

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

**April 2022**

### **Overview**

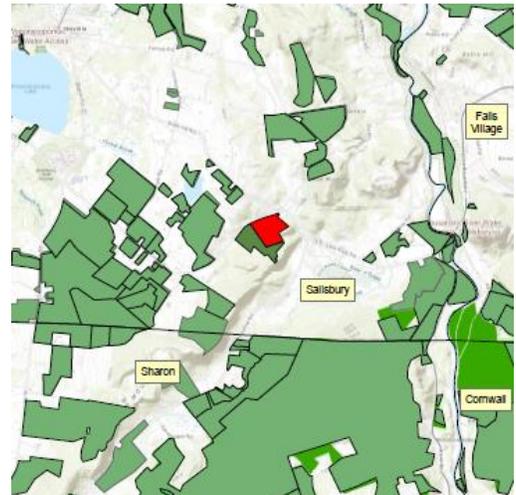
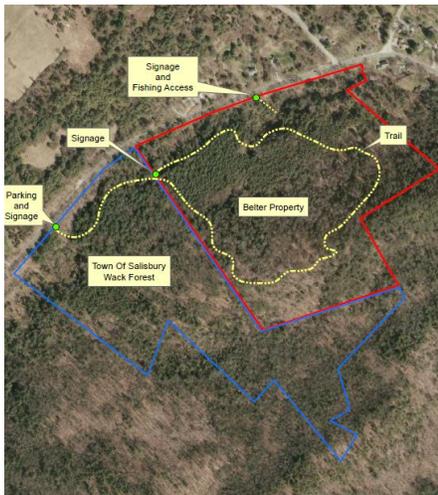
Section 22a-6v of the General Statutes of Connecticut requires the Commissioner of the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection to submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to finance, revenue and bonding and to the State Bond 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 established under Sections 7-131d and the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program 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 were two Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grants funded in April 2022. Additional information on the projects follows.

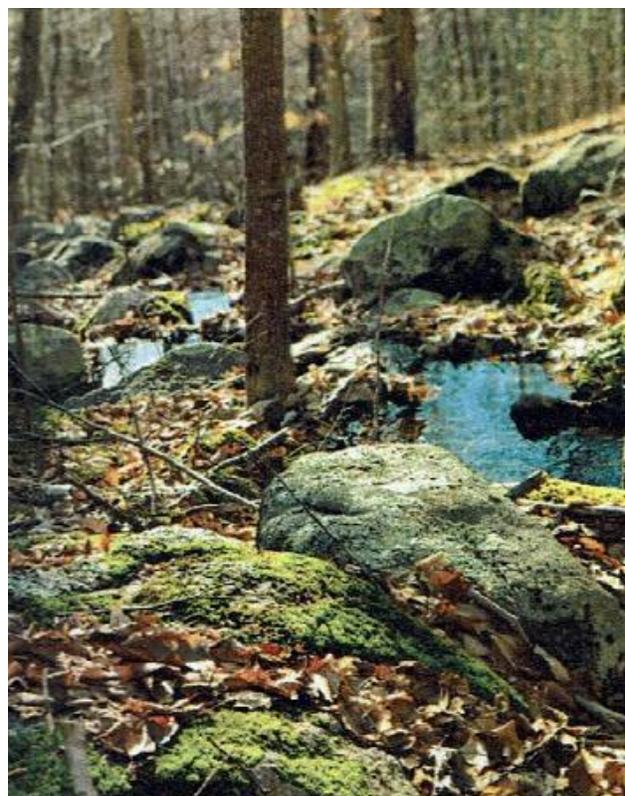
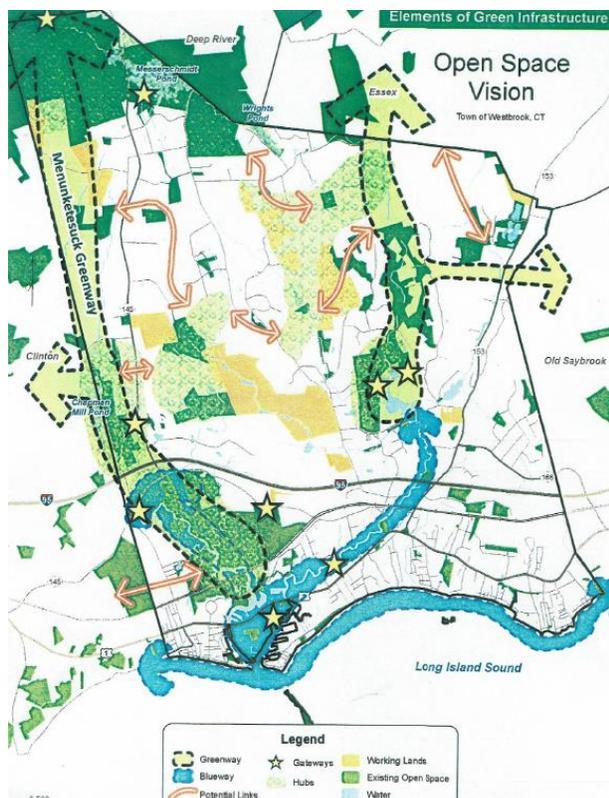
<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Acres Protected</b>
Salisbury Association, Incorporated	Belter Lime Rock Property	Salisbury	114.387
Town of Westbrook	Toby Hill VIII	Westbrook	130.11

