



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

February 2023

Overview

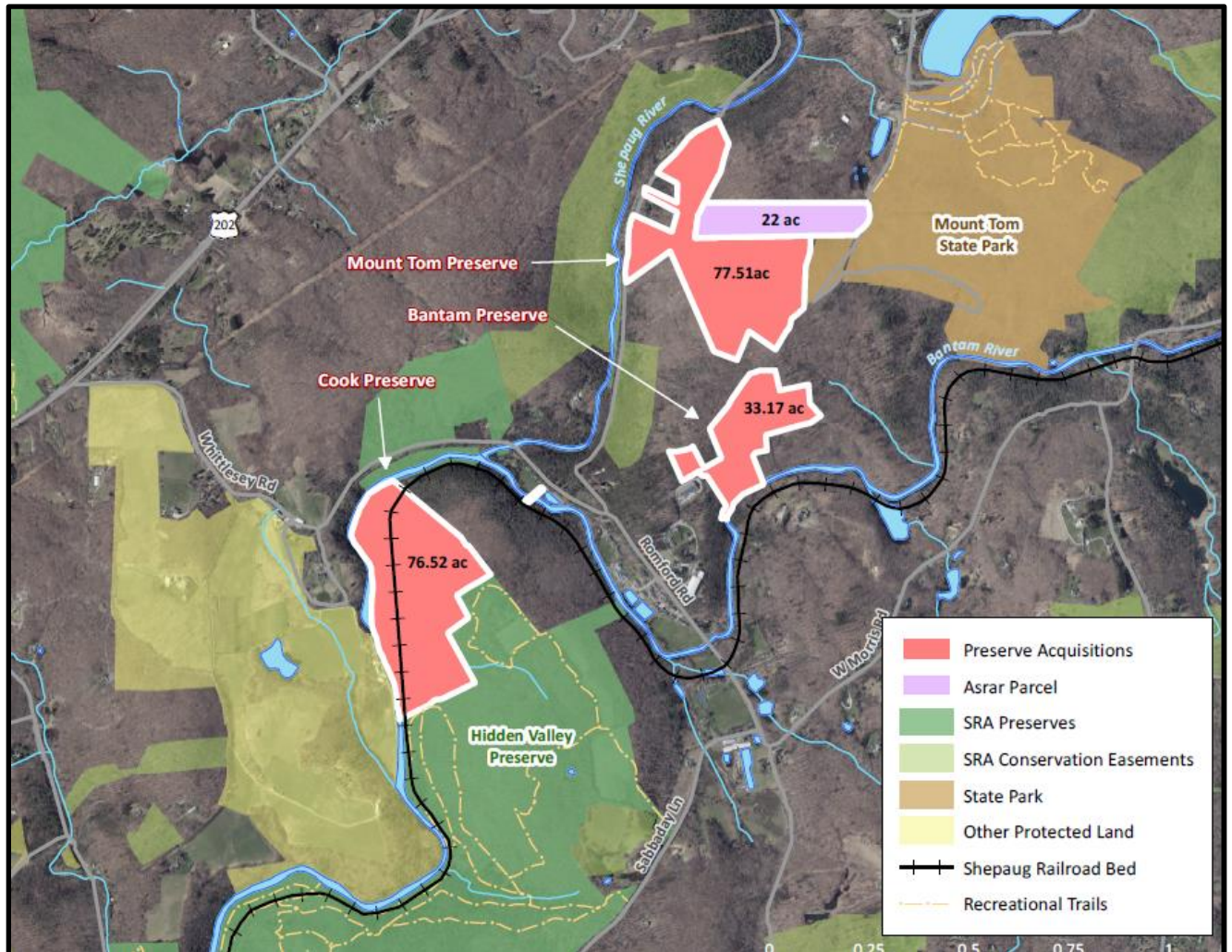
Section 22a-6v of the General Statutes of Connecticut requires the Commissioner of the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection to submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to finance, revenue and bonding and to the State Bond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

