

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Conservation Agenda 2014

CLCC works to increase the pace, quality and scale of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state.

State Legislative and Policy Priorities

1. Campaign for Open Space Acquisition and Stewardship Funding and Support for Land Conservation Programs

- Ensure consistent and maximum funding for state land conservation programs (Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Program, Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program and Farmland Preservation Program) and adequate staffing for those programs.
- Protect the Community Investment Act which provides 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.
- Support better coordination of state conservation funding programs with federal matching funding sources including, but not limited to, the removal of the 70% cap on federal/state matching grants for open space and agricultural land preservation as required in C.G.S. 7-131g(c).
- Support base funding and staff for CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and CT Department of Agriculture (DoAg) for stewardship, management and inventorying of state conservation lands and farmland and for other critical programs including, the UConn Extension, CT Agricultural Station, Council on Environmental Quality, and Invasive Plants Council.
- Continue to research new mechanisms for additional state funding for land conservation programs including efforts to expand the coalition to enact legislation to enable towns to establish a dedicated fund for conservation and other green project purposes.

2. Campaign to Permanently Protect State Lands Acquired for Conservation Purposes

- Ensure that state lands of high conservation value are identified, prioritized and permanently protected in accordance with P.A. 12-152, *An Act Concerning the State's Open Space Plan*, in particular providing express authority to Commissioners of DEEP and DoAg to place conservation restrictions on lands of high conservation value.
- Ensure that there is a process to fully inform the public and provide an opportunity for public input before state lands are exchanged, sold or otherwise conveyed pursuant to The Conveyance Act, in particular providing a process for a public hearing before the Environment Committee when DEEP or DoAg lands are the subject of exchange or other conveyance.
- Provide DEEP with input on revisions to the state Green Plan and support the implementation of additional agency initiatives undertaken in accordance with PA 12-152 including the establishment of a statewide registry and associated database to inventory/track land protected by land trusts and municipalities.
- Support efforts to protect state lands from damage from all-terrain vehicles.

Federal Level

- Support efforts to make the Enhanced Easement Incentive permanent and to explore other conservation incentives in the federal estate tax
- Support fight against reductions in charitable incentives.
- Support appropriations for critical federal conservation programs, including: Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Dept. of Transportation Recreational Trails Program, USDA Farm Conservation Title Programs (*including Farm and Ranchland Protection Program*), USDA Forest Service Programs (*including Forest Legacy Program*) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Programs (*including state Wildlife Grants Program*)

Land Trust and Community Outreach

- Host the 2014 Connecticut Land Conservation Day on April 23, 2014 at the State Capitol and continue to build grassroots support in advocating for land conservation at the local, state and federal levels.