

Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost/Acreage: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2023 Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program Score Sheet

This score sheet was developed to give applicants for open space, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) [Sections C.G.S. 7-131c-k](#), insights into the various factors considered by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) when objectively ranking applications. DEEP reserves the right to consider additional factors that may not be listed on the score sheet in determining initial or final rankings. Various experts within DEEP are employed to score each application based on their resource value pertaining to their area of expertise. The following is a list of resource values and the sought attributes.

### **Disqualifying Characteristics**

(Please refer to the eligibility section of the application for additional considerations)

- Organizations with OSWA projects awarded prior to 2020 should not apply until those projects are completed or grant funds are turned back/rescinded. If applicant has projects, awarded prior to 2020, that are not closed or not turned back, the **PROJECT IS REJECTED**
- If land is to be used for Commercial Purposes (other than forest management/agricultural use). **PROJECT IS REJECTED**
- If the land is to be used for recreational purposes requiring intensive recreational development (golf courses, driving ranges, tennis courts, ballfields, swimming pools and uses by motorized vehicles other than vehicles needed by water companies to carry out their purposes). **PROJECT IS REJECTED.** (Trails or pathways for pedestrians, motorized wheelchairs or nonmotorized vehicles shall not be considered intensive development).
- If land is associated with environmental contamination and will not be remediated prior to acquisition in a manner that is satisfactory to the Commissioner. **PROJECT IS REJECTED**
- Land is to be acquired by eminent domain. **PROJECT IS REJECTED**
- If land was acquired by applicant prior to the grant application deadline. **PROJECT IS REJECTED** (unless a waiver, in writing by the DEEP Commissioner, is provided with the grant application)
- Required appraisal(s) were not provided by the appraisal deadline. **PROJECT IS REJECTED**
- If applicant has not clearly demonstrated compliance regarding public access components and task completion/closing timeframes included in previous OSWA grant awards. **PROJECT IS REJECTED** (the public access component is not applicable to water company lands eligible to be classified as class I or class II water supply properties)
- For all applicants, if the project is inconsistent with the Municipal Plan of Conservation & Development the **PROJECT IS REJECTED.**

## **Administrative (100 points)**

### **1. Mapping:** Did the applicant provide the following maps or photos supporting their project description? **(20 points)**

- Map with contour lines from GIS database such as [UCONN CLEAR](#) or [Avenza](#) or topographic map with USGS 1:24,000 scale, with site outline
- Location map/town road map, with site outline (showing road frontage/property access)
- A2 survey (not required for application but required for grant) **OR** property boundary map
- Ortho-photo map, with site outline
- Two or more high resolution photographs of natural resource-based features

### **2. Title, funding and feasibility of acquisition per DEEP's timeline (<2years) (20 points)**

- Copy of deed
- Copy of recent title search, ALTA title policy endorsement, or Certificate of Title (with copies of all recorded and unrecorded liens or encumbrances) **OR**
- Signed Letter of Intent by seller **OR** signed Purchase and Sales Agreement
- Copy of statement showing purchase funds available in the Open Space Acquisition Account or from other funding sources
- Copy of statement showing stewardship funding and capability to operate and maintain the property
- Resolution authorizing the expenditure of funds (municipal or corporate)

### **3. Local, State & Regional Conservation Goals: (20 points)**

Acquisition aligns with Local, State, Regional, Federal, or other regional conservation goals or plans

- Acquisition is consistent with Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development
- Acquisition is consistent with State's 2016-2020 Green Plan
- Acquisition is consistent with State's Wildlife Action Plan, Forest Action Plan, State's Hazard Mitigation Plan, Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- Acquisition aligns with applicable regional Council of Government plans of conservation and development

Please attach relevant excerpts of the plan(s), not entire plans.

### **4. Municipal Support Letters (20 points):** Did the applicant provide letters of municipal support?

- Municipal CEO or governing legislative body
- Municipal Planning and/or Zoning Department
- Municipal Inland Wetland, Conservation or Open Space Commission

### **5. State or Regional Support Letters (20 points):** Did the applicant provide letters of support from State, or Regional Councils of Government? Were other letters of support provided from recreational or local land conservation organizations?

