

CEEJAC

LAND SUBCOMMITTEE



WELCOME & ROLL CALL

Welcome - Yaw Darko,
CT Land Conservation
Council, Chair

- Terry Adams
- Alex Rodriguez
- Kathy Czepiel
- Reginald Saint Fortcolin
- Anna Pickett

AGENDA

- **Presentation on Coastal Habitat Restoration and Land Acquisition Project Prioritization**
- **Announcements, Updates, and Events**
- **Upcoming Meetings**

MEETING

GROUND RULES

During the discussion, all members should:

- **Listen respectfully, without interrupting**
- **Listen actively and with an ear to understanding others' views**
- **Only have one conversation at a time**
- **Be mindful to give others the opportunity to speak**
- **Focus on the task at hand rather than the position**

- **Avoid off-topic conversations**
- **Criticize ideas, not people**
- **Commit to learning, not debating**
- **Avoid blame, speculation and inflammatory language**
- **Avoid assumptions about any member of the group**

PRESENTATION ON:

Coastal Habitat Restoration and Land Acquisition Project Prioritization

Mindy Gosselin, Coastal Land Acquisition and Restoration Coordinator, CT DEEP



COASTAL HABITAT RESTORATION AND LAND ACQUISITION PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

Melinda “Mindy” Gosselin, Environmental Analyst
Bureau of Water Planning and Land Reuse, Land and Water Resources Division

Today's Presentation Overview

- About DEEP's Coastal Land Acquisition and Restoration Program
- How CEEJAC can inform this program
- Coastal Habitat Restoration & Land Acquisition Criteria Proposal
- Discussion on Evaluation and Prioritization Criteria

