix A**).

With over \$3 million in funding assistance from DEEP’s Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program, municipalities, non-profit land conservation organizations, and a water company were able to complete 14 projects, protecting 1,443 acres in 17 towns across the state (**Appendix B**).

DEEP Land Acquisitions:

6	703	\$1.58
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	1,443	\$3.22 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

SINCE 1998

48,000+ 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**.

560+ 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 the Housatonic State Forest

In 2018, DEEP acquired an impressive 420 acres abutting the Housatonic State Forest in Norfolk. Formerly owned by the Vagliano family, the property is a key open space link from Canaan Mountain to the Blackberry River, and features spectacular views, pristine streams, and abundant wild-life. The acquisition provides the public with new opportunities for passive recreation, hunting, and fishing. Funding was provided by a US Fish and Wildlife Service Pittman-Robertson grant, a US Forest Service Highlands Conservation Act grant, a generous private donation through the Greenprint Partners Pledge Fund, and State bond funds through the Recreational and Natural Heritage Trust Program.



2018 DEEP Open Space Acquisition Actions

State Property Acquisition Review

DEEP evaluated **43 properties covering over 2,700 acres** eligible for State purchase through the [Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program](#). There are currently over 100 properties covering thousands of acres that have been reviewed and approved for acquisition, but DEEP lacks the funding necessary to move forward. The current real estate market favors buyers of open space due to a stall in new housing construction, but limited funding for open space is available to take advantage of many of these opportunities.

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.

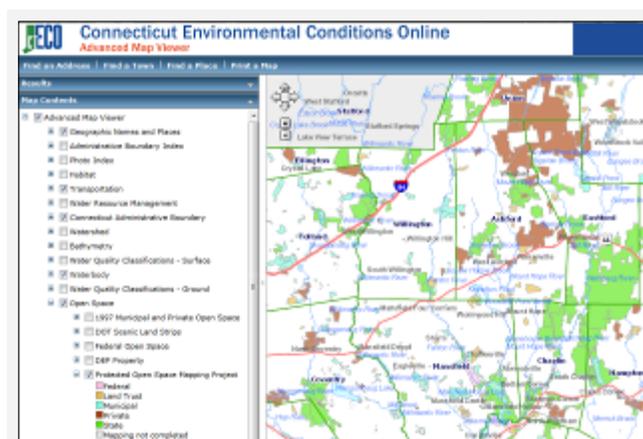
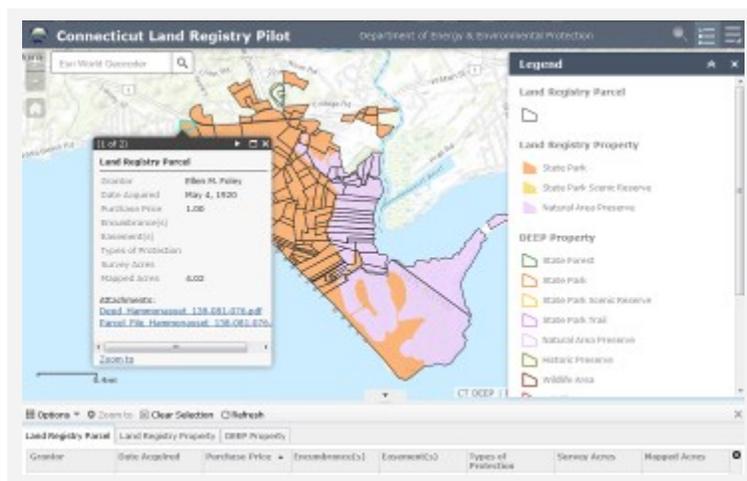
With continued funding assistance through a US Fish and Wildlife Service grant, DEEP-held Wildlife Management Areas are a focus of the parcel data population.

ECSU is also assisting DEEP in producing a GIS datalayer of more than 550 projects funded under the State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant program (OSWA).

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

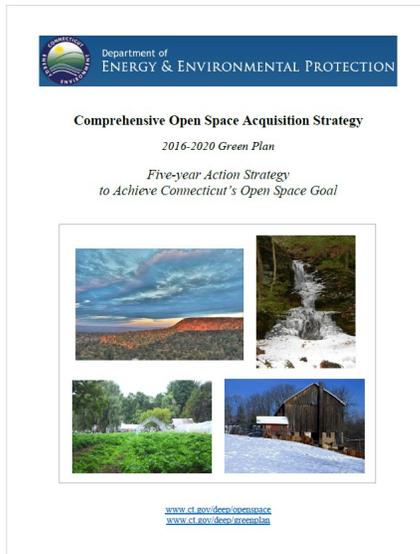
DEEP launched the Land Registry in 2015 to inventory and eventually show all existing protected open space in Connecticut, pursuant to Public Act. Modeled from other national protected area databases, the Land Registry is capable of providing information for lands owned by DEEP, other state agencies, 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 in 2017 as 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. The Green Plan includes 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.

