



Contact: Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director  
(860) 614-8537, abpaterson@ctconservation.org  
16 Meriden Road, Rockfall, CT 06481

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F O R I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E

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### **Connecticut Land Conservation Council builds stronger land trusts through Land Trust Advancement Initiative Program**

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) is excited to offer its fourth round of the Connecticut Land Trust Advancement Initiative, an organizational advancement program designed to strengthen Connecticut's land trusts and their collective capacity to conserve the state's critical natural resources. Through this program, CLCC has brought hands-on training and technical assistance to nearly 20 land trusts across the state and strives to bring those services to many more.

Funded by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, CLCC launched the Initiative in 2014 with a two-year pilot program that provided 15 land trusts working in the lower Connecticut River region with an opportunity to collaborate on three capacity building projects focused on communications and community engagement, land stewardship, and a feasibility study on shared services.

In 2016, with generous funding from the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut (CFECT), CLCC brought the Initiative to New London County, providing six land trusts with individual and group services focused on strengthening their land management programs. This project was followed in 2017 by an Initiative in the Waterbury region, which earned CLCC and its partners the Connecticut Community Foundation Trustees' Award for Excellence in Collaboration.

With a new three-year grant from CFECT, CLCC now has the opportunity to dive deeper into its work in New London County, offering the six participating land trusts with additional services including recordkeeping management and a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping component for the region.

Participating land trusts include the Avalonia Land Conservancy, Colchester Land Trust, East Lyme Land Trust, Groton Open Space Association, Salem Land Trust, Waterford Land Trust, and Wyndham Land Trust. Each are enthusiastic and committed to continuing their work with CLCC.

"Avalonia Land Conservancy is again delighted to be participating in CLCC's Advancement Initiative," said Dennis Main, President of the Avalonia Land Conservancy. "Building off the success of the 2016 program, the current Initiative will allow Avalonia to make dramatic improvements in our ability to further conserve our area's most valuable landscapes via the GIS mapping project and direct technical assistance from CLCC staff, which will be critical in identifying those parcels and habitats most environmentally valuable." "

Through this project, the land trusts will receive the tools necessary to document and map their land holdings, and also to help develop their collective vision for sustainable, regional strategic conservation planning and project implementation.

“I am very encouraged to see that this initiative is both expanding individual land trust capacity and creating opportunity for collaborative conservation work,” said Jennifer O’Brien, Program Director at the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. “The plan to develop a comprehensive GIS map of the region will be a tremendous asset in looking at the big picture of vulnerable lands in New London County and will guide conservation work well into the future.”

CLCC Executive Director Amy Blaymore Paterson added, “As the state’s umbrella organization for the land conservation community, building relationships and fostering collaboration to strengthen land conservation is the cornerstone of all that we do. We are grateful for CFECT’s partnership and generous support in our efforts to assist the land trusts in New London County in building their organizational capacity, and collective ability to conserve and protect the region’s natural and cultural resources.”

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**About the Connecticut Land Conservation Council:**

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council advocates for land conservation, stewardship, and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community in Connecticut. Learn more at [www.ctconservation.org](http://www.ctconservation.org)

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