

## VI. NBS Initiative Program Evaluation Conclusions

This chapter was added to the Final NBS Initiative Program Evaluation to clarify two questions:

- (1) Did DEEP satisfy the requirements of Section 12 of [Public Act 25-125](#)? and
- (2) What else did DEEP conclude during the development of this program evaluation?

### **Did DEEP satisfy the requirements of Section 12 of P.A. 25-125?**

Yes. DEEP has satisfied the requirements of Section 12 of Public Act 25-125 despite the challenge of conducting several tasks simultaneously on a tight timeframe and within existing resources. Below, the conclusions of the program evaluation are organized by Sections 12 (a-c) of the act:

**Section 12(a) of P.A. 25-125** required DEEP to “evaluate how to integrate and advance nature-based solutions in the state that support climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity” through various funding programs named in the public act as well as identify “other applicable state and federal programs administered by DEEP that advance nature-based solutions.”

### **Conclusions related to Section 12(a)**

- In [Chapter III](#), DEEP’s evaluation shows that the NBS best practices identified in [Chapter II](#) are well-integrated into the 10 funding programs identified in P.A. 25-125. Twelve (12) “other applicable state and federal programs administered by DEEP” were also evaluated for a total of 22 DEEP programs overall.
  - The NBS best practices that have the greatest frequency of occurrence across the 22 DEEP programs ranked as either “**Primary Purpose**” or “**Co-Benefit**” include those associated with “open space”, “restore habitats”, and “stormwater management.” Frequency of occurrence of best practices has not been assessed to determine whether this is equivalent to the most well-funded practices or programs.
    - It is noted that two priority DEEP grant programs in urban forestry are in the process of being eliminated, so the frequency of **Primary Purpose** best practices supported by this program will soon change.
- In [Chapter IV](#), DEEP evaluated 25 NBS programs identified across the seven (7) consulting state agencies noted in Section 12(c) of the act, and showed the connections of each program to the NBS best practices.
  - The best practices that have the greatest frequency of occurrence across the 25 “other state agency” programs ranked as either “**Primary Purpose**” or “**Co-Benefit**” include those associated with “soil health”, “restore habitats”, “control invasives”, and “climate-smart agriculture.” Again, further analysis was not done to assess the relationship between best practice frequency and budget.
- In [Appendix II](#), DEEP lists 30 plans, policies/regulations, and guidance documents and evaluates how those documents are integrated with the 10 NBS best practices similar to how state agency programs are presented in [Chapters III](#) and [IV](#).

- DEEP identified several opportunities in [Chapter V](#) to both integrate and advance NBS in Connecticut, notably through:
  - Review and integrate existing resilience funding and financing.
  - Develop a community of practice within State Agencies.
  - Pilot Resilience Improvement Districts.
  - Restore Support to Discontinued NBS Programs.
  - Expand Natural and Working Lands Data and Modeling in GHG inventory.
  - Develop a Statewide NBS Implementation Roadmap and Soil Health Plan.

**Section 12(b) of P.A. 25-125** required DEEP to “consider best practices that encourage the use of the state’s ecosystems to naturally sequester and store carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase biodiversity and protect against climate change impacts.”

#### **Conclusions related to Section 12(b)**

- In [Chapter II](#), DEEP reviewed each of the 10 best practices identified in Section 12(b) of P.A. 25-125 and provided several best management practice (BMP) examples for each best practice noting variable applicability depending on site conditions.
- At least one Connecticut example of each best practice was highlighted for each of the 10 best practices.
- DEEP developed icons to represent each best practice and introduced color-coding to show the significance of each best practice to each funding program as either a **Primary Purpose**, likely **Co-Benefit**, or practice **Eligible** for support. A key for easy use of icons and color-coding is in [Appendix III](#).

**Section 12(c) of P.A. 25-125** required DEEP to “seek review and input” from seven (7) other state agencies – the Departments of Agriculture, Housing, Insurance, Public Health, and Transportation, as well as the Office of Policy and Management and the Connecticut Green Bank; as well as solicit public comments through hosting “one listening session” before the nature-based solutions initiative program evaluation is posted on DEEP’s website by July 1, 2026.

#### **Conclusions related to Section 12(c)**

- DEEP met with representatives from each of the consulting state agencies, co-identified NBS programs administered by five of the seven agencies, and presented findings in [Chapter IV](#).
- DEEP posted a Draft NBS Initiative Program Evaluation online two weeks before hosting two listening sessions on May 26<sup>th</sup> for public convenience (only one was required). Written public comments were accepted until June 2<sup>nd</sup> and are summarized in [Appendix VI](#).
- Public comments were considered by DEEP and incorporated, as deemed appropriate, in this Final NBS Initiative Program Evaluation.

### **What else did DEEP conclude during the development of this program evaluation?**

There are many conclusions that one can draw from this program evaluation beyond those that satisfy the requirements of P.A. 25-125. DEEP highlights a few additional conclusions with the following quotes below from the program evaluation:

“... nature-based solutions are an important tool in society’s ‘solutions toolbox’ to achieve a healthy mix of ecosystem, resilience, and biodiversity benefits that makes Connecticut special.” (p. 3)

“... the [GC3 Phase I Report: Taking Action on Climate Change and Building a More Resilient Connecticut for All](#) included several recommendations for near term actions in the Working & Natural Lands areas (see recommendations #24 – 48 in that report) that continue to be priorities for DEEP and other state agencies.” (p. 4)

“If DEEP had resources to evaluate the wide variety of partners necessary to achieve nature-based solutions at scale, the program evaluation would include the essential work of federal agencies, tribal nations, municipalities, regional planning organizations, private landowners, land trusts, conservation organizations, and many others.” (p. 89)

In conclusion, we’d like to recognize and thank the Lamont Administration, champions in the General Assembly, our colleagues within DEEP, our sister state agencies, as well as the many advocates and individuals who contributed to this robust NBS Initiative Program Evaluation through their involvement and interest in nature-based solutions.