

October 3, 2013

Patrick O'Brien
Office of Policy and Management
Bureau of Assets Management
450 Capitol Avenue - MS#52ASP
Hartford, CT 06106-1379

Re: Proposed Land Transfer, former Cedarcrest Hospital, Newington and Wethersfield

Dear Mr. O'Brien:

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has reviewed the Notice of Proposed Land Transfer regarding the former Cedarcrest Hospital on some 88.5 acres of land at 525 Russell Road in Newington and 300 Russell Road in Wethersfield ("the Property"). The Department has reviewed the proposed land transfer for the purpose of determining if significant natural, recreational, or other valuable resources that should be preserved exist on the Property.

It has been determined that significant natural resources are present on the Property that should be preserved.

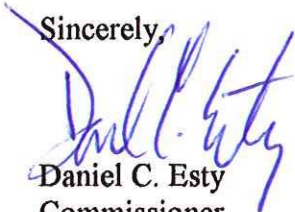
In particular, the Department identified the traprock ridge known as Cedar Mountain that runs approximately north to south through the Property as a significant natural resource. Traprock ridges are critical habitats for the protection of wildlife. The State of Connecticut set a policy of protection and preservation for certain traprock ridges, including Cedar Mountain, in AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTION OF RIDGELINES ([Public Act No. 95-239](#)). The *Conservation & Development Policies: the Plan for Connecticut 2013-2018* also affirms the State's policy to protect and preserve ridgelines. Further, traprock ridges are classified as one of the twelve key habitats essential to protection of Connecticut's species of greatest conservation need in *Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*. While not the result of comprehensive or site-specific field investigations, the Natural Diversity Database, maintained by the Department, contains a record of a State threatened Peregrine Falcon nesting on the northern property line.

The Department believes that the area of the traprock ridge that has not yet been developed and the area directly adjacent to the nesting Peregrine Falcon should be protected through a conservation easement. The area that should be subject to preservation has been identified on the attached map as the Preservation Parcel. Since the property would not serve as a useful addition to the state's system of parks, forests, wildlife areas, the Department recommends the subject area be protected through transfer to the Town or a non-profit conservation organization with a conservation easement provided to the Department.

In addition, approximately ten acres of the former Cedarcrest Hospital is subject to a legislatively-imposed conveyance. Section 15 of [Public Act No. 10-1](#) of the June Special Session states that “the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Commissioners of Environmental Protection and Public Works shall develop a plan to preserve approximately ten acres of said parcel as open space.” The general location of this ten acre parcel is also shown on the attached map as the Conveyance Parcel. The Department is happy to participate with the appropriate parties in developing such a plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this proposed land transfer. If there are any questions regarding these recommendations, please contact David Fox of the Office of Environmental Review at 860-424-4111 or david.fox@ct.gov.

Sincerely,



Daniel C. Esty
Commissioner

cc: Shane P. Mallory, DAS

Report on Basis for Preservation Recommendations

Proposed Land Transfer Former Cedarcrest Hospital, Newington and Wethersfield

Background

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) was notified of the proposed land transfer of the former Cedarcrest Hospital on some 88.5 acres of land at 525 Russell Road in Newington and 300 Russell Road in Wethersfield (“the Property”).

Significant Natural Resources

DEEP has identified two significant natural resources that should be preserved on the property. The first is the traprock ridge, known as Cedar Mountain that runs the length of the Property in a north to south direction. The second is the area in the north east corner of the Property near a nesting Peregrine Falcon.

Basis for Preservation Recommendations

The State of Connecticut has an established policy of protecting traprock ridgelines from development. This policy of protection and preservation of traprock ridges, including Cedar Mountain, can be found in AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTION OF RIDGELINES ([Public Act No. 95-239](#)), a Public Act that permits towns to protect and preserve certain traprock ridges in Connecticut through zoning regulations. State law does not specifically provide for development restrictions to protect any other specific terrain or habitat. The Conservation & Development Policies: the Plan for Connecticut 2013-2018 also affirms the State’s policy to protect and preserve ridgelines.

Traprock ridges, including Cedar Mountain, have been identified in *Connecticut’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy* as one of the twelve key habitats essential for the protection of Connecticut’s most at-risk species. These twelve habitats were identified as those of greatest conservation need in Connecticut. *Connecticut’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy* provides the following information about traprock ridges.

Traprock Ridges include a variety of habitats, ranging from dense forest to open rocky summits, cliff faces, consolidated rock, boulders, gravel, talus, or unconsolidated materials. Plants are scattered or absent, covering less than 26% of the substrate if present. Of most significance are large contiguous areas of forest, rich, moist lower slopes, and the rocky summit-cliff-talus complex. Traprock ridges

contain many of the habitats of conservation significance that are described in this document, but the extensive, uninterrupted and undeveloped nature of these ridges and the abundance of greatest conservation need (GCN) species that occur there, warrants consideration of these areas as a separate subhabitat. Traprock Ridges are generally in good condition.

