Understanding Connecticut Woodland Owners

A Report on the Attitudes, Values and Challenges of Connecticut's Family Woodland Owners

Mary L. Tyrrell

Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies · March 2015

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Introduction

Even though Connecticut is one of the nation's most densely populated states, it is also one of the most heavily forested - nearly 60% of our land base is in forest (CLEAR 2006). Keeping these forests intact and healthy is crucial to Connecticut's environment and culture. Forests and trees provide many public benefits, such as clean water, energy savings, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and recreation. A full 73% of the forest is owned by private landowners. This means private landowner management and ownership decisions have enormous influence over the quality and extent of our forests - now and into the future. Private landowners include land trusts, corporations, churches, schools, utilities, water companies, clubs, foundations, and families. Families are the largest group, owning about half of Connecticut's forests. Decisions made by the 140,000 family forest owners collectively enhance or degrade the Connecticut landscape. How they manage their forests and whether or not they convert them to other uses is of significant public interest.

It is well known that two of the greatest threats to Connecticut's forest ecosystem health are increased forest fragmentation and lack of informed forest stewardship and wildlife habitat management on private lands. There were 169,000 fewer acres of core forest[1] in Connecticut in 2006 than there were in 1985, a 3.6% decrease (CLEAR 2006). That means that the forest is more fragmented, with fewer large blocks, and more small blocks. More fragmented forests can significantly change wildlife habitat, create pathways for invasive species, and increase edge effects such as increased wind and light. Edges are more susceptible to storm damage and invasive plants. In a forest health study in northwestern Connecticut, presence of invasive plant species was found to be significantly correlated with forest fragmentation (Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies et al. 2012). Private forestland is the forest most at risk of being fragmented and converted for development. Reasonable estimates are that only a very small number of forest landowners are being served by current programs aimed at conservation and sustainable forest management.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Division of Forestry is charged with providing assistance to forest landowners throughout Connecticut. However, the resources of the Division are small, with only two service foresters assigned to work with private landowners. Partner conservation organizations such as Audubon Connecticut, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Connecticut Extension, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies Quiet Corner Initiative, and others provide a wide variety of landowner assistance. Nevertheless, the capacity to provide adequate support and advice to the 140,000 family forest owners is limited.

[1] Core forest is defined as an area of forest that is at least 300 feet from an edge (e.g. road, field, developed land). Information on how forest fragmentation is defined and analyzed is available at http://clear.uconn.edu/projects/landscape/index.htm

Forest or Woods?

The language that conservation and forestry professionals use is sometimes different than the language landowners use. One of the most important examples is the word used to describe land with trees. Professionals say "forest" while landowners say "woods" or "woodlands" or "my land" – but almost never say "forest" when they are talking about their land. This has been shown in landowners focus groups throughout the US (Andrejczyk et al. in press), and proved to be true in our focus groups in Connecticut. When asked to describe or talk about their land, almost no one used "forest". Throughout this report, we use the terms forest and woods/woodlands interchangeably.

However, regardless of the scope of service capacity, program variety and richness, cooperation among partners, and shared visions and goals of keeping Connecticut forests as forest, without effective communication all conservation program efforts fall short with on-the-ground results.

Effective program delivery is dependent upon understanding landowner attitudes, concerns, perceptions, and especially the reasons why they own their land. One of the most important methods of achieving this understanding is through landowner focus groups and surveys. The USDA Forest Service National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) is the premier national research survey of family woodland owners. However, prior to this study, the NWOS data for Connecticut were inadequate due to the small sample size. With this research, we significantly enhanced the information about landowner attitudes, objectives, and behavior by conducting six landowner focus groups and an intensified sampling for the 2011 NWOS, with a few Connecticut specific questions.

This is the first study of its kind in Connecticut, providing viable state-level data about landowner attitudes and behaviors. The result is a much better understanding of the stewardship objectives and attitudes of the families who own Connecticut's forests. This allows conservation and forestry professionals to be more strategic in reaching landowners with effective stewardship messages and more successful in developing programs that serve the needs and values of the landowners.

The report is organized into six main sections.

1. Summary of findings and implications for programs and policy
2. Background and study methods
3. Understanding woodland owners – those with parcels of 10+ acres of forest
4. Opportunities for engagement
5. Understanding urban/suburban owners - those with parcels of 1-9 acres of forest
6. Regional Differences

1. Summary of findings and implications for programs and policy

Healthy and well-managed private forestlands are critical to achieving Connecticut's goals to conserve, improve and protect the state's natural resources and the environment. With this study, we now have good information about Connecticut's woodland owners that can be used to develop programs and policies that will help landowners keep their land intact and healthy.

- 17,000 families and individuals own close to 600,000 acres of forest across the state, in parcels of 10 or more acres, which is about 34% of Connecticut's forest estate. These are Connecticut's woodland owners.

- This is an older population – only 15% are under the age of 50. This has implications for all sorts of things, including lifestyle, ability to take care of their land, and potential turnover in ownership.

- They have more formal education than the general population – which implies that they would be receptive to well-designed education programs.