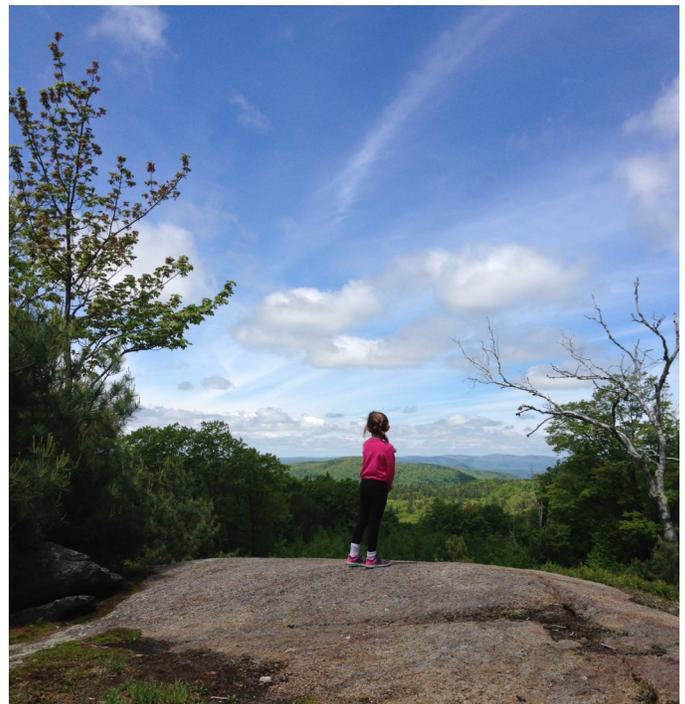


Looking Ahead — Green Plan 2021 - 2026

As required by statute, DEEP will soon revise the Green Plan to provide an updated assessment of statewide open space since its last version, including progress towards implementing the 5-Year Action Plan and reaching Connecticut's goal of protecting 673,210 acres.

Coming Soon!

DEEP needs to hear from all stakeholders to develop a planning document that will be the highest value for the State of Connecticut, municipalities, regional planning agencies, land conservation organizations, and the public. View or download the Green Plan in its entirety or in sections by visiting www.ct.gov/deep/greenplan. Then, stay tuned to DEEP's webpage for news and information on how you can provide comments on how to use or improve the next Green Plan.



"A View for the Future" by Joyce Mowrey
2018 People Category Winner
2nd Annual Diana Atwood Johnson OSWA Photo Contest
Goshen Land Trust Mountain View Preserve

2018 State Assistance to Land Conservation Partners

The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

In 2018, 14 projects were financially completed with over \$3.22 million in assistance from the State [Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program](#) (OSWA), permanently protecting 1,443 acres (**Appendix B**).

In the fall of 2018, DEEP announced grant awards totaling \$4.8 million to support protecting another 1,139 acres and 15 open space projects submitted to the 20th grant round (**Appendix C**).

DEEP subsequently opened the 22nd grant round and will announce those awards in the fall of 2019.

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 Commissioner and others each year.



Tri-Town Ridgeline Forest: 409 Acres Protected in Southeast Connecticut

In 2018, the Avalonia Land Conservancy acquired a 409-acre property partially located in the towns of North Stonington, Griswold, and Preston, now forming the Tri-Town Ridgeline Forest. It connects existing protected lands and interlocks 1,500 acres of contiguous open space, including a 213-acre portion of Pachaug State Forest. The property features unfragmented core forestland, wetlands, and headwater streams to Miller Brook and Broad Brook, each providing habitat for native trout, state-listed breeding birds, and other abundant plants, insects, and wildlife. It hosts several miles of scenic and stone-walled trails to take hikers through valleys, over rolling hills, and along rocky ridgelines and outcrops. The property was protected with \$555,000 in funding assistance from a State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant.

The Urban Garden and Community Green Grant Program

In 2018, three cities were awarded a total of \$62,195 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 initiative 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.