**Salisbury Association, Incorporated (SA)  
Belter Lime Rock Property, Salisbury  
114.387 Acre – Fee Acquisition**



The Belter Lime Rock property abuts the Appalachian Trail corridor to the east and the Housatonic State Forest's Sharon Mountain Forest Block to the south and west. It lies on the northernmost ridge of Sharon Mountain and rises to an elevation of 1150 feet. The land has a spring-fed stream that drains to the Salmon Kill and contains 10 acres of surficial aquifer potential. It contains high quality wildlife habitat including core forest, meadow, stream, and steep slopes with bedrock exposures and boulders. An NDDB preliminary assessment indicates that 13 State Listed Species are known to occur within or close to the boundaries. The property is an Audubon-designated Important Bird Area. There is a Subacidic rocky summit/outcrop which is a key habitat of Greatest Conservation Need under Connecticut's Wildlife Action Plan. The public can easily access the property from Route 112 off Route 7, for passive recreation on a planned 1.8 mile loop trail.

**Town of Westbrook**  
**Toby Hill VIII Property, Westbrook**  
**130.11 Acre – Fee Acquisition**



This parcel is within a 500+ acre block of core forest near other protected Westbrook & Essex Land Trust properties, the Town-owned Toby Hill Woods & Town Forest, and the Preserve (municipal, State & land trust owned), helping to create two greenway corridors. It is a mixed coastal hardwood forest containing oak, hickory, beech, black birches and red maples. The Connecticut Water Company's Holbrook well site is located downstream, which serves more than 2000 homes, business and municipal facilities. The site slopes vary from very steep around Trout Brook to nearly flat on the western side. There are glacial erratics, scenic vistas and a plateau, interspersed with wetlands. The upper reaches of Trout Brook, a Class A tributary, runs through the property and native brook trout have been recorded on site. Storm water draining from Toby Hill VIII eventually reaches the Patchogue River Estuary and Watershed. Possible access areas are from both sides of Toby Hill Road, and the Timberland Drive Terminus. The property will be accessible for passive recreational uses.

## 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. There was one Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program closing in April 2022. Additional information on the project follows.

Property Name	Town(s)	Cooperators & Cost Share	State Share	Acres Protected	Purpose of Acquisition
Thomas	Canaan	USFWS Highlands grant \$395,000	\$395,000	269.027	Addition to Housatonic SF & Robbins Swamp WMA

### Thomas Property

#### 269.027 Acres – Fee Acquisition

#### Canaan

The Thomas property in Canaan features two parcels across the street from each other on Route 7 North. The eastern parcel totals 194.272 acres that are being added to the Housatonic State Forest, while the western parcel contains 74.755 acres that are being added to the Robbins Swamp Wildlife Management Area. An incredible diversity of habitat exists across the two parcels. The western parcel of the property includes a northern white cedar swamp along with other calcareous wetland and forested wetland habitats. The eastern parcel rises over 900 vertical feet above the swamp to the ridgeline of Canaan Mountain and includes northern hardwood and mixed hardwood forests, as well as acidic rocky outcrops, with both scrub oak and grassy bald subhabitats. The biodiversity that exists on the property, along with the physical topography make it an important area of resiliency during a time of climate change.

