

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

August 29, 2018

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Honorable Governor Dannel P. Malloy

Office of the Governor

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue

Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Malloy:

On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, I am writing to respectfully request that you convene the State Bond Commission to allocate \$5 million in bonding for the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA).

As the umbrella organization for the state's land conservation community, including its 137+ land trusts, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term viability of the land conservation community statewide. Ensuring consistent and increased funding for OSWA and other state land conservation funding programs is a top annual policy priority for our organization and our members.

Funded through the Community Investment Act and state bonding, the OSWA program has provided more than \$125 million to assist in the conservation of 33,000+ acres of land in 137 CT municipalities. The OSWA program truly is the backbone of land conservation efforts in the state and crucial to achieving the state goal of protecting 21% of Connecticut as open space by 2023.

Rarely a day goes by without my fielding at least one question from a land trust or town regarding the OSWA program. These inquiries relate to pending or prospective conservation projects in every part of the state. Indeed, the land conservation community is anxiously awaiting news of the 2017- 2018 grant awards and is assembling new projects in anticipation of the announcement of the next round this fall.

Yet with DEEP still recovering from annual cuts to the CIA, including the most recent reduction of \$2.3 million – taken from the agency's open space account in order to put money back into the agricultural sustainability account – funding for the OSWA program may not be adequate to meet current and anticipated project costs.

The release of available bonding is essential to ensure that land trusts, towns and water companies have a source of funding they can depend on as they advocate protection and negotiate acquisition of valuable open space.



Thank you for in advance for your continued support of OSWA which has enabled the state's conservation community to preserve valuable forest resources, protect clean water, increase the recreation value of Greenways, and preserve those historic landscapes that define the character of the state of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Amy Blaymore Paterson
Executive Director

P.S. Entire communities celebrate when land is protected by the OSWA program! Hosted by local land trusts and other partners, CLCC organized visits to seven land conservation success stories around the state made possible by OSWA and other state, federal, and local investments. Approximately 150 land trust members, State Legislators, local leaders, and other people who care, joined us this summer for fun and informal walks at preserves, farms, and a community garden and had an opportunity to exchange ideas about land conservation priorities.