- The major themes that stand out among Connecticut woodland owners are a strong conservation ethic and the very high value they place on a woodland-owning lifestyle. By far the most important reason for owning their woodlands is to enjoy the beauty and scenery, followed by privacy, home, and protecting wildlife habitat, nature, and biological diversity.

- The vast majority of owners want their woodland to stay woodland (80%) and believe that keeping their land intact benefits the community (77%) and improves the environment beyond their community (74%). This is evidence of an incredible conservation ethic and understanding of the value of forests in the landscape of their community, the state of Connecticut, and beyond.

- Most of these same woodland owners who have strong conservation and stewardship ethics, do not appear to actively manage their lands, at least not in the way that natural resource professionals define as good stewardship. They do not participate in landowner assistance programs, attend workshops, seek advice and help from professionals for managing their woodlands, or have conservation easements to protect their land from future development. This combination of high stewardship values and low participation in assistance programs makes them what can be called 'prime prospects' for well-designed programs and outreach campaigns.

- Although few woodland owners have conservation easements on their land, they do know about them. Forty-six percent say they are at least somewhat familiar with conservation

easements. This is much higher than the national average of 15%. This is a testament to the strong land trust community in Connecticut.

- Keeping their land intact for future generations is a major concern; nonetheless, almost a third would sell their land if offered a reasonable price (representing nearly 300,000 acres) – and 17% say they are likely to sell or give away their land in the next 5 years (200,000 acres). The challenge is to keep this land from being further fragmented as the inevitable turnover happens.

- In the focus groups, aging came up as the key reason why some owners are considering selling now or in the future. Older respondents said they find it increasingly difficult to take care of the land.

- Forest health is uppermost in the mind of many woodland owners, although that might not be the term they use. Influences on forest health, such as vandalism, insects and disease, invasive plants, and pollution are high on the list of their concerns. Although only 21% have received advice about caring for their property in the last 5 years, many more say that advice on wildlife management, invasive plants, insects and diseases, and caring for their property in general would be helpful.

- The data from the National Woodland Owner survey reflect the benefits of Connecticut's current use property valuation tax on forestland, PA490, in several ways. Owners of woodland that do not qualify for PA490 (10-24 acres) are more likely to say that high property taxes are an important concern than owners of 25+ acre parcels. Of those who are enrolled in PA490, 96% say it is important to helping them keep their land.

- Connecticut's woodland owners' biggest challenges are 1) keeping their land intact for future generations, especially for larger landowners; 2) maintaining forest health, that is to say, protecting their woods from invasive plants, insects, and diseases; and 3) knowing when and where to get good advice and assistance to manage their woodlands.

- Even though Connecticut woodland owners are primarily motivated by aesthetic, lifestyle and conservation values, there is also a modest interest in timber management.

- Both awareness and use of traditional landowner assistance programs are extremely low (see figure 5 for list of current programs). Traditional assistance programs are often geared towards silviculture or other forms of active management, which although they play an important role in improving forest health and wildlife habitat, are not necessarily appealing to our 'woodland retreat' landowners. In order to get these landowners onto the engagement ladder of more and more active management of their woodlands, perhaps the traditional programs should be supplemented with lighter touch advice and assistance focused on activities the landowners enjoy, and solving the landowners' problems. Once

a landowner is actively engaged with a professional in small ways, such as getting advice on how to best cut firewood or build a trail, they are more likely to take some of the bigger steps such as silvicultural management for bird habitat or stand regeneration.

- A significant barrier to more effective landowner outreach and assistance is the low number of service providers in the state. Landowners by far prefer to get advice and assistance from government foresters. However, between DEEP, UCONN and NRCS, there are only a handful of service/extension foresters in the state. More assistance is needed on the ground to assure that Connecticut's private forests are well managed and able to face the increasing threats of invasive species, wind and storms, climate change, and poor or negligent management.

- Partnerships will be crucial to achieve any reasonable level of landowner support for woodland management. Land trusts and conservation organizations such as the Connecticut Forest & Park Association and Audubon Connecticut have a significant role to play, especially as they have a strong educational mission. Collaborations between DEEP, UCONN, NRCS and these conservation partners for landowner outreach and education should be encouraged and supported.

- Finally, the small woodlots of less than 10 acres, dispersed throughout the urban and suburban area, amount to 300,000 acres of woods. These small landowners should not be neglected – they need good advice and support to manage their woodlots and wooded backyards well. Currently Connecticut has only one urban forester – and there are 122,000 of these small woodlot owners scattered throughout the state. Knowing something about their attitudes and values, and what kinds of advice and assistance they need is a good start, but it is not enough. Innovative programs and partnerships are needed to reach and work with small woodlot owners.

2. Background and Study Methods

The goals of this study were 1) to increase our knowledge about Connecticut's family forest owners' values, attitudes, behaviors and needs related to conservation and stewardship of their woodlands, 2) to do so with enough rigor to have a high level of confidence in the results, and 3) to use this knowledge to make recommendations for policies, programs, and service delivery to keep Connecticut's forests intact and healthy. We used two basic methods, landowner focus groups and surveys. A stakeholder group was convened to: advise the project; develop topics for the focus groups and Connecticut specific questions for the survey; develop a set of key messages and recommendations arising from the findings; and disseminate the results. Participants were from the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection,

University of Connecticut Extension, Connecticut Forest & Park Association, Audubon Connecticut, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Highstead.

