

# CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

## Conservation Agenda 2018

### Introduction

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the state's land conservation community. Among CLCC's constituents are land trusts (there are 137+ in Connecticut), municipal conservation commissions, garden clubs, and local and statewide conservation advocacy groups – each managed, supported, and governed by concerned residents. CLCC is a primary resource and voice for land conservation issues statewide.

CLCC believes that strong and sustainable land conservation is essential to a healthy environment and strong economy. Land conservation plays a crucial role in protecting and enhancing water quality, ensuring clean air, creating wildlife habitats, offsetting impacts of climate change, enabling access to locally grown foods and products, and providing opportunities for the public to enjoy the natural, scenic, cultural, historic and esthetic qualities of the environment for generations to come.

**Land is a finite resource. Once gone, it's gone forever; and it is the responsibility and moral obligation of our current generation to ensure that future generations receive the same benefits derived from land conservation that we enjoy today.**

CLCC works with, and encourages our constituents and partners to work with, members of the legislature on policy issues impacting land conservation in Connecticut. To that end, CLCC intends to pursue the following legislative and policy priorities in the 2018 Session of the Connecticut General Assembly.

### 2018 State Legislative and Policy Priorities

#### Support Funding and Staff for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Open Space and other Programs

While approval of the Passport to the Parks Program as part of the FY18-19 state budget was essential to provide much needed dedicated funding to State Parks, we remain deeply concerned about the short and long-term impacts that cumulative annual cuts to DEEP's budget will continue to have on the agency's ability to implement core programs and undertake key functions – with the potential to cause irreversible damage to the state's quality of clean air, water, wildlife, and recreational resources.

#### **CLCC priorities with respect to funding for DEEP's programming for 2018 include:**

- ENSURE consistent and increased funding for state land conservation programs including Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Program, Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program, and Recreational Trails & Greenways Program.
- PROTECT the Community Investment Act, which generates funding for state programs for open space, farmland/dairy production, historic preservation and affordable housing. Enhance public

awareness of the importance of the fund and ensure that the integrity and level of funding are protected.

- ENSURE Passport to the Parks funds operations and maintenance of State Parks at a sustainable level to keep State Parks and campgrounds open.

#### **Pursue Enabling Legislation for Municipal Land Conservation & Stewardship Funding Program**

PURSUE legislation enabling select municipalities to collect up to 1% of real estate conveyance fee on buyers to support local open space and farmland acquisition as well as park, forest and trail management projects.

#### **Pursue a Constitutional Amendment to Better Protect Public Lands**

ENSURE the second passage of a Constitutional Amendment bill that protects public lands from being conveyed without appropriate public process and compensation.

#### **Support Programs which Protect and Enhance the Viability of Working Lands**

- ENSURE consistent bond funding for Department of Agriculture's Farmland Protection Program
- EXPAND availability of Farmland Restoration Program to encourage access to land by new and beginning farmers
- INCENTIVIZE the development and siting of renewable energy infrastructure projects compatible with Connecticut's land conservation goals.

#### **Protection of Class I & II Watershed Lands**

SUPPORT efforts to protect Class I and II Watershed Lands and to ensure that laws and policies protecting such lands are not weakened.

#### **Federal Policy**

Support appropriations for critical federal conservation programs, including: Land & Water Conservation Fund, USDA Conservation Title Programs, USDA Forest Service Programs (*including Forest Legacy Program*) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Programs (*including State Wildlife Grants Program*). Protect tax laws and regulations that incentivize charitable giving to land trusts and other non-profits. Oppose roll-backs of laws and regulations which protect land, water, air, and other natural resources.

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