

DEEP Request for Public Comments OSWA/UGCG 2021 Grant Application

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is inviting public comment on the 2021 grant applications for the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) and the Urban Green and Community Garden (UGCG) programs. Demand for OSWA/UGCG grants continues to increase, so DEEP is seeking public comment on how to better address the increased competition to ensure grants are distributed in an equitable manner.

Please provide comments in the following **four priority areas as well as any other issues related** to the grant applications:

1. Public Access
2. Environmental Justice
3. Climate Change
4. Grant Timelines

Public Access

- Providing for public access and passive recreational use of open space properties is a fundamental, core component of the OSWA program, and continues to become more essential with increased demand for outdoor recreational use. Public access for current and past OSWA grants is an important eligibility requirement for an applicant to obtain funding. DEEP is interested in strengthening requirements for equity and public transparency of public access.

Recommend review [OSWA grant application](#) section 1 eligibility; sections 6 & 7 public access including with disabilities; section 13 past OSWA project compliance; and scoring sheet.

Environmental Justice and Equity

- DEEP's Environmental Equity Policy provides that "no segment of the population should, because of its racial or economic makeup....be denied equal access to environmental benefits." This includes the preservation of open space. In addition, [Executive Order 3](#), issued by Governor Lamont in September, 2019, on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (GC3) prioritizes and recognizes that issues of environmental justice and equity are central to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Accordingly, DEEP is reviewing the equitable administration of the OSWA and UGCG programs to preserve and improve open space that is available to all people in Connecticut – including those who live in underserved communities.

Recommend review [OSWA grant application](#) section 8 Community Impact; section 9 Local Support; Scoring Sheet; and [UGCG grant application](#).

Climate Change

- [Executive Order No. 3](#) re-established and expanded the membership and responsibilities of the GC3 to include mitigation, adaptation and resilience in the face of climate change impacts. The GC3 issued a Phase I Near Term Actions report, *Taking Action on Climate Change and Building a More Resilient Connecticut for All* in January 2021. This [Report](#) provides a number of recommendations from several of the working groups, including the Working and Natural Lands and Equity and Environmental Justice Working Groups that we want to take into consideration as we assess the 2021 OSWA and UGCG grant applications.

Recommend review of [OSWA grant application](#) section 2 Conservation, Climate and Recreation value; Scoring Sheet; and [UGCG grant application](#).

Grant Timeframes

- DEEP's goal is to provide for consistent, transparent, equitable funding that allows the state to reach its open space goals in a timely manner. Our goal is to fund projects at levels high enough to adequately support project completion within the two-year timeframe while also providing applicants across the state with the opportunity to secure essential matching funds. For these reasons, DEEP will be focused upon on increased levels of accountability for timeliness and the eligibility requirements and criteria for project selection.

Recommend review of [OSWA grant application](#) section 1 eligibility; section 3 property cost estimate- appraisals; section 13 past OSWA compliance; scoring sheet; [OSWA Instructions Manual](#) and [UGCG grant application](#).

To submit comments, please fill out the following [survey](#).

DEEP appreciates all the public support for the OSWA program! Thank you for your valuable participation and input!