Six focus groups were conducted by a professional facilitator, Langer Qualitative, between August 10th and 19th, 2010 with people who owned 10 or more acres of woodland. Two groups were conducted in each of the towns of Tolland, Haddam and Torrington at University of Connecticut extension offices. Throughout the report, these locations are referred to as East (Tolland), Central (Haddam), and West (Torrington). Locations were chosen to represent the more wooded areas of Connecticut. Landowners recruited for the groups were selected randomly from property tax lists for towns within a 30-mile radius of the meeting locations.

Figure 1 shows the towns the sample was drawn from (pale yellow) and towns where focus group participants live (darker colors). General topics covered were: values and attitudes towards their land; management activities; attitudes towards active management; plans for the future of their land; awareness of and participation in landowner assistance programs; and how best to reach them with information about programs and services. Table 1 shows the list of topics, and a complete focus group report is included as an Appendix to this report. The quotes throughout this report are from focus group participants.

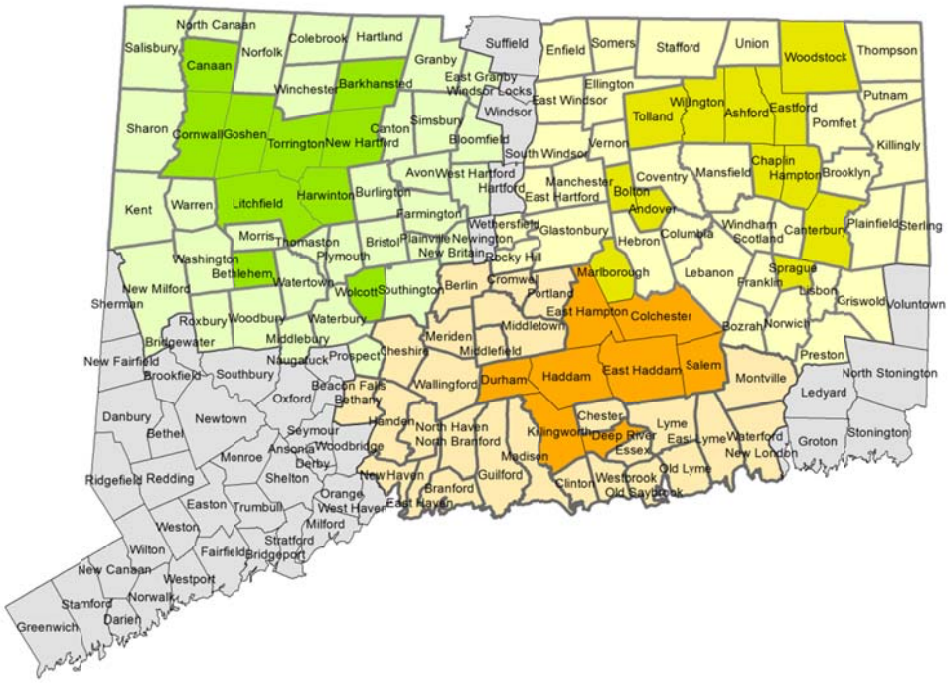

Figure 1. Towns the focus group sample was drawn from (pale yellow) and towns where focus group participants live (darker colors).

What is a Focus Group?

A focus group is a loosely structured discussion with people from your population of interest. You invite them to come and sit around a table with folks like themselves and talk about their opinions and attitudes towards specific products, behaviors, services and programs. The facilitator follows a topic guide, but lets the discussion flow naturally, including between participants. In our case, it is a good way to hear in depth about why people would or would not want to do certain things like get a management plan or hire a professional forester for advice. It is also a good way to hear the language that landowners themselves use when talking about their land, and find out if they understand the jargon the professionals use. Unlike in a survey, where you can only ask "have you done this or that", in a focus group, you can ask "why" or "why not". It's a way to add depth and color to survey data, or to pre-test what topics and questions would be most helpful in a survey. Focus groups are qualitative research (not measured) and thus do not provide quantitative results, i.e. you cannot say "x% of participants feel thus and so" – you can only draw general impressions from the discussions.

