



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

August 2023

Overview

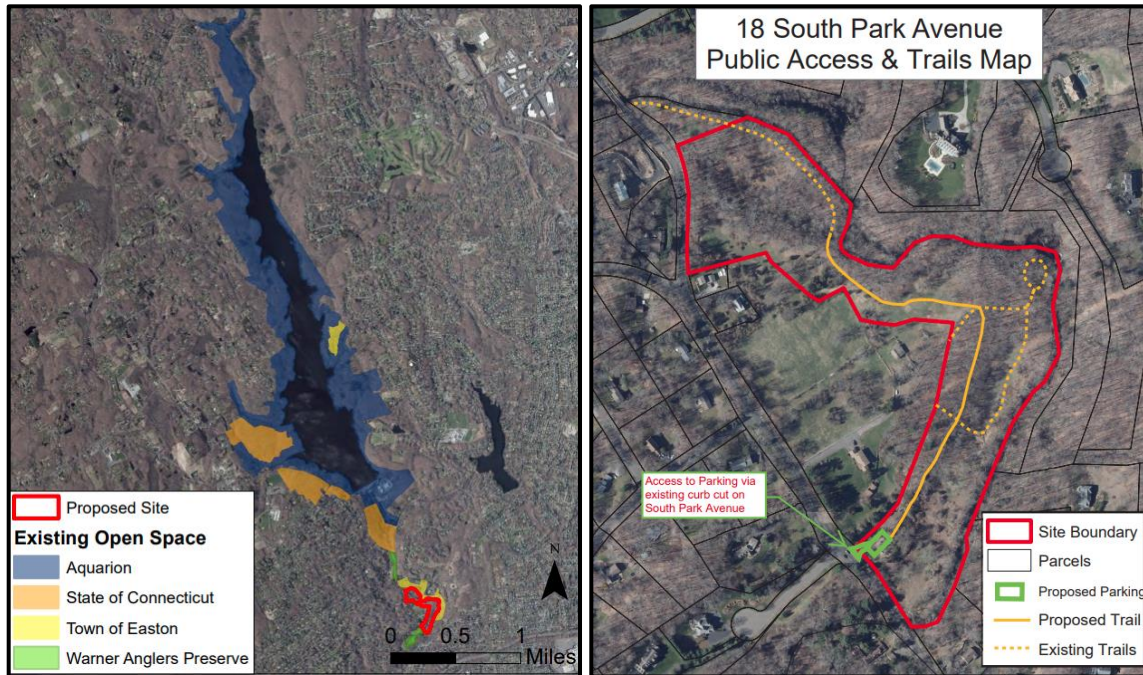
Section 22a-6v of the General Statutes of Connecticut requires the Commissioner of the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection to submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to finance, revenue and bonding and to the State Bond 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 Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program grants were funded in August 2023. Additional information on the projects follows.

Sponsor	Project	Town	Acres Protected
Aspetuck Land Trust, Inc.	18 South Park Avenue	Easton	18.33
Salisbury Association, Incorporated	Belter-Wack Forest	Salisbury	47.235
Aspetuck Land Trust, Inc.	Montanaro Property	Wilton	9.839

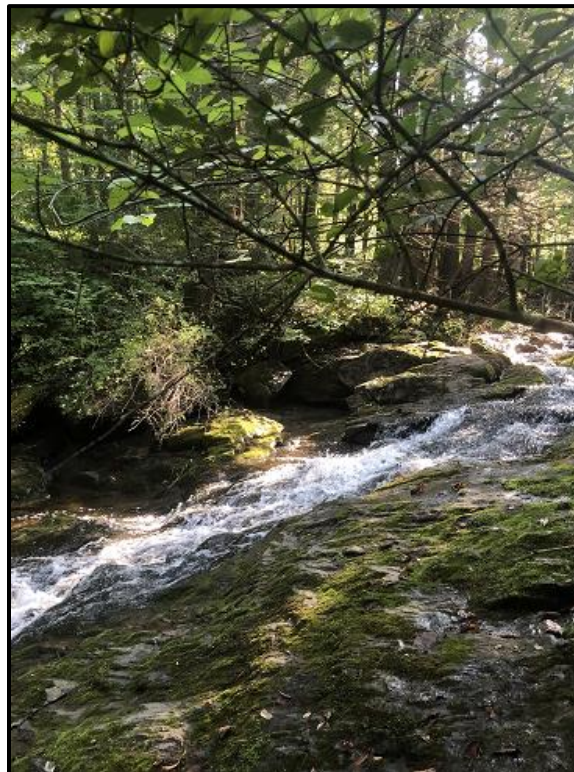
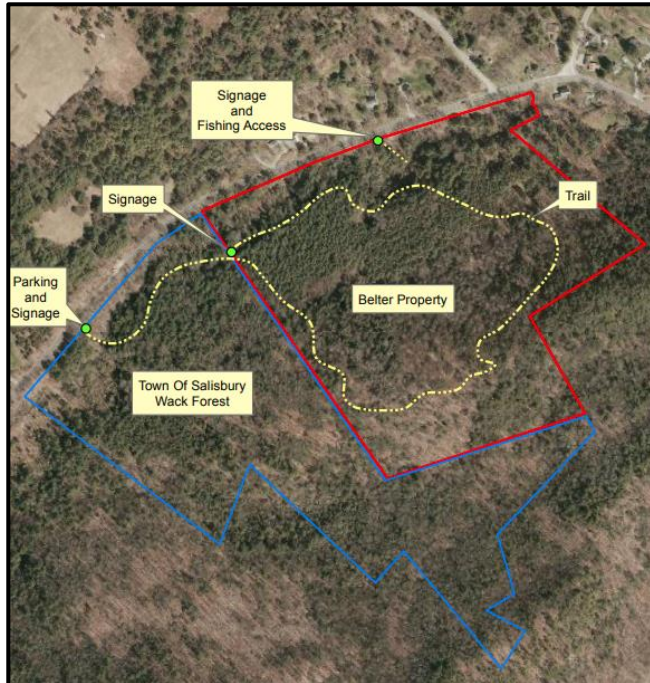
Aspetuck Land Trust, Inc. (ALT)
18 South Park Avenue, Easton
18.33 Acres



