

Comments to be submitted to DEEP via an [online entry form](#) by 5:00 p.m. on July 24, 2026.

1. What recommendations from the D.J. Case Study should DEEP seek to implement? Are there any recommendations that should be prioritized above others? If so, please explain why.

*The Council strongly supports the following recommendations in the Study for prioritization: invest in mapping, prioritize early consultation, increase staff capacity, make E-Zfile easy, and enhance communication and information resources. Increasing staff capacity should be prioritized since many of the recommendations, such as enhanced mapping and early consultation, will require increased staff capacity.*

2. Are there any recommendations from the Study that DEEP should not seek to implement? If so, please explain why.

*While the Council supports improving the applicant survey system by helping applicants identify qualified experts and establishing ways for consultants to become eligible to survey for specific taxa, the Council has concerns regarding the recommendation to reduce the frequency with which applicants are required to conduct surveys. As noted in the Study, “the screening maps focus on documented observations of state listed species.” The key points in that phrase are 1) the NDDDB “Blobs” are a screening tool to identify or “flag” the potential presence of state-listed species, which can sometimes only be confirmed or refuted through field studies, and 2) the “blobs” indicate “documented observations.” And since most of the state has not been surveyed for the presence of state-listed species, “documented observations” might not exist. Consequently, reducing the extent or frequency with which applicants are required to conduct surveys might not be appropriate. The Council also has concerns regarding rigid timelines for environmental reviews since “setting such a timeline could have adverse impacts on conservation outcomes.”*

3. Are there any recommendations that were not included in the Study, that DEEP should also consider implementing?

*The Council supports the concept raised by NDDDB staff to undertake a more strategic approach and “focus on landscape-level efforts (e.g., identifying and conserving critical habitat areas), and establish species recovery plans and goals that prioritize key actions by species.” The Council also supports increasing “land acquisitions by the state to conserve and protect key habitats,” although such actions would likely be undertaken by DEEP’s Office of Land Acquisition and Management, in consultation with DEEP’s Wildlife Division.*

4. What conservation outcomes should DEEP be trying to achieve as part of the mapping modernization project?

*The mapping modernization project would likely improve NDDDB’s ability to better protect state-listed species and enhance species recovery and management. The Council suggests that the mapping modernization project could also include the identification of 1) areas with high concentrations of state-listed species “hot spots”, and 2) ecological corridors, such as unfragmented habitats and green/undeveloped corridors.*

5. What efficiency and streamlining outcomes should DEEP be trying to achieve as part of the mapping modernization project?

*Desired outcomes that could be achieved as part of the mapping modernization project include reducing the uncertainty associated with significant data gaps; addressing the inability to conduct broad, strategic planning and prioritization for the conservation of vulnerable species; and improving accuracy/alignment of the mapping/software tools for better conservation outcomes.*

6. Other states have developed online mapping tools that support conservation planning, environmental review, municipal planning, and public access to natural resource information. What features, tools, or capabilities would you like to see included in Connecticut's future mapping system?

*Enhancing the online mapping tools used for conservation planning, environmental reviews, protection of state-listed species and critical habitats, and public access to certain natural resource information would be helpful. The features, tools, or capabilities included in the future mapping system should leverage and build upon the existing data that has been collected and maintained by DEEP and its conservation partners with a public interface that is easy to use and intuitive.*

7. Are there particular habitats, ecosystems, species groups, natural communities, or geographic areas that DEEP should prioritize for the mapping project?

*DEEP Wildlife Division biologists have identified Connecticut's species of greatest need in the 2025 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan. If it is not already completed, the Council suggests that DEEP consider prioritizing the mapping for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), key habitats, priority issues, and conservation actions for wildlife in Connecticut that are identified in the 2025 Connecticut Wildlife Plan. However, the Council defers to DEEP's Wildlife Division to determine what should be prioritized for the mapping project.*

8. Is there anything else that DEEP should be aware of or consider as part of this initiative?

*The NDDB program's work to protect state-listed species and enhance critical habitat is extremely important. While the NDDB "Blobs" or buffer areas depict the potential locations where state-listed species and critical habitat have been documented, significant gaps in the data exist, "especially on private property where the state has not been able to access sites to assess habitat suitability." Further, many projects that consult with NDDB as part of the regulatory process would be located on private property. Consequently, efforts to minimize or substitute field surveys, especially for sites that are large, unfragmented and/ or could provide habitat for state-listed species, should be discouraged.*

*There may be misconceptions about the NDDB program and how it functions. Based on the response to Question 15 of the survey – "Based on your experience with CT DEEP's NDDB website (not the ezFile portal), how would you rate your satisfaction with the following," DEEP should consider developing and/or expanding educational, training, and outreach materials, such as StoryMaps, to improve the understanding of NDDB processes for municipal agencies, frequent users and the general public.*