Table 1. Topics covered in landowner focus groups

Ownership description and attitudes
Brief description of the owner's land
What is valued most about owning land
Main issues/challenges of being a landowner
Land management
What landowners do to take care of their trees/woodland
Reasons for commercial timber harvest, type of professional consulted
Use of a written forest management plan, interest in a plan
Ever consulted with professional forester
The future
Any plans to sell, reasons/pressures to sell
Hopes for the land after the landowner owns it
Concerns about the future of the land staying as it is
Feelings about woodlands remaining woodlands
What feelings would be if an endangered species found on the land
Interest in a land conservation agreement
Incentives that might interest landowners in keeping woodlands as woodlands
Programs
Assistance, programs wanted (unaided)
Reactions to a list of major Connecticut landowner programs: awareness of programs, enrollment – written, then discussed (program list and responses appended)
Sources to reach landowners about programs

National Woodland Owner Survey

The National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) is conducted by the USDA Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis program to increase the understanding of the attitudes, behaviors, and demographics of private forestland owners across the United States. The information is intended to help policy makers, resource managers, educators, service providers, and others interested in the forest resources of the U.S. better understand the social context of forests in order to facilitate more informed opinions and decisions. In each year of a sampling cycle, a different set of approximately 9,000 private forest-land ownerships from across the country are asked to participate in the NWOS. The primary survey instrument is a self-administered questionnaire, supplemented with phone and online surveys. Butler et al. 2005)

The best information we have about America's private forest landowners comes from the National Woodland Owner Survey, which has been conducted every so often since 1982. Methods and topics have varied over the years, so longitudinal comparisons are difficult. Connecticut has always been in the mix, but at a low sample size, which means the past data have a high level of statistical variability. Even in the last survey, 2006, the number of respondents was only 77. According to the US Forest Service, the goal for reasonable state-level data is 250 respondents (Brett Butler, personal communication).

In order to increase the sample size and achieve the goal of at least 250 respondents, we conducted an intensified sampling for the NWOS in 2011. Sampling protocols were the same as those used by the USDA Forest Service for the FIA inventory and NWOS[2]. Using Geographical Information Systems (GIS), a grid was placed over a map of Connecticut land cover (CLEAR 2006) and points were randomly placed in each grid cell which had forest cover. Points which landed on public land were eliminated, leaving 995 points. Owners of the properties on which the points landed were identified through various means including digital property databases, realtor databases and town property tax maps. Points on properties that were duplicates (same owner of more than one sample point location), non-private ownerships, subdivided to less than 1 acre, or no longer forested, were eliminated. In the end, 728 surveys were mailed and 384 responses received for a response rate of 53%, much higher than the national average of 43%. Of those respondents, 330 were family landowners, the rest other private owners such as land trusts, water companies, and clubs.

[2] For more information on the NWOS methods, refer to Butler et al. 2005.

The value of a $2 bill

To investigate methods for increasing survey cooperation rates, three treatments were tested: stamps (vs. metered), personalization (hand written addresses), and token financial incentives (a $2 bill). These treatments were selected based on the findings proposed by Dillman et al. (2009) and others. The stamps are intended to help differentiate the mailings from "junk mail" and increase trust – we are providing real stamps in the anticipation the respondent will indeed respond. Personalization is intended to differentiate the mailings from "junk mail" and build trust by using more personal information. The token financial incentive is provided as a modest "thank you" for their anticipated response. The cooperation rates for the stamped and personalization treatments were not statistically different from their corresponding non-treatments. However, the token financial incentive treatment cooperation rate was statistically different. The cooperation rate for those ownerships that received a $2 bill with their survery was 59.9 percent compared to 48.6 percent for those ownerships that did not receive a token financial incentive.

3. Understanding Connecticut's Woodland Owners (10+ acre parcels)

This report focuses mainly on the 17,000 families and individuals who own woodland parcels of 10 or more acres (Table 2). They own close to 600,000 acres of forest across the state, which is about 34% of Connecticut's forest estate. Throughout this report, "woodland owners" refers to this segment of the population. Another 17% of Connecticut's forest is in small lots of less than 10 acres, with 122,000 owners. These small parcel owners, in mostly urban/suburban areas, are covered separately in section 5 of the report.

Parcel Size (acres)	Owners		Acres		% of CT Forest	Average parcel size	# Survey Respondents
1 - 9	122,100	88%	300,000	34%	17 %	2.3 acres	106
10+	16,700	12%	590,000	66%	34%	34 acres	217

Table 2. Connecticut family woodland owners by size class.

Who Are Connecticut's Woodland Owners? Demographics and Lifestyle

A typical profile of a Connecticut woodland owner would be an older retired couple, who live on their land, have owned their 30 acres for about 20 years, who are highly educated, have a strong stewardship ethic, and value privacy, aesthetics and wildlife. They cut their own firewood, walk the trails, and make new trails. It's their lifestyle, they love living in the woods.

Table 3. Demographics of Connecticut woodland owners

	Primary Owner	Secondary Owner
Primary Residence	83%	
Has a farm nearby	15%	
Years owned		
0 – 10	26%	
11 – 20	18%	
21 – 50	45%	
50+	5%	
Purchased	78%	
Inherited	22%	
Gender	70% male	70% female
Age		
Under 50	14%	16%
51 – 70	60%	67%
70+	27%	17%
Bachelors or advanced degree	51%	62%
Household annual income		
Less than 25,000	8%	
25,000 – 50,000	19%	
50,000 – 100,000	41%	
100,000 – 200,000	16%	
Over 200,000	16%	

They have more formal education than the general population – ranging from 51% (primary owners) to 62% (secondary owners) who have at least a bachelor's degree (vs. 35% for Connecticut as a whole and 28% for the US).

