

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

July 2022

Overview

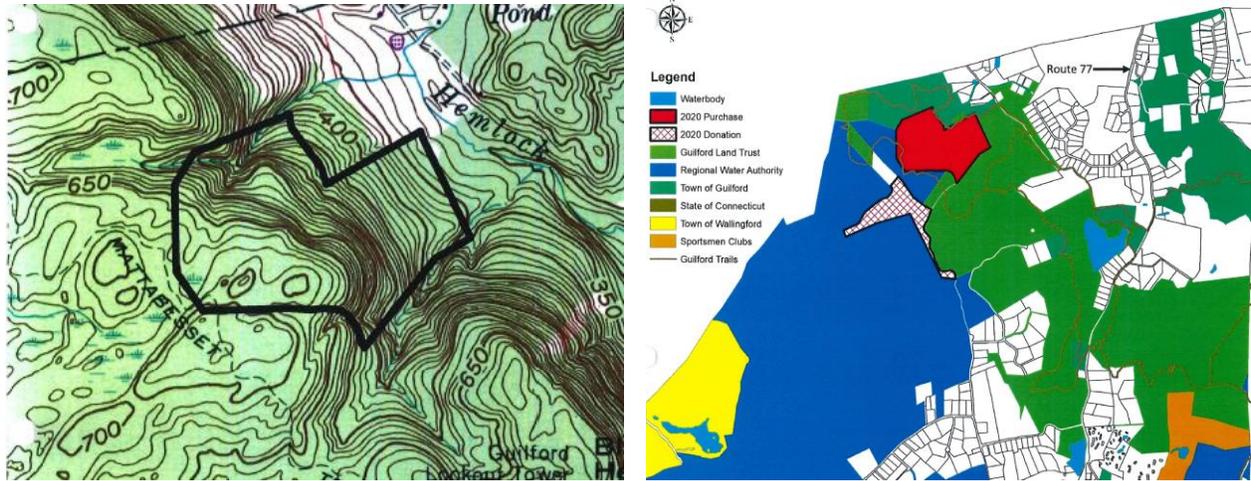
Section 22a-6v of the General Statutes of Connecticut requires the Commissioner of the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection to submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to finance, revenue and bonding and to the State Bond 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. Three acquisitions were funded with Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Funds in July 2022. Additional information about the three projects follows.

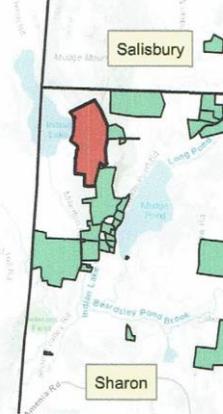
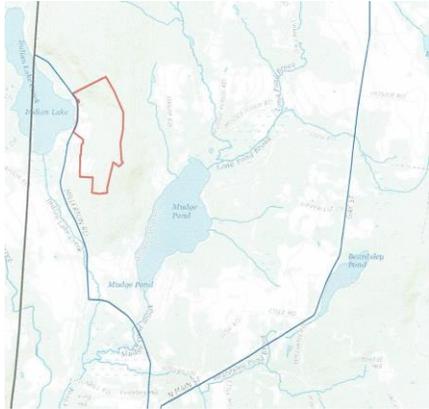
Sponsor	Project	Town	Acres Protected
Guilford Land Conservation Trust, Inc.	Bartlett Preserve / Bluff Head Property	Guilford	80.0739
Sharon Land Trust, Inc	Von Ahn Property	Sharon	175.595
Town of Hebron	Bernstein Property	Hebron	214.2

**Guilford Land Conservation Trust, Inc.
 Bartlett Preserve/Bluff Head Property, Guilford
 80.0739 Acres – Fee Acquisition**



The Guilford Land Conservation Trust, Inc. purchased this 80+ acre property (red parcel above) and received, as a simultaneous gift, a nearby parcel to the southeast (hatch-mark parcel above). The 80+ acre parcel contains trap rock ridge within the northern reaches of Totoket Mountain and is part of the Metacomet Ridge, a 100 mile, fault-block ridge that stretches from the New Haven/Branford line at Lake Saltonstall, through the Connecticut River Valley. The parcel is surrounded by 464 acres of protected open space owned by the Guilford Land Conservation Trust, the South-Central Regional Water Authority and the Town of Guilford. Hemlock Brook flows through the northwest corner of the property, the southerly portion contains a wetlands area and the entire property drains into the Coginchaug River watershed. This 130+ acres of unfragmented forest further protects the New England National Scenic Trail (a state designated greenway with a Blue-Blazed trail, managed by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association and 1 of only 11 national scenic trails in the U.S.). The trails are part of the Bluff Head and Northwoods trail systems, having on and off-street parking for public use. This acquisition will ensure that the public can continue to use these trails in perpetuity.

Sharon Land Trust, Inc.
Von Ahn Property, Sharon
175.595 Acres – Fee Acquisition



The Von Ahn Farm lies on the western reach of Indian Mountain off Connecticut Route 361 and rises 600 feet to its peak elevation at 1,200 feet. It contains wonderful view sheds and has almost a mile of scenic ridgeline on Indian Mountain. This acquisition more than doubles the current protection of Indian Mountain and complete a continuous belt of protected land between Indian Lake and Mudge Pond. The 37 acres of farm fields contain USDA Prime and Statewide Important Farmland soils, and 120 acres are core forest, including upland and riparian forested wetlands. There are wetlands and several headwater streams that drain into Indian Lake. The property is contiguous with Sharon Land Trust's 108-acre Goodbody/Paley Farm Preserve. Other features of the property include shrub land, steep slopes and rocky outcrops. According to an NDDB preliminary assessment, 11 State-listed rare species occur on or near the property. Additional funding for this purchase was provided by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service pursuant to a Highlands Conservation Act grant.



View of Indian Lake from Von Ahn Farm

**The Town of Hebron
Bernstein Property, Hebron
214.2 Acres – Fee Acquisition**



Woods trail leading to Airline Trail



Airline Trail looking south

The Bernstein property is a relatively large parcel of land containing mature forest, agricultural fields in various stages of succession, brook corridors, and wetland corridors. It is located adjacent to the State's Air Line Trail State Park as well as other Town of Hebron Open Space parcels. The southern boundary runs along Judd Brook, a Class A stream that flows into the Jeremy River. The Jeremy River becomes the Salmon River just a few hundred feet from the property's boundary. Eight state listed species are known to occur within or close to the boundaries of the property according to a June 24, 2020 NDDDB preliminary assessment. Frontage on Old Colchester Road will allow for public access via a small parking area and trailhead. The Town of Hebron hopes to establish a small trailhead accessible from the Air Line Trail.



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 were no Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program closings in July 2022.