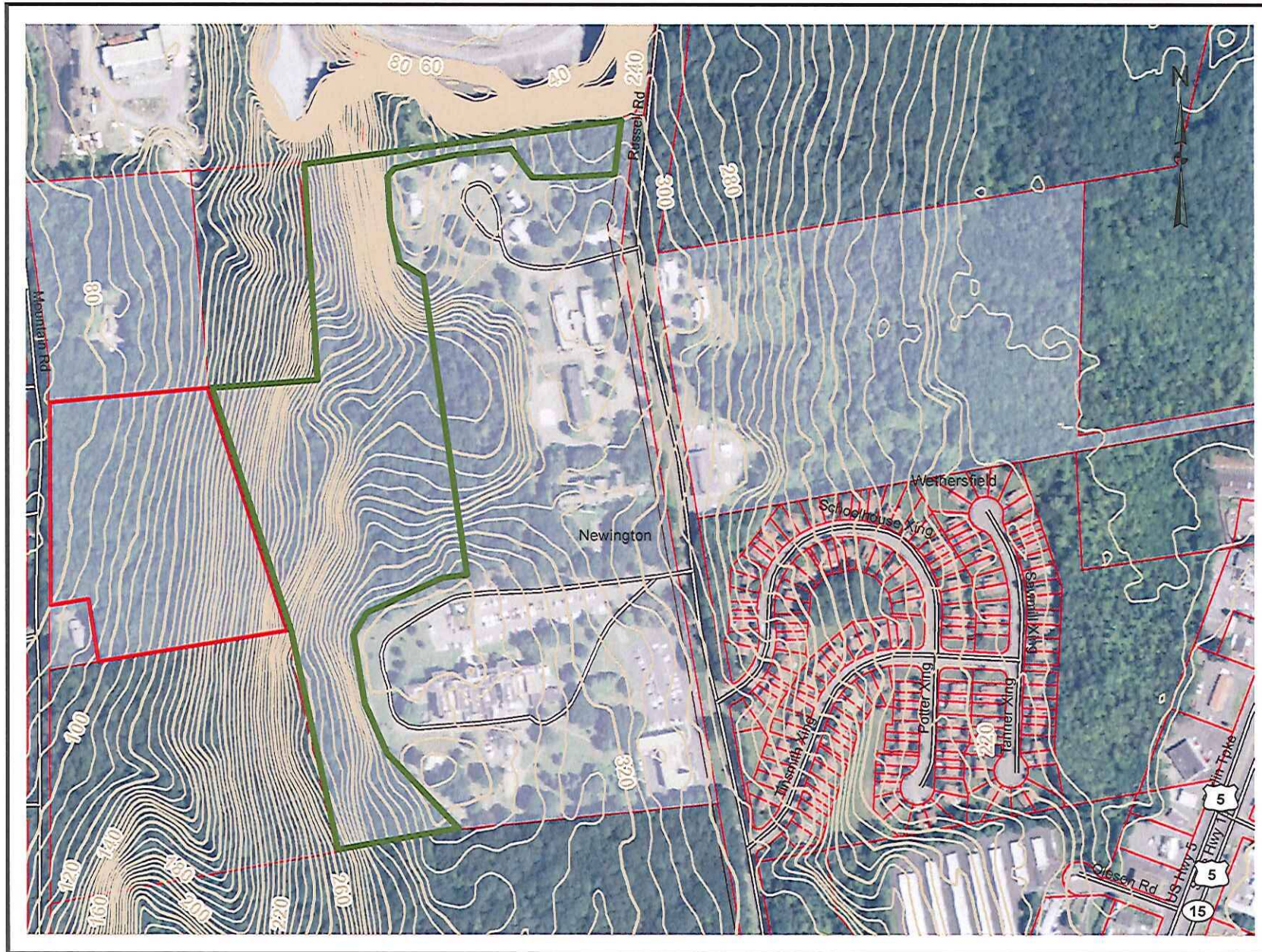
Traprock Ridges GCN Species by Taxon		
<p><u>Mammal</u> <i>Very Important</i> Bobcat Meadow Jumping Mouse</p> <p><u>Bird</u> <i>Very Important</i> Common Raven Peregrine Falcon</p> <p><i>Important</i> Black-throated Green Warbler Cape May Warbler Cliff Swallow Yellow-rumped Warbler</p>	<p><u>Reptile/Amphibian</u> <i>Most Important</i> Timber Rattlesnake</p> <p><i>Very Important</i> Common Five-lined Skink Eastern Box Turtle Eastern Hog-nosed Snake Eastern Ribbonsnake Jefferson Salamander Northern Leopard Frog Spotted Turtle Wood Turtle</p> <p><i>Important</i> Copperhead Eastern Newt Eastern Racer Fowler's Toad Gray Treefrog Marbled Salamander Northern Dusky Salamander Spotted Salamander Wood Frog</p>	<p><u>Invertebrate</u> <i>Most Important</i> Columbine Duskywing Northern Metalmark Silvery Checkerspot</p> <p><i>Very Important</i> Herodias Underwing</p> <p><i>Important</i> Mottled Duskywing New Jersey Tea Inchworm</p>

Threats Affecting GCN Species in Traprock Ridges

- Insufficient scientific knowledge regarding wildlife species (distribution, abundance, and condition).
- Loss, degradation, or fragmentation of habitats from development or changes in land use.
- Degradation of habitats by non-native invasive species.
- Impacts from human disturbance.
- Impacts to micro-climate from habitat alterations (e.g., tree cutting).

Potential Land Transfer

Former Cedarcrest Hospital, Newington and Wethersfield



Legend

-  Preservation Parcel
-  Conveyance Parcel



Connecticut Department of
Energy & Environmental Protection

Date: 10/3/2013

0 100 200 400 600 800
Feet

Locations are approximate and
are for illustrative purposes only