This is an older population – only 15% are under the age of 50 and a substantial number are over 70. About 40% are retired. Of the primary owners (mostly men), 27% are over 70; 17% of the secondary owners (mostly women) are over 70[3] (table 3). This has implications for all sorts of things, including lifestyle, ability to take care of their land, and potential turnover in ownership.

Over three quarters of these landowners have strong conservation and stewardship ethics, but do not appear to actively manage their lands, at least not in the way that natural resource professionals define as good stewardship. They do not participate in landowner assistance programs which provide financial and technical assistance for activities such as wildlife habitat improvements, stewardship plans, and riparian corridor management. Most are not attending workshops, don't seek advice and help from professionals for managing their woodlands, and don't have conservation easements to protect their land from future development. This combination of high stewardship values and low participation in assistance programs makes them what can be called 'prime prospects' for well-designed programs and outreach campaigns. However, the programs must be designed to meet the needs of the landowners, be realistic in terms of the landowner's time, resources, and interests, and the outreach must be targeted to appeal to the landowners' values, lifestyles and concerns.

Woodland owners are not a homogenous population, and effective assistance and outreach programs will be designed to take this into account. One way to think about differentiating landowners is based on the reasons why they own their land - to ask What are the overarching factors and values that influence their decisions to become woodland owners? Using a statistical analysis of data from the NWOS, woodland owners fall into four categories based on reasons for owning their woodlands (Butler et al. 2007). In Connecticut, the largest is Woodland Retreat (59%), followed by Uninvolved (26%), Working the Land (10%) and Supplemental Income (5%). These percentages are about the same as the national data, although Connecticut has less Working the Land and Supplemental Income and slightly more Woodland Retreat and Uninvolved (Figure 2).

[3] For the first time, the NWOS is tracking how many owners there are for each property, and some basic information about each of the primary and the secondary owners. These are self-identified categories. The survey instructions say "The owner who makes most of the decisions about your woodland in Connecticut should answer this questionnaire." This is who is identified as the primary owner. The demographic questions ask for information on "owner 1" and "owner 2", which is left up to the respondent to interpret as they see fit. So for ownerships which have at least 2 owners, we have demographics for both. For Connecticut, 70% of the primary owners are men; 70% of the secondary owners are women. This can be interpreted to mean that most woodland properties are owned by a couple. Most likely a married couple, but it could also be other family configurations (father and daughter, mother and son, siblings), or unmarried couples.

