

ESSEX LAND TRUST



Great Meadow, Essex looking south towards the Sound, Old Saybrook, Lyme and Old Lyme. (photo: Al Braden)

The Lower Connecticut River and Coastal Region is one of the most fruitful and attractive natural systems in the temperate world. Ocean frontage, rich fresh and saltwater wetlands, fertile fields, productive forests, trap rock ridges, and cedar swamps all gather here around the final watersheds of the Connecticut, one of the continent's great rivers. Unlike nearly all the other major river mouths on the planet, the lower Connecticut culminates in Long Island Sound through a largely unspoiled natural landscape that still retains most of its inherent integrity and its function as an intact ecosystem.

Essex, Connecticut is a picturesque and historic town located on the west bank of the Connecticut River where it broadens and begins to flow into nearby Long Island Sound. In addition to a charming colonial era village, the town includes broad expanses of river frontage, wetlands, and farmland within its borders.

The Essex Land Trust is an independent nonprofit organization supported by generous donations and managed by a dedicated group of volunteers. Its mission is to acquire open space by gift or purchase, to protect the environment, to preserve the character of Essex, and to provide the community with passive recreational and educational opportunities. The Trust conserves wildlife habitats, wetlands, scenic views, and farmland by maintaining properties in their natural state now and forever. To date, the Trust has protected 21 properties in fee ownership or easement, totaling approximately 600 acres of land. In addition to maintaining over 55 trails, carefully maintained by volunteers, the Trust manages about another 400 acres of town-protected lands. Active conservation priorities include open space in the Great Meadow, the creation of open space corridors within Essex and neighboring towns, and protecting scenic views.

Volunteers, members, Scouts, and school groups donate more than 2,000 hours of service annually to the Trust, making possible an active calendar of hikes, canoe and kayak paddles, educational, and property spruce-up activities throughout the year. The Trust has nearly 400 family memberships, nearly 150 life conservators, and over 21 corporate members, including event sponsors and other business supporters.

For further information, please contact us:

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A Message For Property Owners

The landscape that we love and enjoy today is the result of the care and stewardship of centuries of landowners who went before us.

Through the work of local land trusts, many families have created

arrangements that not only express their care for the land, but also respond to financial factors and the values and concerns that transcend all generations. The Essex Land Trust stands ready to help property owners to define their aspirations, explore practical options, and arrive at the most advantageous plan for the future. The American real estate and tax systems provide for a wide variety of conservation options that we can discuss with you; naturally, you will want to retain your own legal and financial counsel in these regards as your exploration and decision-making process continues. *If you are interested in conserving your land* we would look forward to an informal discussion with you at your convenience.

While many options are open to landowners who wish to explore the conservation of their lands, and specific cases should be defined with the assistance of an attorney, some general categories can be considered.

Gift of Conservation Easement

A conservation easement is an agreement through which the landowner permanently gives up the right to develop all or a portion of a property. A qualified land trust holds the rights to enforce the terms of the easement, which is recorded on the land records and runs with the title to



Johnson Farm

the land; its terms require any future owners to conform to the conservation wishes of the donor. The landowner still owns the property, and can occupy, rent, bequeath, or sell it as desired.

Gift of Fee Simple Ownership

A landowner may make a gift outright of all or a portion of the title to their property to a conservation land trust in order to protect it in perpetuity (forever). As the owner of the property, the land trust then becomes responsible for stewarding the property and protecting its conservation and wildlife values.

Gift with Retained Life Estate

A landowner may give title to their property to a land trust, but retain the right to occupy the property for the term of their life, or the lives of a couple in the case of joint ownership. Three key points should be noted: *First*, a conservation gift requires careful planning between the landowner and the land trust to ensure the most mutually beneficial course of action. *Second*, it is essential that landowners discuss both their wishes and their property management interests with their attorney. *Third*, conservation arrangements, including those listed here, may result in significant tax benefits for the landowner under relevant state and federal tax law. Again, an attorney or qualified financial advisor should be consulted to provide insight into the potential benefits and structure of various conservation options.

For more information regarding conservation planning, please contact the Essex Land Trust. Thank you for your consideration.

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Crossing Falls River at Millrace Preserve, Ivoryton