**Please submit only one letter of support per organization.**

**Public Access and Outdoor Recreation (100 points):** Pursuant to CGS section 7-131d(e), the public access requirement is exempt, for water companies requesting funds to purchase drinking water watershed land classified as class I or II land. Water companies that do not allow public access score at the same percentage of points that they received in the rest of their application. For example, if a water company that does not allow public access, receives 80% of available points in the rest of their application, it would receive 80% of the available points in this section. Water companies, that will allow public access at the proposed acquisition, will be scored based on the criteria below.

**1. How will the proposed property be accessible by the general public? (20 points)**

- Did the applicant provide a map showing how the public will access the proposed acquisition (signage, parking, and trail locations)?
- If the proposed acquisition does not have frontage on a public street, does the applicant own an abutting property, providing feasible street frontage and public access?
- Will the sign location be clearly visible from the roadway and parking area?
- Will the parking area be on-site and off-street?

**2. Public Outreach (20 Points).** Did the applicant describe how information and maps showing public access and parking will be permanently posted on the applicant's website, municipality website and/or [CT Trail Finder](#)? Did the applicant describe its public outreach plan for communicating the open space grant award and the public access opportunity, including press, social media, and other community engagement?

**3. Accessibility for people with disabilities (20 points).** Did the applicant demonstrate how Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility will be integrated into the design, physical landscape and structural components of the project? If not, did the applicant explain why accessibility for people with disabilities cannot be incorporated?

**4. Trail or Greenway Connectivity (20 points).** Does the project provide a linkage or contribute to a developing or existing greenway including an existing trail system of statewide importance such as: CT Blue Blazed Hiking Trail System, a CT Designated Greenway, National or Scenic Trail or waterway? Does the greenway offer opportunities for passive and active recreational uses or non-motorized transportation? Does the property have preserved open space on one, two, three or all sides? Did the applicant provide a map showing the acquisition's location relative to existing open space?

**5. Public Access Compliance at Previously funded OSWA Acquisitions (20 points).** Did the applicant demonstrate proof that all their previously funded OSWA acquisitions continue to be easily and readily accessible for public access (excluding water company lands eligible to be classified as class I or class II lands)?

- Links to ([CT Trail Finder](#), municipal website or applicant's website, etc.) showing how the public can access the property.
- Pictures of each property's funding acknowledgement sign (with DEEP logo)
- Pictures of each property's parking area, public access trail(s) and ADA components.

## **Environmental Justice and Equity (100 points)**

### **1. Did applicant demonstrate how project aligns with the GC3 EJ recommendations (20 points)?**

[GC3 Phase1 Report Jan2021.pdf \(ct.gov\)](#) including, but not limited to, support for urban forestry and community interest in tree planting and maintenance, parks, and/or community gardens in densely populated areas; expansion of urban green spaces that incorporate nature-based solutions; and protects smaller farms in more urban and suburban communities including support for urban agriculture initiative and socially disadvantaged producers, including Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), or Working and Natural Lands recommendations?

### **2. Community Impact (20 points):**

- Is the property located in a distressed municipality or target investment community?
- Is the property in an urban area with growth and development pressures or an area with open space deficiencies and underserved populations as a small lot or a larger open space parcel?
- How close/far away are nearby urban areas?
- If the property is not close to an urban area, how will the applicant encourage visitation from cities/urban centers?
- Is the property in an area where significant growth/development has occurred or is planned?
- Does the proposal create a pocket or community park suitable for a community garden or urban forest?
- Is the project located in an area with significant need for open space?

### **3. Public Transportation (20 points).** Is the property accessible via public transportation? If so, what public transportation system? How far away is the nearest public transportation stop/station?

### **4. Population Density (20 points).** Does the applicant identify the number of people impacted in the local community by the purchase, including the major service area(s), neighborhood(s), city(s), region(s) that would be affected? What is the population in the municipality and the population density per square mile?

### **5. Multi-Family or Mixed Income Housing (20 points)**

- Is the property listed within an exempt municipality designated by the Commissioner of Housing that has at least 10% mixed income housing?
- Has the property ever been considered for multi-family or mixed income housing development? Did the applicant provide details and/or include letter(s) of support from local land preservation, environmental justice and/or equity organizations, in support of the acquisition as open space?