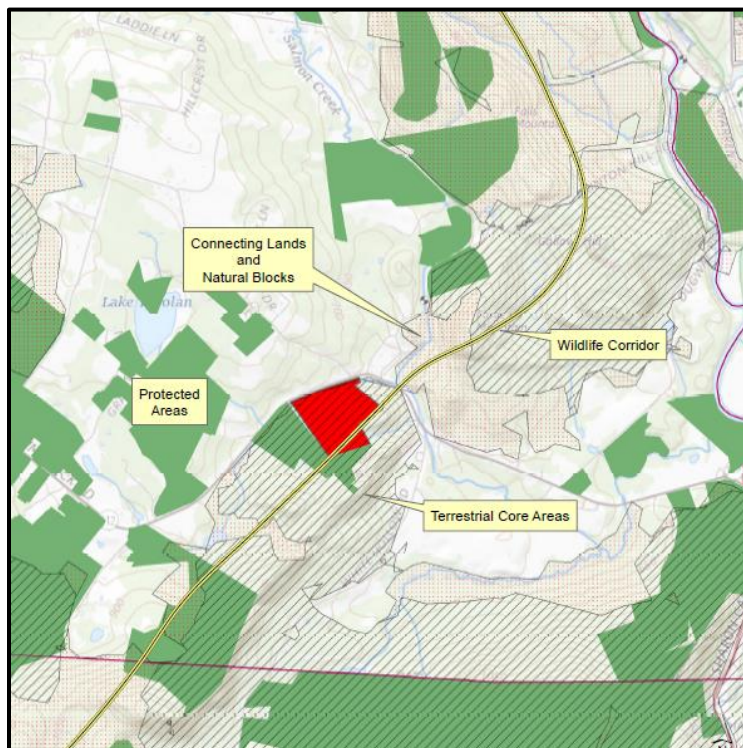
This 18.33-acre parcel, with 3,130 feet of frontage on Mill River in Easton, will be incorporated into the Warner Angler Preserve which would more than quadruple its current area. The opposing riverbank is dedicated Town of Easton Open Space. The acquisition of this parcel would allow the public access for fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing. This section of the Mill River, which sits below Easton Reservoir, is classified as a Class 1 Wild Trout Management Area and supports populations of wild Brook Trout and wild Brown Trout. The NDDB shows the Eastern box turtle, Wood turtle and Sharp-shinned hawk to be known species in the area. ALT will add a parking area to significantly improve public access and a blazed dirt trail for hiking with access to the riverbank will be provided.



