

Why should land trusts care about protecting public lands?

On November 6th the citizens of Connecticut can vote “YES” on the statewide ballot to protect public lands, and your land trust has the ability to help make this happen. Why should your land trust care about protecting public lands?

Public Lands Are Important to Your Land Conservation Work

- **Public lands are important buffers.** State-owned conservation lands often are important buffers to protect the beauty and solitude of your property/ies.
- **Public lands provide connectivity.** Wildlife corridors, recreational trails, rivers, drinking water aquifers, flyways, etc. usually extend beyond the lands you protect.
- **Gifts of land should be honored.** Families have donated and sold land to the state with the expectation that it would be managed and protected for the public’s benefit.
- **Public lands bring revenues to your community.** Every year, State Parks and Forests attract over \$1 billion in revenues and support over 9,000 private sector jobs.
- **Easements can be undermined.** If the state’s easements on protected open space or farmland are undermined by the General Assembly, the integrity of land you worked to preserve with state funding may be compromised.

But Public Lands are Not Protected ... Yet

You know the importance of protecting land, honoring land donations, enforcing easements, and encouraging public support for land conservation. However, the way that the General Assembly sells, swaps, or gives away public lands every year - with little to no opportunity for public input - does not promote faith in land conservation.

The Solution – A Constitutional Amendment to Protect Public Lands

Maine, Massachusetts, and New York all have protections for public lands in their state constitutions. It’s time for Connecticut to follow suit.

Voting “YES” on November 6th would amend the state constitution to ensure that before the General Assembly could sell, swap, or give away your public lands, it must:

- 1) Hold a Public Hearing; and
- 2) Achieve a 2/3rds supermajority vote on land held by CT DEEP (e.g., State Parks, Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, etc.) or the Department of Agriculture (e.g., farmland easements).

Your Land Trust Can Make a Difference

Residents in your community look to your land trust as the local authority on land conservation. After all, you have “land” and “trust” right in your name. If you don’t speak up for protecting public lands, who will?

Please encourage your members, volunteers, and supporters to vote “YES” in November, and get involved TODAY to support the Protect CT Public Lands Coalition, Inc.

For more information, contact Eric Hammerling via protectctpubliclands@gmail.com.