## **Climate Change and Natural Resources (100 points)**

**Did the applicant demonstrate how the project supports GC3 Working and Natural Lands recommendations Near Term Actions, January 2021 Report?** [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3\\_Phase1\\_Report\\_Jan2021.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3_Phase1_Report_Jan2021.pdf)

### **Forests (20 points)**

- It contains productive forest soils, has the potential for productive timber growth and demonstrates the capability to sequester and store carbon by applying adaptive and mitigating forest practices, including supporting action to increase statewide forest cover from 59% to over 60% by 2040;
- It contains diverse forest types, unique habitats, or cultural resources;
- It has or will have a Forest Stewardship Plan developed for the property that identifies landowner goals and objectives and includes various aspects of forest resource stewardship;
- It is a suitable size to support active forest management and is adjacent to protected forest land or core forest area;
- It supports statewide, regional, and local actions that align to maintain un-fragmented forests within and across boundaries with an emphasis on connections to waterways and wetlands, core forests, and wildlife habitat linkages (GC3 Phase I Report recommendation 27 b);
- Does the applicant indicate that the property is within, or contributes to a core forest, and that it aligns with the definition of core forest utilized in the application?

### **Wetlands (20 points)**

- It is adjacent to freshwater and tidal wetlands;
- It includes riparian lands adjacent to cold water streams, beaches and dunes and areas of tidal marsh migration;
- It conserves identified ecosystem services vulnerable to climate change such as preserving inland advancement zones to help create future protective storm buffers for coastal communities while preserving ecologically important habitat and Long Island Sound (GC3 Phase I Report recommendation 32a & 32b);
- It supports nature-based adaptation strategies that will reduce flooding including natural habitat/wildlife conservation and/or incorporation into state or local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans (NHMP) (GC3 Phase I Report Recommendation 33a & 33c);
- It supports conservation of wildlife in area that is already highly developed; and
- It contains a diversity of habitat types or special wildlife feature including, but not limited to, an area where threatened and endangered species occur or is an area identified as a Nature's Network Core or Connector (<http://www.naturesnetwork.org/>).

### **Rivers & Fisheries (20 points)**

- It protects lands that preserve high-quality natural waters, and drinking water resources;
- It protects the future ecosystem services value of inland waters under a changing climate including prioritizing resilient river networks that will likely maintain diversity and functional integrity (GC3 Phase I Report Recommendation 35);
- It protects fish and wildlife through land conservation around cold water streams and resilient river systems (GC3 Phase I Report Recommendation 39);

- It protects land valuable to inland and marine fisheries because it provides quality, unique fish habitat, access to fishing opportunities, and anadromous or catadromous fish restoration or other fisheries management initiatives; and
- It protects land valuable for preserving and/or enhancing water quality because it is within a watershed which is already >25% but <50% protected, >50% but <75% protected, near wellheads, aquifers or drawdown areas, has potential for Class I or Class watershed land protection; and headwaters of a stream or river.

**Agriculture and Soils (20 points)**

- The acquisition reduces conversion of prime and important farmland soils, agricultural land, forest land and other soil landscapes that provide critical ecosystems (GC3 Phase I Report Recommendation 41);
- The site is valuable for preserving local agricultural heritage because, for example, it is currently a food-producing farm;
- It meets criteria established for the Department of Agriculture’s Farmland Preservation Program; and
- The primary farmland soils cover more than 30% of the property
- A soils map was provided

**Wildlife (20 points)**

The property is valuable for the conservation of wildlife because of the following reasons:

- It contains a diversity of habitat types;
- It contains a special feature that is important to wildlife (upland area, vernal pool, grassland/scrubland, cold water stream, coastal habitat);
- It includes area identified as important for state or federal listed species;
- It includes area identified as a [Nature’s Network Core or Connector](#);
- It represents an important roosting area for birds of concern or a breeding area for species of concern;
- It is in an area where threatened and endangered species occur or that includes a high concentration of species of concern; and
- It includes a habitat type that is rare, infrequent, or otherwise critical.

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|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Administrative                       | 100 points |
| Public Access and Outdoor Recreation | 100 points |
| Environmental Justice & Equity       | 100 points |
| Climate Change and Natural Resources | 100 points |