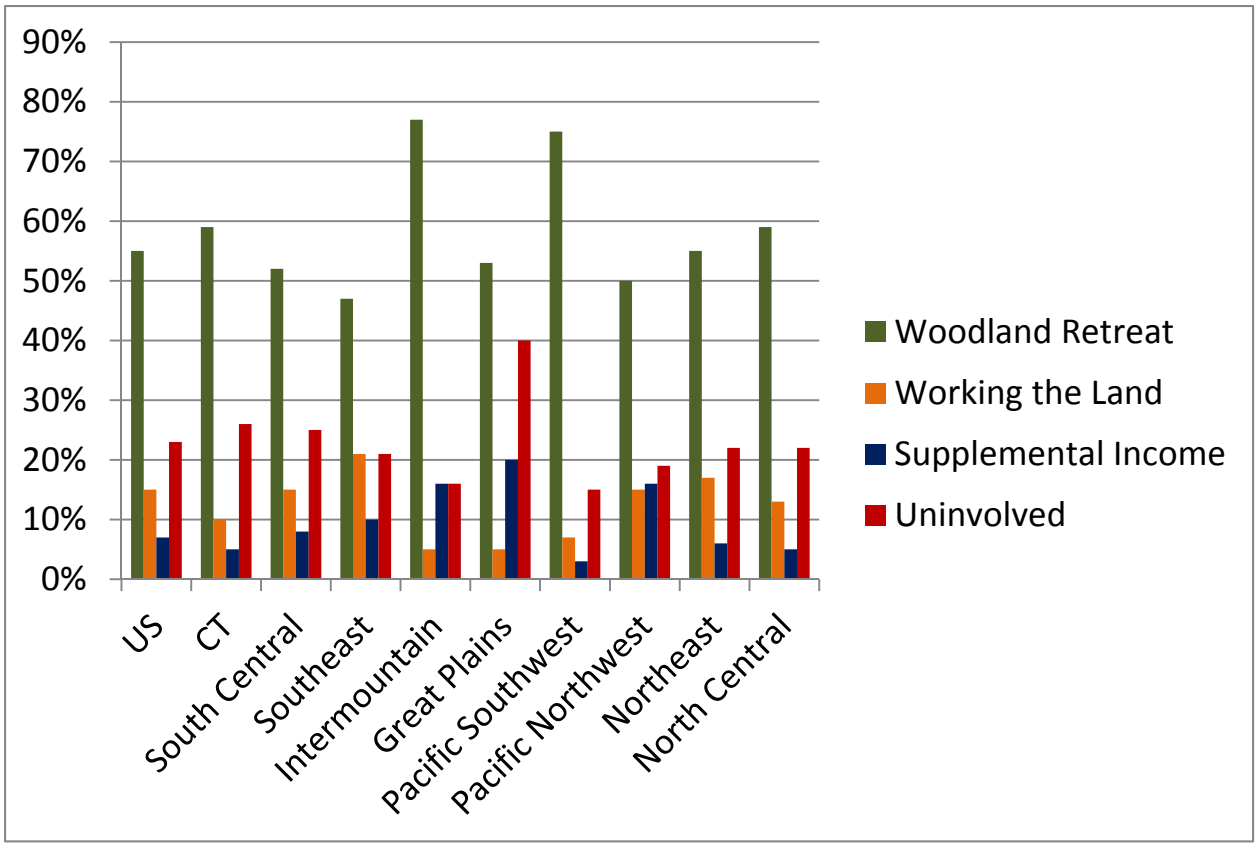

Figure 2. Attitudinal groups for woodland owners (10+ acre parcels) in the US, Connecticut, and US regions. Source: Preliminary data, National Woodland Owner Survey 2011-13.

Woodland Retreat landowners' defining characteristic is that they own their land primarily for its beauty and recreational value. They assign high importance to benefits such as beauty, biodiversity, privacy, hunting and recreation. In contrast, they assign lower importance to financial reasons for owning woodland, such as timber income.
Working the Land landowners are best described as pragmatic individuals who have a strong and multi-faceted interest in their land. This group gives the highest importance ratings to all reasons for owning woodland. The financial and amenity benefits of woodland are equally valuable to these owners and they try to use land in ways that balance different objectives.
Supplemental Income landowners are defined by the fact that they primarily own their land for income purposes. They are much more likely to cite timber income as important reasons for owning land than aesthetic, lifestyle, conservation, or recreational reasons. They also assign low ratings to personal uses of woodland, such as collecting firewood or non-timber products.
Uninvolved landowners are just that--uninvolved. As a group they are neither financially motivated nor particularly interested in the recreational or aesthetic benefits of owning their land. On the National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS), Uninvolved owners were less likely than other segments to rate any reasons for owning woods as important.

What do Connecticut's Woodland Owners Care About?

Conservation and Lifestyle

The major themes that stand out among Connecticut woodland owners are a strong **conservation ethic** and very strong feeling that owning woodlands is a **lifestyle** choice. By far the most important reason for owning their woodlands is to enjoy the beauty and scenery, followed by privacy, home, and protecting wildlife habitat, nature, and biological diversity. Over 2/3 of all woodland owners rate these factors as important or very important reasons for why they own their land (Figure 3). Over half rated water protection, passing land on to heirs, and raising a family as important or very important.

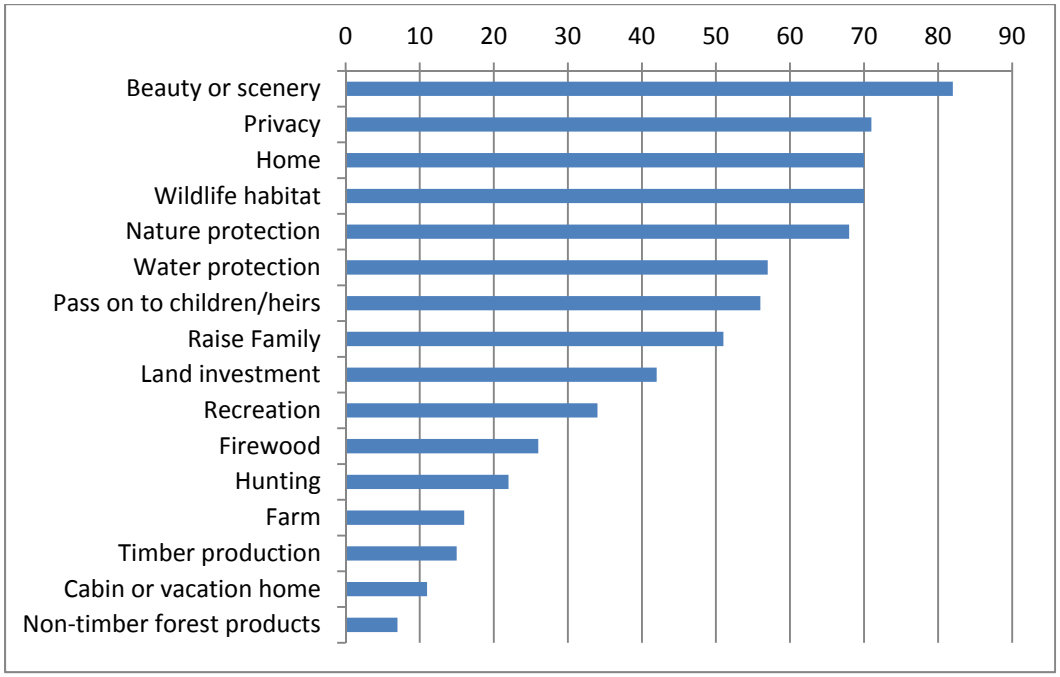

Figure 3. Reasons for owning woodland: percentage of woodland owners (10+ acres) who rated each category either very important or important. The categories are not mutually exclusive.