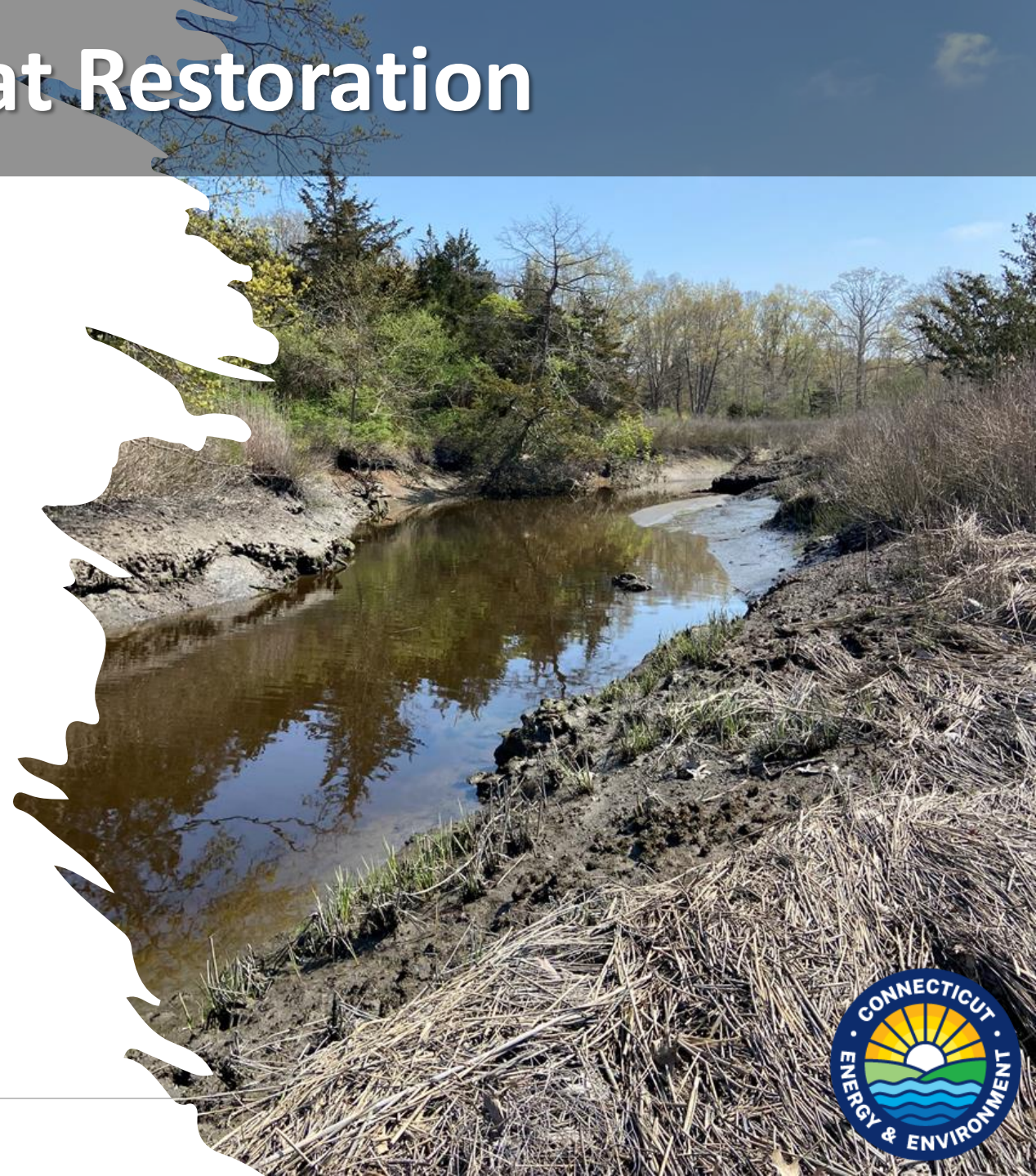


Coastal Habitat Restoration

Habitat restoration is the process of returning a habitat to the condition that existed prior to its being degraded by human activities. Habitat restoration encompasses a range of remedies to repair, rehabilitate, or reestablish parts of the ecological system that have been lost or degraded.

Project examples include:

- Habitat enhancement or restoration of Important Coastal Habitat Types
- Reducing barriers (e.g., under-sized culverts and dams) to fish passage
- Restoring or enhancing habitat to improve resilience
- Restoration of coastal marshes and wetlands
- Creation of living shorelines



Coastal Land Acquisition

- Land acquisition – state purchasing a property outright (fee simple) or partnering with an organization for them to buy the land and for the state to have a conservation easement over it
- The property must remain in a natural and open condition for the conservation, open space, or green space purposes for which it was acquired
- Provide passive public access as appropriate and consistent with resource protection



DEEP's Coastal Land Acquisition And Restoration Program

Program Goals

- Supporting coastal habitat restoration and land conservation efforts that serve all of Connecticut's coastal communities
- Prioritize funding for environmental justice communities

Proposed Program Outcomes

- Transparent, accessible, and inclusive funding processes
- More environmental justice communities will receive funding for coastal land conservation and coastal habitat restoration



Key Funding Source for Projects

Federal EPA Long Island Sound Study (LISS) Funding, from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

- Annual funding available for up to 3 years
- About \$1 million per year for Coastal Land Acquisition
- About \$1 million per year for Coastal Habitat Restoration
- Projects MUST advance goals of Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (LIS CCMP)
- Projects MUST build adaptive capacity of ecosystems & communities (climate resiliency)
- Projects MUST be located within LISS coastal boundary (unless for a fish passage project)
- At least 40% of funds total funds MUST go to EJ communities



DEEP's Coastal Land Acquisition And Restoration Program

How do we accomplish the program goals and outcomes?

- DEEP hired Coastal Land Acquisition and Restoration Coordinator (that's me!)
- DEEP is developing a new and transparent process for distributing federal EPA Long Island Sound Study (LISS) funds for coastal acquisition and restoration
- This program must be designed to address needs of tribes and underserved communities

