



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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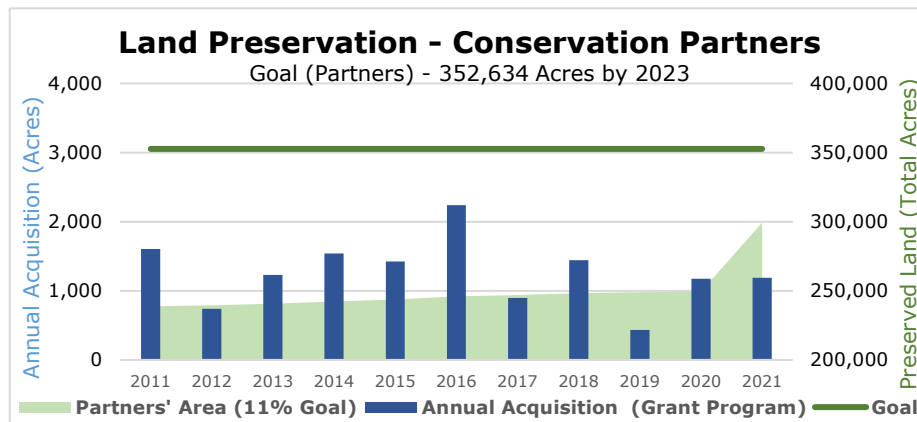
January 29, 2023

Re: House Bill 6483 - An Act Concerning the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko, Vice Chairs Sen. Hochadel and Rep. Palm, Ranking Members Sen. Harding and Rep. Callahan, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) is a nine-member board that works independently of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to assess the condition of Connecticut's environment and report its findings annually to the Governor; recommend actions to improve state environmental programs; advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed projects; and investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.

The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWLA) Grant Program provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations (AKA land conservation partners) to acquire land for open space. As depicted in the chart below¹, the annual acquisition of land with assistance from the OSWLA Grant Program is far less than what is needed to achieve the land preservation goal of 352,634 acres.² Consequently, the Council strongly supports House Bill 6483 that would provide funding for the OSWLA Grant Program. The Council would also support a refinement of the proposed bill to increase staff resources at DEEP to facilitate the acquisition and preservation of open space land.



Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Paul Aresta, Executive Director

¹ Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality, Environmental Quality in Connecticut, Preserved Land, April 20, 2022.

² Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 23-8(b), not less than eleven per cent of the state's land area is to be held by municipalities, water companies or nonprofit land conservation organizations as open space.