Sponsor	Project	Town	Acres Protected
Steep Rock Association, Inc.	Bantam Preserve	Washington	33.17
Steep Rock Association, Inc.	Cook Preserve	Washington	76.52
Steep Rock Association, Inc.	Mt. Tom Preserve	Washington	77.51
Town of Pomfret	Frankfurter Property	Pomfret	130.66
Town of Wallingford	264 Williams Road	Wallingford	95.281

Steep Rock Association, Inc. (SRA)
Bantam Preserve, Cook Preserve and Mt. Tom Preserve, Washington
187.2 Acres total



The Bantam, Cook and Mt. Tom Preserves expand upon SRA's 676-acre Hidden Valley Preserve connecting it to Mount Tom State Park. The three parcels are located within a 1,216-acre core forest, 1,656 acres of protected land and the 13,000+ acre Shepaug Forest Block Important Bird Area. SRA plans to install a 2.1-mile spur trail from the existing Mount Tom State Park trail system.

The 33+ acre Bantam parcel contains 77 feet of riparian habitat along the Bantam River, 6 acres of wetland, a 1-acre swamp, a cold-water stream and an alluvial swamp within floodplain forest.



The 76+ acre Cook Parcel includes 4 vernal pools, 9 acres of Dry Oak-Pine Forest, a 0.22-mile perennial tributary of the Shepaug River, 8 acres of north-central interior and Appalachian rich swamp, 11 acres of wetland alluvial and floodplain soils, a swamp and some USDA Prime and Statewide Important Farmland Soils.

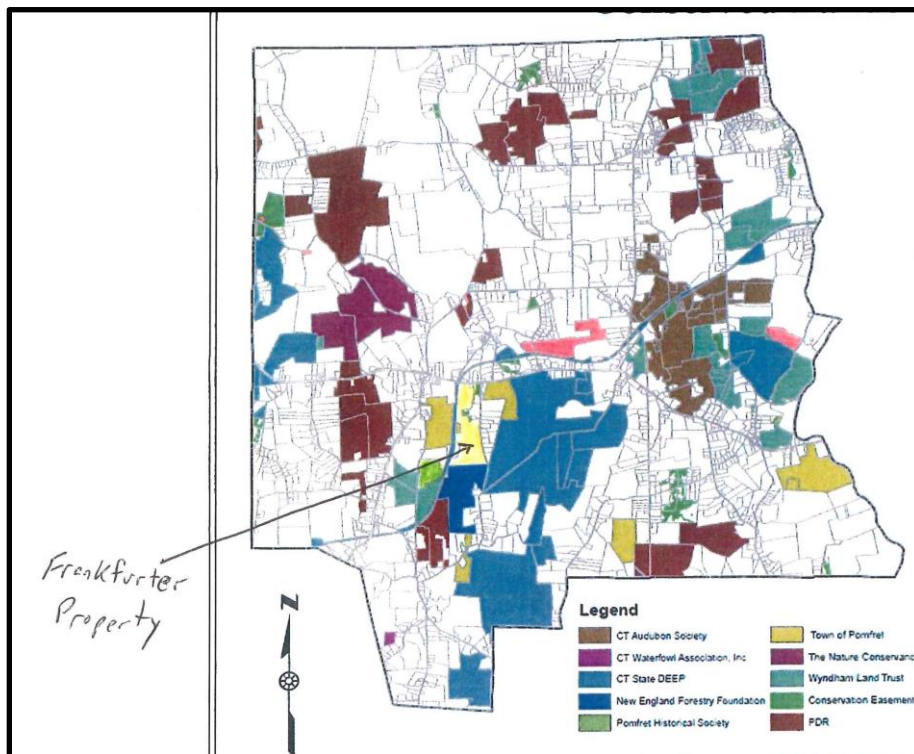
The 77+ acre Mt. Tom parcel is adjacent to DEEP's 231-acre Mount Tom State Park, contains 7 acres of wetland soils, 52 acres of core forest and 0.25 miles of dry sub acidic ridgeline. It protects two GAA-drinking water wells at nearby Rumsey Hall School, is largely mountainous and contains four subpeaks (990', 1040', 1060', 1090').