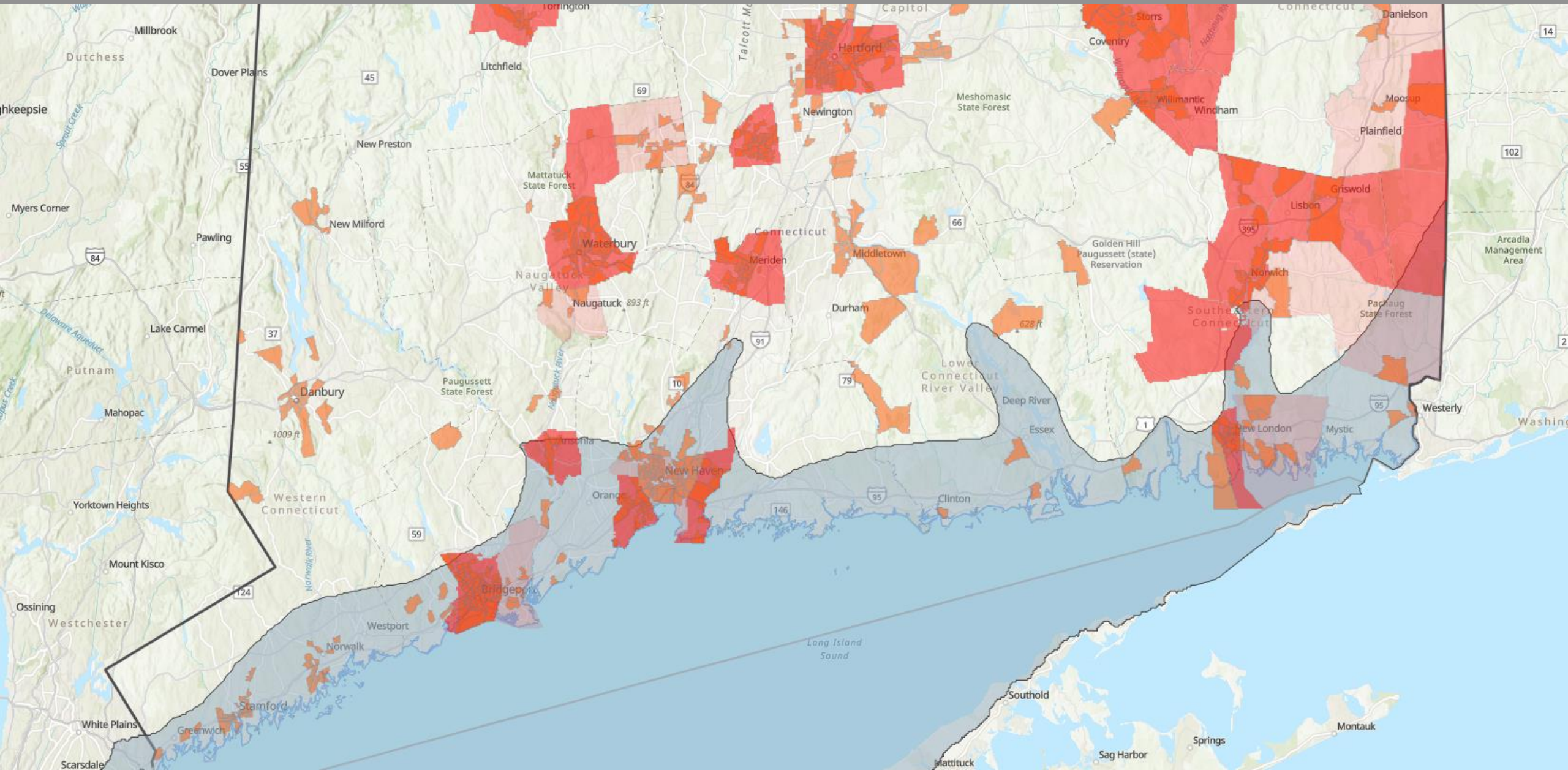


DEEP's Coastal Land Acquisition And Restoration Program

- Grant Program development requires selection and prioritization criteria
- This criterion will be:
 - Applied to a currently maintained inventory of restoration projects
 - Used to identify and assess projects
 - Will be the foundation of a future grant program for the following:
 - Coastal Habitat Restoration Implementation
 - Coastal Habitat Restoration Planning, Engineering and Design
 - Coastal Land Conservation (Acquisition)



Long Island Sound Study Coastal Area Boundary



How CEEJAC Can Help

We are looking for input on selection criteria for this forthcoming coastal habitat restoration and land acquisition grant program. These criteria will guide the development of this program and, ultimately, the competitive selection of projects.

- Questions to think about throughout the presentation:
 - What factors should we consider for coastal habitat restoration in EJ communities?
 - What factors should we consider for coastal land acquisition in EJ communities?
 - What challenges/barriers exist? How can we overcome these challenges/barriers?
 - What are your thoughts on the proposed weighting system?



DEEP's Coastal Habitat Restoration & Protection Funding Background

Previous Efforts Funded Through:

- Long Island Sound License Plate Program (not currently active)
- EPA Long Island Sound Study Base Funding (ongoing)
- Federal Coastal Land Conservation Program
NOAA CELCP (not currently active)
- CT DEEP Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Grant (focuses on whole state)



DEEP's Coastal Habitat Restoration & Protection Funding Background

New Grant Program Inspiration:

- LISS Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan and its Workplans
- CT DEEP Green Plan
- Federal Coastal Land Conservation Program - NOAA CELCP
- Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

- **Other relevant grant programs**
 - CT DEEP Climate Resilience Fund
 - CT DEEP Recreational Trails
 - CT DEEP Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Grant
 - NOAA CZM BIL Grants



Known Funding Barriers in EJ Communities

- Existing contamination of sites
- Staff capacity to complete grant application
- Staff capacity to administer grant if awarded
- Reimbursement grant model
- Existing structures on the property
- Typically smaller parcel size in EJ communities = score lower

Any other barriers to add?