Project Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Amount
Bloomfield	Lisa Lane Community Garden	\$16,245
New Haven Land Trust	New Haven Community Gardens	\$25,000
New Haven Urban Resources Initiative	Beaver Ponds Park	\$20,950
Total		\$62,195



Photos by Tom Bombria

DEEP Grants make Community Gardens Possible in New London

Supported by State Urban Garden and Community Garden grants awarded in 2008, 2011, and 2017, the City of New London in partnership with FRESH New London have reclaimed several urban spaces as farms and gardens for use by local residents, families, and schools. Pictured above, McDonald Park (on McDonald Street) is planted with a border of fruit trees and shrubs, including blueberries and plums. A small dig pit was created for young children to play and learn how to garden. Other opportunities for recreation are also being explored with input from residents. With funding assistance from this grant program, partnerships between local non-profit organizations and municipalities can help make healthy foods more accessible to communities.

Appendix A

State Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program Acquisitions January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018

Property Name	Town	Fee Acres	Easement Restriction or R.O.W.	State Purchase Share	Cooperator Share	Cooperator	Purpose of Acquisition
Pellici	Mid-dletown	12.07	NA	\$90,000	NA		Acquired for Crystal Lake Dam access
Vynalek	Norfolk	1.7	NA	\$0	\$4,610*		Donated addition to Ruddy Creek WMA
Vagliano and A2V, LLC	Haddam	420.00	NA	\$387,500	\$725,000 — USFWS, Pittman-Robertson Act Fund \$637,500 — USFWS, Highland Conservation Act Fund \$250,000 — Greenprint Partners Pledge Fund		Addition to Housatonic State Forest
Kaszney	Harwinton	72.90	NA	\$0	\$655,000	USFWS, Pittman-Robertson Act Fund	Addition to Roraback Wildlife Management Area
Gallup	Voluntown	162.87	NA	\$790,000	NA		Addition to Pachaug State Forest
Castle	Pomfret	34.25	NA	\$165,000	NA		Addition to Natchaug State Forest
Totals		703.79		\$1,432,500	\$2,271,610		

* approximate fair market value of donated property

Appendix B

State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grants
Financially Completed by DEEP
January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018

Project Sponsor	Project Name	Town	Acres	Grant Amount
Town of Coventry	Williams Property	Coventry	55.75	\$262,600
Winchester Land Trust	TorWin Farm	Winchester, Torrington	118.60	\$307,500
Town of Fairfield	565 Park Avenue	Fairfield	2.80	\$83,750
Town of Suffield	Lefcheck Farm Easement	Suffield	30.28	\$174,000
South Central CT Regional Water Authority	Luft Property	Madison	43.24	\$184,800
Town of Sprague	Bombero Property	Sprague	97.00	\$151,000
Avalonia Land Conservancy	Tri-Town Ridgeline Forest	Preston, Griswold, North Stonington	409.00	\$555,000
Wyndham Land Trust	Bull Hill Preserve	Thompson	284.36	\$172,500
Northern CT Land Trust	Bellante Preserve	Ellington	35.76	\$36,000
Branford Land Trust	Warner/Hull Property	Branford	29.00	\$91,000
Town of North Haven	182 Kings Highway Property	North Haven	29.08	\$200,250
Town of Lyme	Johnston Preserve	Lyme	250.04	\$870,000
Town of Hebron	Calvin Fish Parcel	Hebron	47.53	\$102,000
Old Lyme Land Trust	Denison Parcel	Old Lyme	10.72	\$36,113
Totals			1,443.16	\$3,226,513

Appendix C

State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program Grant Awards Announced 2018

Project Sponsor	Project Name	Town	Acres	Grant Amount
The Salisbury Association	Yoakum/Wolf Hill	Salisbury	240.00	\$650,000
Avalonia Land Conservancy	Atkinson/Dirlam Preserve	Ledyard	230.00	\$697,775
Avalonia Land Conservancy	Dutka Property	Griswold	62.58	\$30,469
Avalonia Land Conservancy	Boyd Rixtown	Griswold	54.00	\$58,435
Town of Oxford	Schreiber Farm	Oxford	132.00	\$1,105,000
Guilford Land Trust	Westwoods	Guilford	32.18	\$162,500
Cornwall Conservation Trust	Furnace Brook Preserve	Cornwall	106.00	\$404,300
Town of Bethany	Simpson Preserve	Bethany	50.88	\$248,300
Deep River Land Trust	Pratt Cove Marsh	Deep River	7.20	\$104,000
Madison Land Conservation Trust	Lowry Woods	Madison	73.00	\$462,500
Town of Hamden	370 Brooksvale Ave, rear	Hamden	42.00	\$432,250
Canton Land Conservation Trust	45 West Road	Canton	12.00	\$27,500
Town of Fairfield	760 Oldfield Road	Fairfield	3.60	\$82,500
City of Shelton	Pearmain Preserve	Shelton	6.71	\$187,500
East Haddam Land Trust	Nichols Property	East Haddam	84.00	\$170,000
Totals			1,139.15	\$4,823,029