

Why is the Green Plan Important?

The Connecticut Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy (Green Plan) is a statewide planning document developed by DEEP in partnership with municipalities and numerous conservation organizations to guide land acquisitions towards achieving the state's open space goal.

Section 23-8 of the general statutes requires a goal of conserving 21% or 673,210 acres of Connecticut's land base as open space by year 2023:

- 10% (320,576 acres) is to be held by the State;
- 11% (352,634 acres) is to be held by municipalities, non-profit land conservation organizations, and water companies.

As of late 2015, DEEP and its Partners need to acquire an additional 62,960 acres and 108,920 acres as open space, respectively, to meet their targeted goals.



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While progress has been made over the decades on preserving open space, lands of high conservation and recreation value continue to be lost to development, even with the current economic conditions.

The new Green Plan should enhance open space acquisition efforts and outcomes through the implementation of a set of acquisition target goals and State program administration objectives.

Investing in protecting lands in the most critical locations will not only increase the value of the land DEEP and its Partners have already protected, but also secure the future of Connecticut's natural heritage, rural landscape, abundance of recreational resources, and strong communities.

New Plan Components

- A 5-year Action Strategy which identifies highest land acquisition priorities and targeted acreages for open space;
- Discussion on the new Public Use and Benefit Land Registry, a publicly-accessible geographic information map system and database (more at www.ct.gov/deep/landregistry);
- Emphasis on climate change on and lands which can provide to buffer from impacts;
- Discussion on the permanent protection of State-owned lands held by DEEP and other agencies in perpetuity.

Stay Involved with Your Plan

The Green Plan is updated every five years. Help us improve your open space plan by viewing the plan and submitting your questions and comments via email to Jamie.Sydoriak@ct.gov

Key Implementation Partners

- The State Natural Heritage, Open Space and Land Acquisition Review Board
- Connecticut Land Conservation Council
- Council for Environmental Quality
- Other Conservation Partners: private landowners, municipalities, non-profit land trusts, utility companies, developers and land planners, and conservation-minded planning organizations and associations.



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www.ct.gov/deep/greenplan

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Connecticut's Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy

The Green Plan
2016-2020

Information Summary



The Preserve
Old Saybrook, Westbrook, Essex

Protecting Land Today Leaves a Legacy for Tomorrow

Purpose of and Need For Open Space

Connecticut's natural landscapes provide a seemingly endless list of ecosystem services to people, such as safe drinking water, carbon sequestration, flood control, outdoor recreation, sense of place and culture, and many more.

Fish & Wildlife Habitat:



Connecticut's marine, freshwater, and terrestrial habitats are home during all or parts of the year to a wide diversity of plants, animals, and insects.

Water Resources:

Clean water in our wetlands, streams, rivers, and waterbodies are essential to life and provide rich habitats.

Outdoor Recreation:

Residents enjoy nature and contribute to local economies through activities such as camping, fishing, and trail exploration.



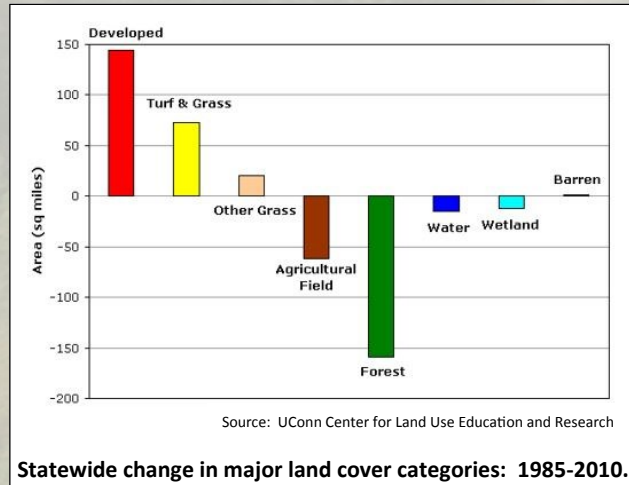
Urban Open Space:

Urban parks, trails, and community gardens increase the quality of life for residents in populated areas that tend to be farther from other existing open spaces.

Land for Open Space is Finite

Connecticut has witnessed a rapid growth in developed land compared to the rate of population growth over the last 40 years.

As a consequence, from 1985 to 2010, the state lost 115,200 acres of forested land and 39,680 acres of agricultural fields to development and related land covers like turf and grass. Developed land covers cannot not provide the same sustaining ecosystem services that natural lands do.



A recovering economy could spark another burst in development. This places an urgency on all aspects of undeveloped land protection, from securing funding to negotiating transactions before desirable properties are converted to other uses.

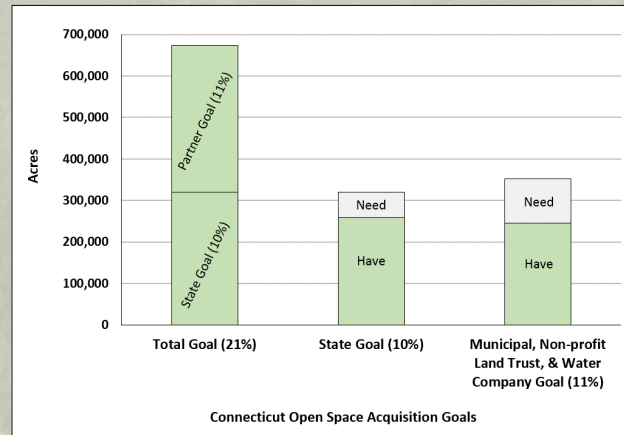
Key remaining lands and waters must be protected now if we wish to leave our future generations with the wildlife habitat, safe air and water, and outdoor recreational opportunities we benefit from today.

Connecticut's Open Space Goal

The state has a goal to protect 21%, or 673,210 acres, of Connecticut's land base as open space by year 2023, as required by section 23-8 of the general statutes.

As of late 2015, the State (DEEP) held about 257,616 acres, or 80%, of its statutory share for open space acquisitions. Most of these lands are associated with the State's system of public Parks, Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, and water access areas.

DEEP's Partners (municipalities, non-profit land conservation organizations, and water companies) held an estimated 243,714 acres, or 69%, of their statutory share for open space acquisitions.



DEEP and its Partners have met 74.5% of the total statewide goal. By working together, DEEP and its partners can achieve Connecticut's goal and ensure the protection of the most important lands for open space.



Connecticut Green Plan Priorities for Land Conservation

The 2016-2020 Green Plan contains an action strategy with acquisition priorities and targeted acreages to protect specific lands identified as capable of providing certain services, for example buffers to climate change, critical habitats, and recreational trails.

The plan recommends the acquisition of lands for environmental and public recreation conservation, centering around four major themes:

- Natural Waters and Drinking Water Resources
- Areas Significant to the Coast
- Natural Heritage Resources
- Natural Resource-based Outdoor Recreation

By targeting resources towards the highest-value conservation and recreation lands, the best remaining lands for open space can be preserved.

Learn more by viewing and downloading the Green Plan at:
www.ct.gov/deep/greenplan