Coastal Habitat Restoration & Protection Prioritization Criteria

Criteria is broken up into two sections, due to current funding opportunities:

1. General Project Checklist (Required for all projects based on BIL funding source)
 - 5 parameters that must be met to move to section 2

2. Prioritization Criteria
 - Ecological Value (55 points)
 - Environmental Justice & Community Impact (25 points)
 - Climate (10 points)
 - Project Details & Readiness (10 points)

Total of 100 points



General Project Checklist

- These are required due to the funding source
- For projects that will not be related to this funding source, there will be more flexibility with the Long Island Sound Study Coastal Boundary

General Project Checklist (Required for all Projects based on BIL Funding Source)	
Located within the <u>LISS Coastal Boundary</u> (except for fish passage projects)	
Accelerate and implement Long Island Sound Study's <u>Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)</u>	
All projects must build <u>adaptive capacity of ecosystems and communities</u> as defined by EPA	
Demonstrated willingness of landowner	
Located within an <u>environmental justice community</u> defined in <u>C.G.S. § 22a-20a</u> . Depending on federal funding requirements, this may change to federal definitions. (Acquisition Only)	



Ecological Value

Prioritization Criteria (Each parameter has different weights)	
Ecological Value	55
Protects one or more of the <u>LISS 12 priority coastal habitat types</u>	
Protects one or more of the 12 key habitats described in <u>CT's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy</u>	
Eliminates or lessens threats to <u>Species of Greatest Conservation Need</u> (sea level rise, invasive species, development, etc.), especially those that rely on near shore coastal islands, rare species habitat	
Reflects coastal priority areas identified in local, tribal, regional or state plans (CT Green Plan, CT's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program plan, CT SWAP Plan, LISS CCMP)	
Project site geographically contiguous to other protected areas and/or high priority habitat	
Property does not require contaminant remediation per phase 1 environmental assessment	
Contains frontage on tidal waters or tidal marsh (Acquisition only)	
Is the property under imminent threat of conversion that would diminish its natural state (Acquisition only)	
Increases coastal habitat acres protected or restored	



Environmental Justice and Community Impact

Environmental Justice and Community Impact	25
<p>Provides demonstrated benefit to an Environmental Justice Community <u>DEEP Connecticut Environmental Justice Communities map</u> defined in <u>C.G.S. § 22a-20a</u>. Depending on federal funding requirements, this may change to federal definitions (Restoration Only – 10 points)</p>	
<p>Project involves outreach and engagement with underserved communities as a target audience or partner on the project</p>	
<p>The project addresses heightened vulnerabilities and disproportionate impacts relating to coastal access, coastal hazards, and climate change on underserved communities</p>	
<p>Other public co-benefits associated with project including but not limited to flood mitigation, passive public access, enhanced quality of life, etc.</p>	
<p>Provides passive public access to green space or Long Island Sound (Acquisition Only)</p>	
<p>The property accessible via public transportation (Acquisition Only)</p>	



Climate

Climate	10
Factored in anticipated climate change effects - designed to promote long-term sustainability of relevant habitats (e.g., tidal marsh, beach/dune, coastal grassland, etc.), and to enhance the site's capacity for resilience to climate change and sea level rise	
Protects or restores ecologically significant habitats, including lands that play a critical role in helping communities become more resilient to natural hazards	



Project Details and Readiness

Project Details & Readiness	10
Restoration planning or implementation already in progress	
Project likely to be completed within the requested award period	
Project is ready for implementation - fully designed, fully permitted	
Budget request in reasonable and justified	
Involved the appropriate partners to execute the project	
Community level support and engagement present	
Includes a long-term plan for monitoring and/or management	



Path Forward



- Outreach meetings
- Public comment period
- Incorporate results into final version
- Apply final version to projects submitted through future grant program





CONTACT INFO

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ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPDATES, & EVENTS



ParkScore – Hartford, CT

**Six Lakes Park Coalition and
Remediation Sites**

Connecticut's Green Plan

**UPCOMING
MEETINGS**



THANKS!