SRA received supplemental Highlands Conservation Act grant funds from the U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife

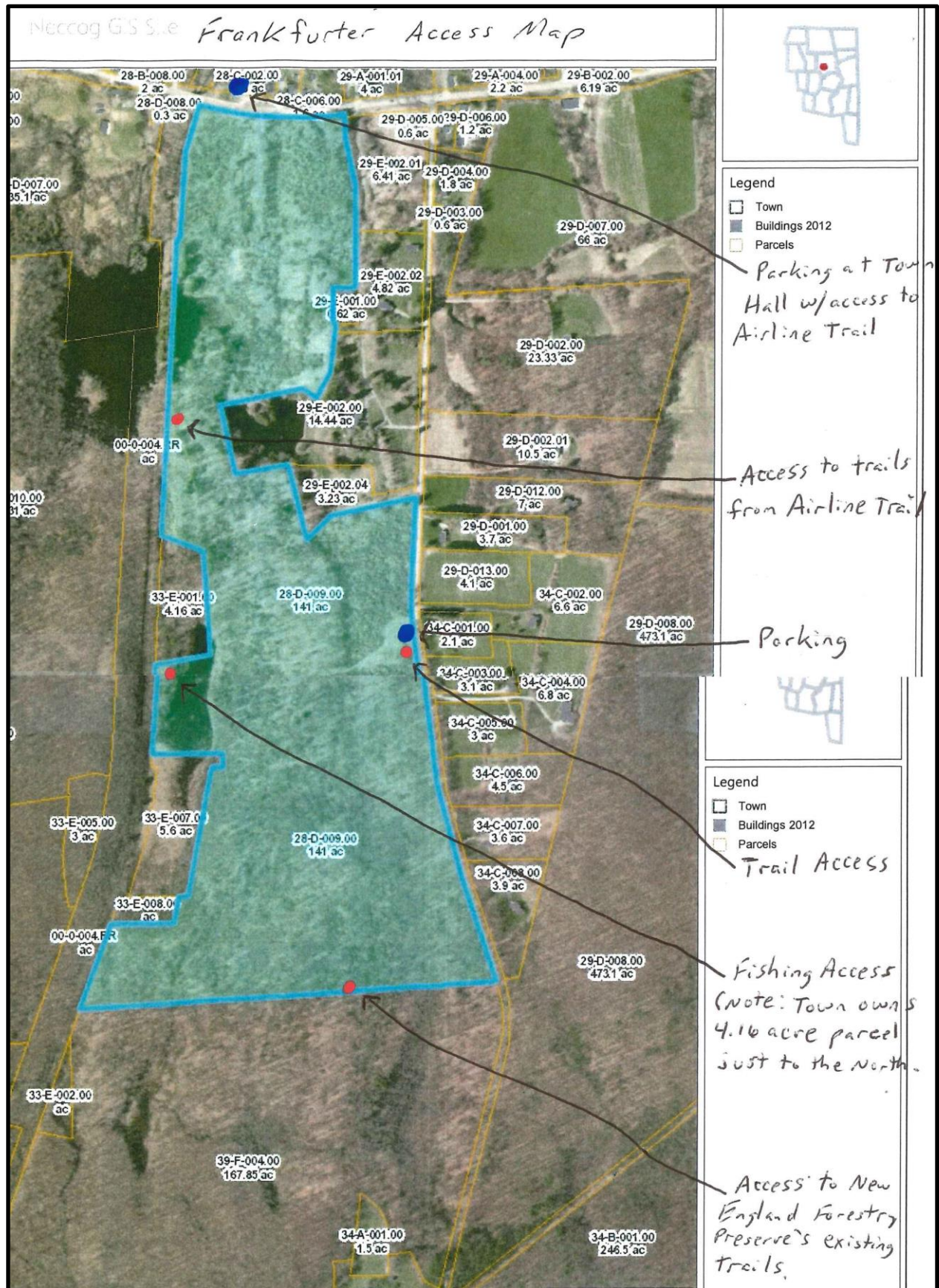
Service for all three (Bantam, Cook and Mt. Tom Preserve) acquisitions.