This was born out in the focus group discussions, where lifestyle and conservation were strong themes. Participants spoke passionately about how much they love their land. Aspects of ownership they value most include: Privacy and seclusion, peace and quiet, awe of nature – its beauty, a sense of discovery; wildlife/animals; conservation, carrying on their family legacy. Outdoor activities were mentioned a lot – enjoyment of the physical labor of doing chores, especially cutting firewood ("beats going to the gym"), and of recreation.

Ownership of the land is a lifestyle. Whatever you're doing with it, owning it is part of your lifestyle – just being a landowner, just the ambiance of your being, that you don't live in an apartment or in a multi-family or ticky-tackies. (East)

For us it's a having a safe environment for our kids to just be outside and to be on their own. (West)

Simply the beauty of nature, which sort of leads you a little bit in the direction of the spiritual. (Central)

One of the things I particularly enjoy, and it's been evident over the last 20 years, is the change in wildlife that we're experiencing. Very few deer 40 years [ago]. Today we have them coming out our ears. We've had bears up on the property, we've had duck. A tremendous amount of bird life. We're finding that over the years the property is sort of self-improving just simply by the wildlife that's out there. Gray-horned owls are just common to us right now. Just so many new things. That's important to me possibly [because of] having grown up in an urban area, although that was 65 years ago. (East)

I think we all like physical labor. We don't necessarily want to go to a gym – we want to cut wood, we want to build wood duck boxes, we want to build bluebird boxes. We want to go out and clear out the invasive species and make it look it nice. We enjoy that aspect of it. (East)

The vast majority of owners want their woodland to stay woodland (80%) and believe that keeping their land intact benefits the community (77%) and improves the environment beyond their community (74%). This is evidence of an incredible conservation ethic and understanding of the value of forests in the landscape of their community, the state of Connecticut, and beyond.

Although few woodland owners have conservation easements on their land (6% - twice the national average), and even fewer say they plan to get one in the next 5 years, they do know about them. Forty-six percent say they are at least somewhat familiar with conservation easements. This is much higher than elsewhere in the US – the national average is 15%. This is likely attributed to the strong land trust community in Connecticut, where almost every town has a land trust. In neighboring Massachusetts, which also has a large number of land trusts, the awareness is 36%. These numbers show the effects of land trust activities within their communities, and suggest that land trusts can play significant roles in woodland owner education and outreach.

Recreation

Although recreation and hunting are less important reasons for owning their land (34% for recreation and 22% for hunting), most of Connecticut's family woodlands are used for recreation, either by the landowners themselves, or family members. The most common form of recreation is hiking/walking – with 72% of woodland owners saying they themselves or family members hike or walk on their land; the next biggest activity is hunting, at 47%. In the focus

groups owners were divided in their views of hunting, which appears to be a polarizing issue. Although much lower, other forms of recreation are horseback riding (18%), off-road vehicle use (15%) and skiing and snowmobiling (12%). Very few landowners say they allow public access for recreation.

Legacy

Keeping their land intact for future generations is a major concern, with 71% rating this as a great concern/concern. In fact, after high property taxes, this is their number one concern (Figure 4). Almost half (42%) would like advice on how to transfer land to the next generation, and 19% would like advice on selling or giving away development rights. The vast majority of landowners (80%) want their woodland to say wooded, with this sentiment being strongest among the largest landowners (84% of those owning 100+ acre parcels), and in the southeast quarter of the state (100%). Nonetheless, almost a third would sell their land if offered a reasonable price (representing nearly 300,000 acres) – and 17% say they are likely to sell or give away their land in the next 5 years (200,000 acres). Those who indicated that they were planning to give their land to their children or other family members in the next 5 years own only about 50,000 acres, so the vast majority would conceivably be sold. However, the largest landowners (100+ acres) are much less likely to want to sell even if offered a reasonable price (15%). It is important to keep in mind that intentions are not the same as actions, but these numbers indicate that a large amount of land might be turning over in the near future, if the real estate market and other conditions are right (Table 4).