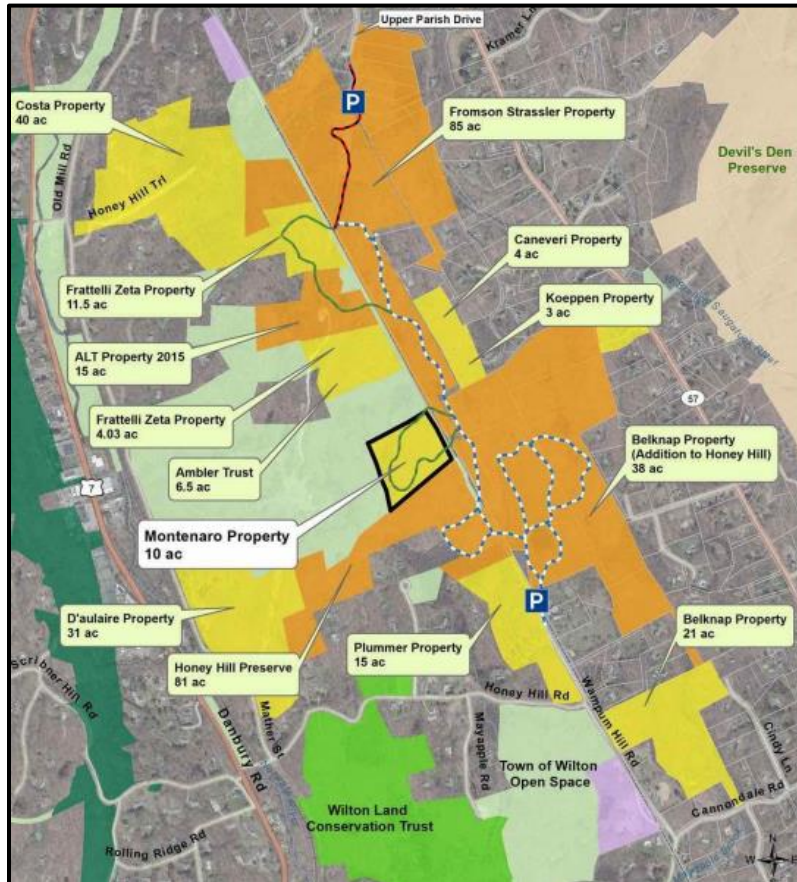
Salisbury Association, Inc. (SA)
Belter-Wack Forest, Salisbury
47.235 Acres



This forested property on Lime Rock Road lies in the center of a critical wildland corridor on the northern ridge of Red Mountain, capturing the ridgeline, summit and riparian habitat supporting a wide variety of wildlife species. It is in an area of high resilience to climate change with core forest providing maximum carbon sequestration and storage. There are streams, steep slopes with bedrock exposures and boulders, 13.5 acres of statewide-important farmland soils and two high gradient wooded tributary streams that drain to the Salmon Kill, a major tributary of the Housatonic River. A NDDDB review determined that there is a Sensitive State Endangered Species and 5 State-listed plant species within or near the area. Salisbury Association will create a loop trail that connects to the adjacent Town-owned 55-acre Wack Forest Preserve, providing passive recreational opportunities for the public such as hiking, fishing and birdwatching. This project received additional funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to a Highlands Conservation Act Grant.



Aspetuck Land Trust, Inc. (ALT)
Montanaro Property, Wilton
9.839 Acres



This 9.839-acre property with frontage on Old 2 Rod Highway, a town-owned paper road, contributes to a 705-acre contiguous forest known as the Weston/Wilton Forest Block (WWFB). This will be the 6th acquisition by ALT in the WWFB, providing passive recreation opportunities such as hiking, dog walking, birding, nature/wildlife observation and photography, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Public access is from a trail head at the Upper Parish Drive terminus (to the north) on the adjacent Fromson-Strassler Property and from a trail head (to the south) at the Wampum Hill Road terminus at Old Two Rod Hwy. ALT plans to connect the WWFB with the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) in Wilton through other open spaces owned by the Town and Wilton Land Conservation Trust. The NRVT is a 38-mile multi-purpose phased trail construction project from Norwalk to Danbury, connecting to the Norwalk Heritage Greenway (a CT designated Greenway). Protection of this property is important for combating climate change because the WWFB is one of the last un-fragmented forests in Fairfield County. It is an important carbon sink that is crucial for preserving critical ecosystems, wildlife habitat and their linkages, wetlands, groundwater fed watercourses, clean drinking water and natural beauty which are all under threat from

a warming climate. The wetlands on the site form a headwater tributary to Mayapple Brook, which discharges into the Norwalk River approximately 1.5 river miles downstream, southwesterly of the site.

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 August 2023. Additional information about the project follows.

Property Name	Town(s)	Cooperators & Cost Share	State Share	Acres Protected	Purpose of Acquisition
Planeta	East Haddam	George Dudley Seymour Trust	--	34.26	Addition to Devils Hopyard State Park

Planeta
Millington Hopyard Rd
East Haddam
Addition to Devils Hopyard SP
34.26 Acres

The Planeta property is a large irregular shaped flag lot that abuts the northwest section of Devils Hopyard State Park. The land is primarily wooded with rolling topography. A stream cuts through the southwestern portion of the property. The acquisition will help expand the park and will provide additional passive recreation opportunities such as hiking and bird watching.

