

Open Space Report to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee and the State Bond Commission

March 2021

Overview

Section 22a-6v of the General Statutes of Connecticut requires the Commissioner of the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection to submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to finance, revenue and bonding and to the State Bond Commission each month. The report provides information on the acquisition of land or interests in land by the state, a municipality, water company or nonprofit organization using funds authorized for the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program (OSWA) established under Sections 7-131d and the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program (RNHTP) established under Sections 23-73 to 23-79 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

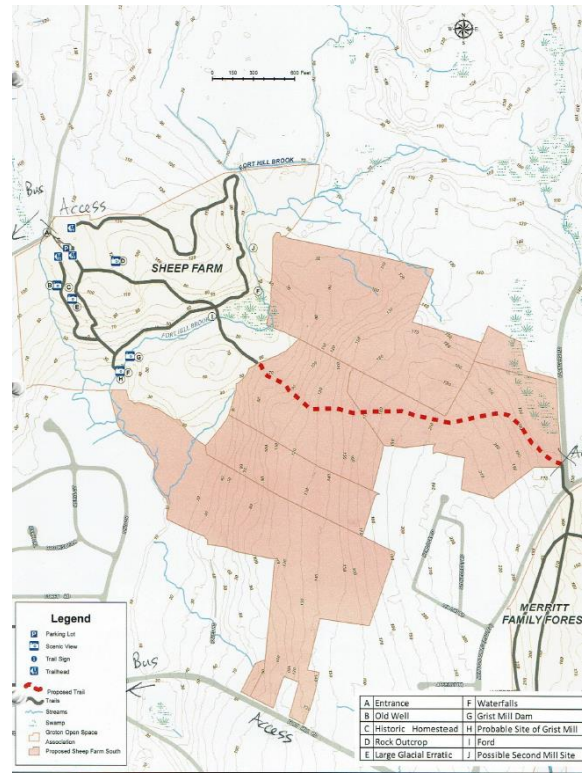
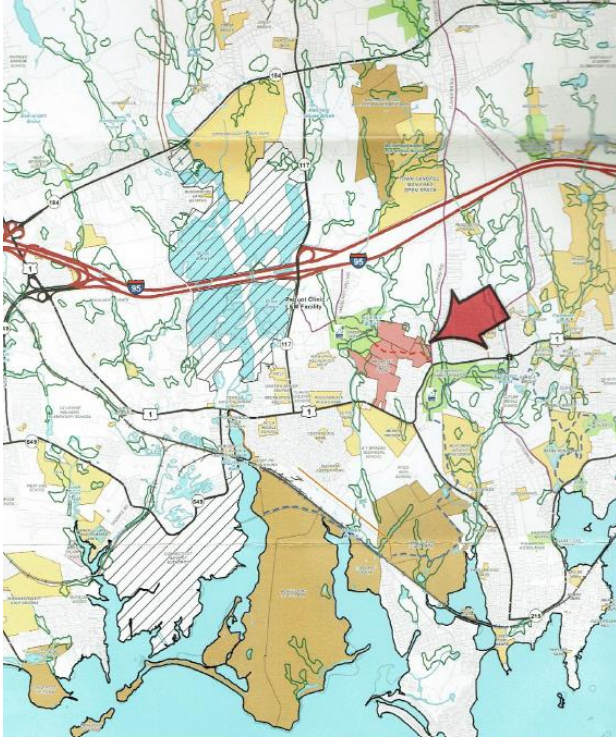
Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program provides grants to municipalities and private nonprofit land conservation organizations for the acquisition of open space land and to water companies to acquire land to be classified as Class I or Class II watershed land. The State of Connecticut receives a conservation and public access easement on property acquired to ensure that the property will be protected and available to residents of Connecticut as open space in perpetuity.

There was one Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grant funded in March 2021. Additional information on the project follows.

Sponsor	Project	Town	Acres Protected
Groton Open Space Association, Inc.	Sheep Farm South	Groton	103.32

**Groton Open Space Association, Inc. (GOSA)
 Sheep Farm South Property, Groton
 103.32 Acres – Fee Acquisition**



This property, with access on Fort Hill Road (Rte.1) and Flanders Road, is adjacent to two GOSA properties, the (initial) 62.75-acre Sheep Farm to the northwest and the Merritt Family Forest to the southeast, as well as the Town-owned Merritt Property to the south. The property features scenic overlooks, rock outcroppings, unique land formations and glacial erratic boulder fields. Fort Hill Brook flows through both Sheep Farm properties, protecting a string of productive vernal pools, high quality wetlands and several species of concern. A 10-foot waterfall barrier prevents fish from climbing up to the pools to prey on large numbers of egg masses and larvae of wood frogs and salamanders. Passive recreational uses include biking, hiking, walking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, photography, wildlife and bird viewing, fishing, nature and history study of foundations, stone pens, stone heaps and geology.

Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program

The Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program is the State of Connecticut’s primary program for the acquisition of lands for the beneficial use and enjoyment of the public as additions to the State’s system of parks, forests, wildlife, fisheries and natural resource management areas. The program acquires land that represents the ecological diversity of Connecticut, including natural features such as rivers, mountainous areas, coastal systems and their natural areas, in order to ensure the conservation of such land for recreational, scientific, educational, cultural and aesthetic purposes.

One acquisition closed in March 2021. Additional information on this project follows.

	Town(s)	Cooperators & Cost Share	State Share	Acres Protected	Purpose of Acquisition
Szymanski Property	Winchester & Torrington	USFWS Highlands Grant \$110,000	\$110,000	74.75	Addition to Paugnut State Forest

Szymanski Property

74.75 Acre – Fee Acquisition

Winchester & Torrington



The Szymanski property features a diverse landscape, including sections of forest with areas of open pastures through the central and eastern portions. The western end of the property is bisected by the east branch of the Naugatuck River, which is a popular river for trout fishing.

The property abuts a section of Paugnut State Forest that had been essentially landlocked and under utilized by the public. The addition of the property will greatly enhance the accessibility to the larger forest for passive recreational uses including hiking, hunting, fishing, bird watching, etc.