**Town of Pomfret
Frankfurter Property
130.66 Acres**

This 131-acre parcel is almost completely surrounded by protected open space and adjacent to the Airline Trail. The property was logged about 10 years ago and is now an early successional forest. It is part of a wildlife corridor



made up of more than 2,000 acres of open space. There are 2 inland wetlands and a pond on the property. Old logging roads on the site will be used for passive recreation and can be accessed from several points along the airline trail. The public can also access the property on Wolf Den Road and from the New England Forestry Foundation's trail system. Bass fishing will be permitted on the property's pond.



Town of Wallingford
264 Williams Road
95.281 Acres

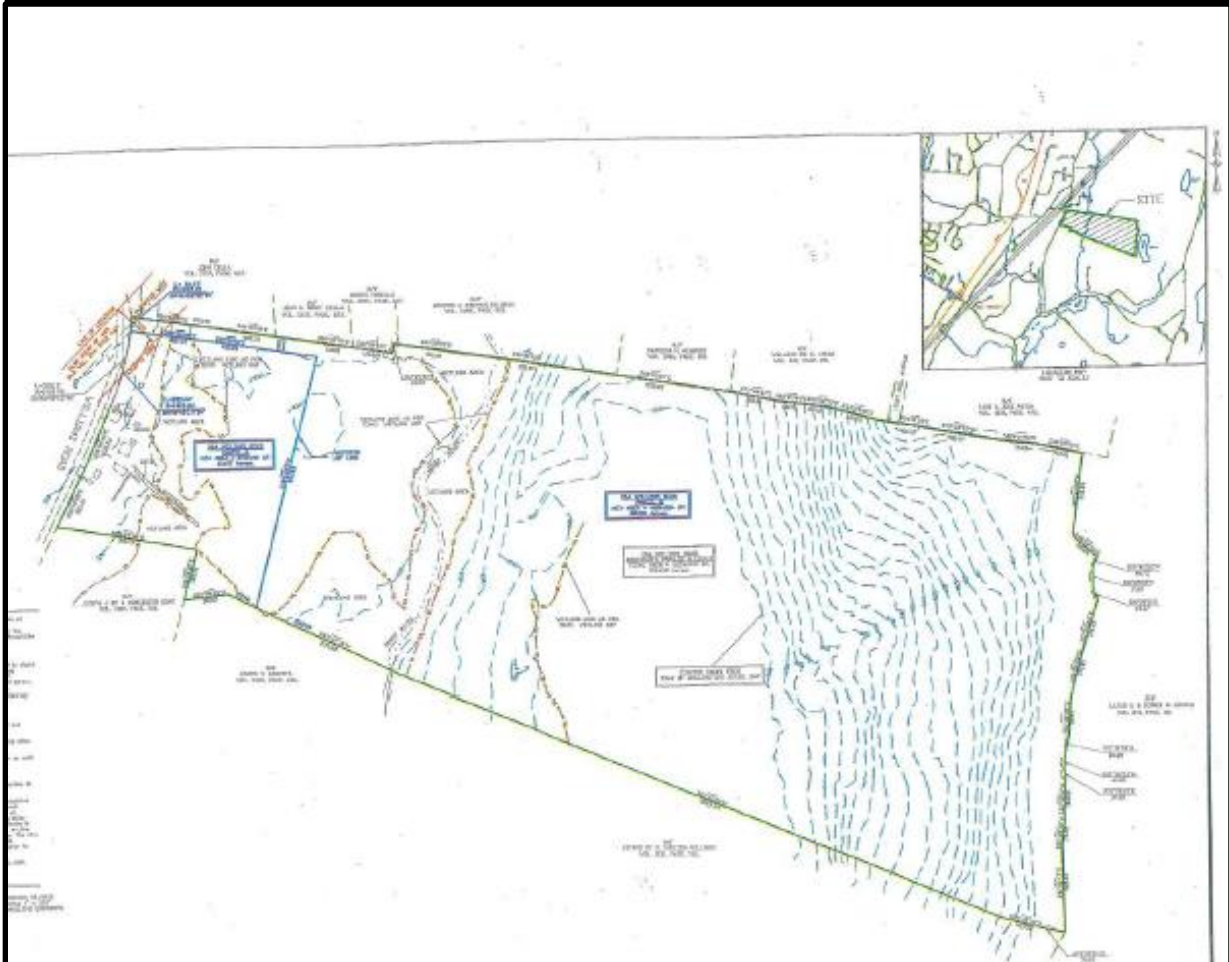
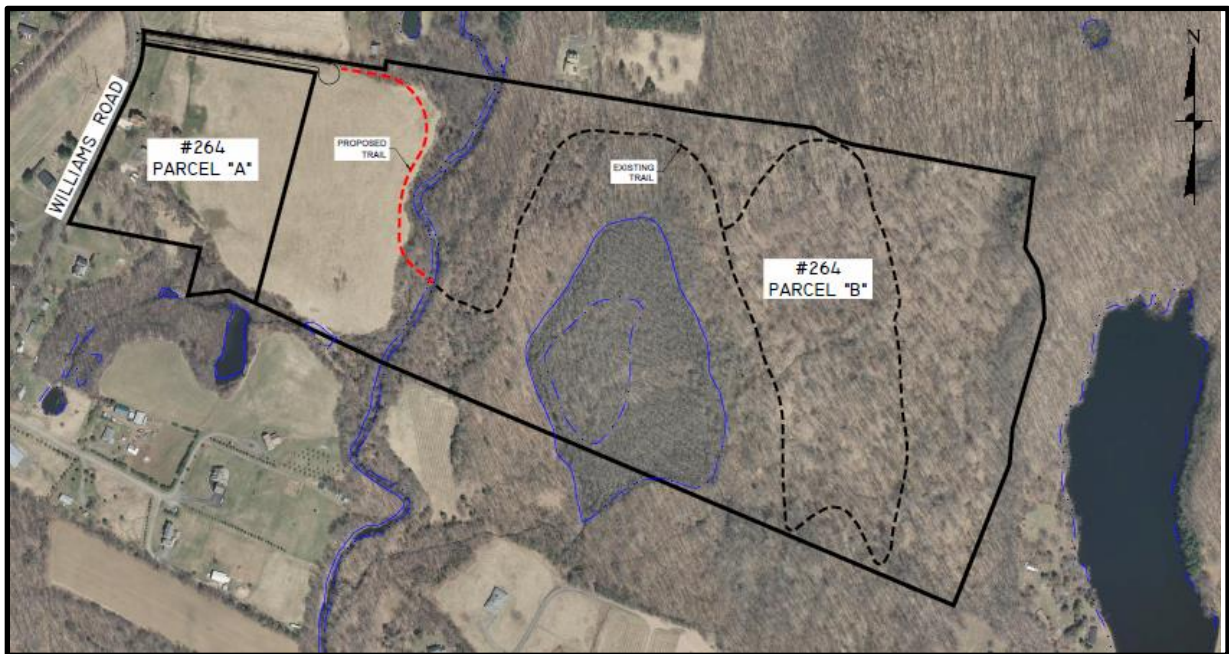
This property, to the rear of 264 Williams Road, is in the Wallingford public drinking supply watershed and will be classified as Class I and Class II water company lands. It contains the Muddy River, a Class AA watercourse, which meets the McKenzie Reservoir approx. 2,500 feet to the south. Preservation of this property protects an



undeveloped watershed area from environmental degradation, contributes to water quality purification in the open and forested areas and protects a public drinking water supply. Public access will be via a Williams Road access strip with parking on its southern edge. The town will create a loop trail, connecting to an existing woods road in the wooded section of the property. Passive recreational activities include hiking, cross country skiing, nature photography and stream fishing (the Muddy River supports a native brook trout population). A scenic viewing area with a bench and a stone dust pad intended for wheelchair use is proposed at the southeast

edge of the access drive affording scenic views over the meadow to the high ridge to the east. The property is westerly of an open space corridor with undeveloped private lands in the eastern side of Wallingford. Migrating flocks are frequently observed landing in these open fields. Ridges are known as 'highways' for wildlife movement and the high ridge on the subject property connects to other ridges offsite.





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 February 2023.