

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

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Dear Salutation:

When it comes to state funding for land conservation, there's good news, bad news, and an opportunity.

Let's start with the good news!

Earlier this month, we shared the announcement that the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is accepting applications for a new round of Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA).

OSWA is the main source of funding that has been essential to the work of land trusts, towns and water companies in acquiring and permanently protecting open space for conservation. Funded through the Community Investment Act (CIA) and bonding, the OSWA program has leveraged millions of matching municipal, federal and private dollars resulting in funding for over 500 projects totaling over 32,000 acres in more than 130 communities since the program's start in 1998.

Protecting and ensuring the consistency of funding for the OSWA program is a top priority for CLCC – each and every year!

This year state budget problems required a particularly aggressive campaign to protect funding sources for OSWA, including fighting sweeps to the CIA and advocating to make sure bonding for the program was included in the biennial budget.

So, what's the bad news?

While bonding was authorized for OSWA, to date none of those funds have been allocated to the agency – putting the future of the program at risk.

Considering the raids on CIA funds (which were minimized but not eliminated in 2016), bonding is even more essential to the ongoing survival of the OSWA program and the ability of your land trust and community to continue to plan for and pursue high caliber conservation projects.

What can you do to help?

Contact Governor Malloy! (governor.malloy@ct.gov) If you haven't done so already, please join CLCC and many land trusts around the state in asking Governor Malloy to convene the State Bond Commission to authorize the release of funding for OSWA. [View CLCC's letter: www.ctconservation.org/view-clccs-letter-governor-asking-release-open-space-funds]



And, what's the opportunity?

Speak up for Nature! With the general election only weeks away, NOW is an excellent time for land trusts to educate candidates for office about the issues that matter to your organization and your community.

CLCC sent a letter to all candidates running for state office, outlining the policy issues impacting land conservation in Connecticut that we expect to work on in 2017 and beyond – priorities that include continued robust funding for OSWA, other critical conservation programs and DEEP's overall budget. [We've attached a copy of that letter]

We urge you to get involved too.

While your land trust, as a 501(c)3 organization, is prohibited from endorsing candidates or engaging in partisan election activities, you are permitted to reach out to candidates running for office to remind them of your land trust's goals and mission, and provide them with information on the issues that are important to your organization and community. **Being evenhanded and nonpartisan with your outreach is key.** Visit CLCC's website or give me a call at 860-614-8537 to learn more about what land trusts and their members can do to help promote land conservation during election season. [www.ctconservation.org/policyguidance]

Now is the time!

When it comes to land conservation and the overall health of our environment, we are feeling a sense of urgency like never before!

Now is the time to send a strong message that land conservation is not a luxury we can live without. Land conservation is a daily necessity - providing essential benefits to the quality of life for current and future generations: fresh air, clean water, wildlife, education, recreation, community, culture, strong economies are all benefits of land conservation worth investing in and protecting.

Together our voices are loud and our actions do make a difference.

We are grateful for your support. We value your partnership. We are inspired by your work.

Sincerely,



Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director

P.S. Our advocacy work would not be possible without your financial support. If you have already sent in your 2016-17 membership contribution, thank you. If not, or if you would consider an additional gift to CLCC, we've enclosed a return envelope and membership form for your convenience. Thank you!