

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Comments

Draft 2025-2030 Conservation and Development Policies Plan
Planning and Development Committee

Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
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On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC), I am pleased to submit comments regarding the Draft 2025-2030 Conservation and Development Policies Plan (the Plan). As the statewide umbrella organization for Connecticut's ~120 land trusts, CLCC's mission is to elevate and strengthen land conservation across the state. This includes ensuring the protection of Connecticut's natural and working lands and prioritizing the vital role of nature in addressing climate resilience and biodiversity loss while empowering land trusts and communities to access the resources and benefits of these efforts.

We appreciate the effort and thoughtfulness that went into the Plan and offer our comments below.

1. **Integration of Conservation Factors in Planning:** We commend the inclusion of conservation factors such as core forests, wetlands, drinking water source areas, and critical habitats within the Plan's Locational Guide Map (LGM). These elements are essential for ensuring conservation priorities are embedded in statewide policy and planning processes.
2. **Focus on Climate Resilience and Nature-Based Solutions:** The Plan's emphasis on climate resilience and nature-based solutions is critical to addressing the escalating impacts of the changing climate on our state's ecosystems, communities, and economy. Strategies that promote the use of green infrastructure and the preservation of floodplains, forests, and wetlands mitigate climate risks and provide co-benefits such as improved air and water quality and enhanced biodiversity. The Plan should emphasize codifying these as priorities in state statute.
3. **Commitment to Equity and Environmental Justice:** We are encouraged by the Plan's acknowledgment of the importance of equity and environmental justice in land use and conservation decisions. Recognizing the historical and ongoing disparities in access to open space and environmental benefits is a necessary step toward creating a more inclusive and just conservation movement in Connecticut. The Plan could be even further improved by including more specific details and recommendations for targeted outreach and funding programs to ensure that underserved and environmental justice communities can access the benefits of land conservation.
4. **Support for State Agency and Regional Collaboration:** We applaud the Plan's emphasis on fostering cross-agency cooperation and communications to incentivize collaborative opportunities for multiple land uses. Likewise, the Plan's focus on regional collaboration, particularly through Councils of Government (COGs), aligns with CLCC's efforts to promote partnerships among land trusts, municipalities, and other stakeholders. These collaborative approaches can amplify conservation outcomes and strengthen the capacity of small, all-volunteer land trusts to participate in regional planning initiatives.
5. **Strengthen Implementation Measures:** While the Plan articulates ambitious goals for conservation and development, this important feature could be strengthened by adding detail on the mechanisms and resources needed for implementation. For example, the activity zone framework and Locational Guide Map (LGM) could benefit from more detailed guidelines for balancing conservation and development priorities, particularly in areas where they may conflict. It would also be helpful if the Plan included suggestions for new dedicated funding streams, such as a state revolving loan fund, to support



conservation initiatives.

6. **Emphasize Tracking and Accountability:** While the plan includes targets for preserving open space and farmland, it does not appear to specify how these targets will align with or enhance Connecticut's statutory open space goals (protecting 21% of the state's land by 2023). A holistic, inter-agency system that includes additional accountability measures, progress tracking, and recommendations for increased investments in statewide mapping would strengthen confidence in achieving these goals.

CLCC commends the thoughtful and deliberate development of this new C&D Plan and hopes it will lead to a more integrated, holistic, and collaborative land use planning process in CT.

Thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide additional information or support.