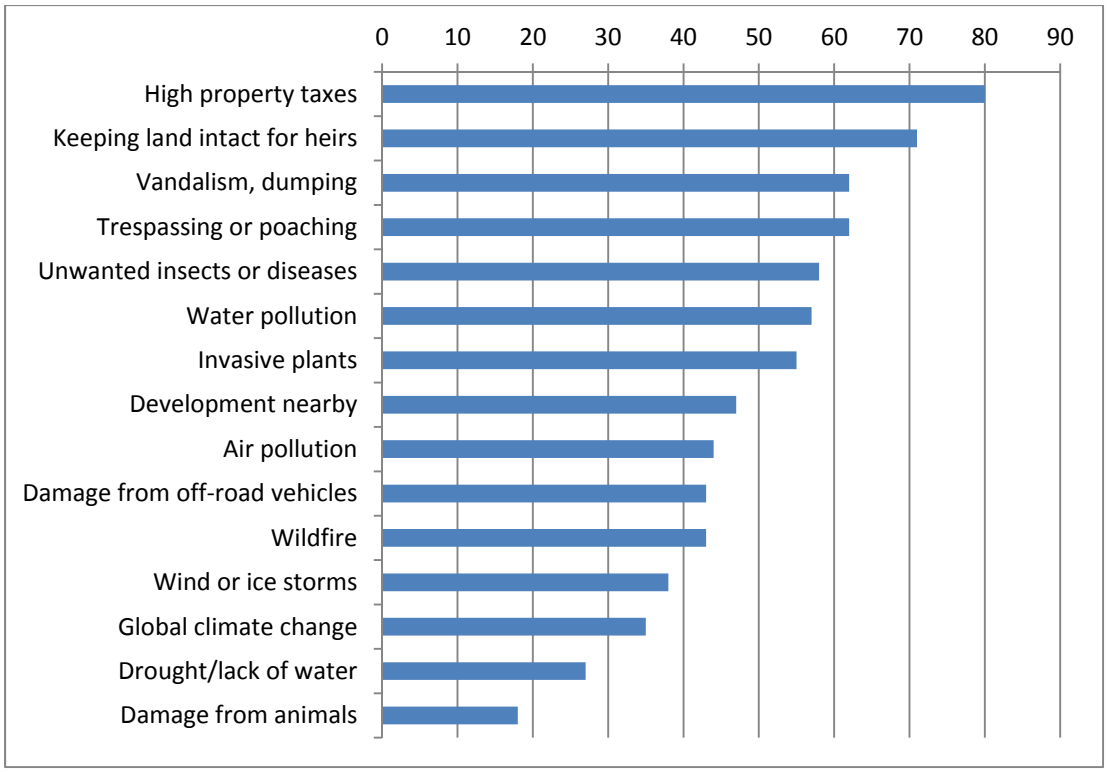

Figure 4. Concerns of Connecticut woodland owners (10+ acres). Percent of owners who indicated great concern or concern. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

I would sell my land if offered a reasonable price					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Owners	1,500	3,700	4,700	3,100	3,100
Acres	40,000	114,000	138,000	106,000	159,000
Average size	26 acres	30 acres	29 acres	34 acres	50 acres
How likely is it that you will sell or give away your wooded land in the next 5 years?					
	Extremely likely	Likely	Undecided	Unlikely	Extremely unlikely
Owners	900	2,100	2,800	4,600	5,900
Acres	40,000	61,000	101,000	141,000	223,000
Average size	44 acres	30 acres	36 acres	31 acres	38 acres

Table 4. Woodland owner responses to questions about selling their land

In the focus groups, aging came up as the key reason why some owners are considering selling now or in the future. Older respondents said they find it increasingly difficult to take care of the land. Widows may sell rather than trying to manage the property, according to some male and female respondents. Some owners who have no children or whose children are uninterested in the land see selling as an alternative.

> *I have seven children and so over the years we've had meetings. None of them really wanted to own the place. I'm going to be 78 in September and although I'm healthy, my physical situation is not good. I can't do the things I used to do. Over the years I've had a lot of interest.* (East)

> *I just figure at some point we'll sell our property because I don't expect that our children will settle around here. There's no work for them. They might [come back] at some point, but there'll come a time when my husband and I won't want to take care of everything anymore. I don't want to be an old person living up here. No, I don't – particularly if I'm on my own. There's going to come a point when I don't want to deal with it anymore.* (West)

> *I will have to sell sooner or later because we're getting too old to keep it. I already have almost [a] buyer, actually. It's a lot of upkeep, which [I] can't do it like I want to see it. It would be private [not for development].* (Central)

Forest Health and Management

Forest health is uppermost in the mind of many woodland owners, although that might not be the term they use. Influences on forest health, such as vandalism, insects and disease, invasive plants, and pollution are high on the list of their concerns (Figure 4). Although only 21% have received advice about caring for their property in the last 5 years, many more say that advice on wildlife management, invasive plants, insects and diseases, and caring for their property in general would be helpful.

Only 8% have management plans, typical of landowners across the country. The main reason they give for not having a plan is that they don't need one. Nonetheless, they are cutting trees. Almost 60% have cut trees for firewood, 35% have cut unwanted trees for personal use, 19% have cut logs for personal use, and 21% have cut trees for sale. About the same numbers say they plan to cut and/or remove trees in the next 5 years. Although there is no indication of the size or extent of the harvests - some of them could be just a few trees - it appears that there are a lot of trees being cut down on these lands, especially for firewood. Many of the landowners are using foresters, but by no means all. Thirty-one percent say they used a professional forester to plan, mark, contract, or oversee any of the harvests.

Many of the activities landowners are engaged in are in effect management actions. Besides harvesting trees for sale, they are cutting firewood (59%), eliminating/reducing invasive plants (29%), constructing and maintaining trails (28%) and improving wildlife habitat (21%). And they plan to continue with these same activities in the future.

Property Taxes

If you give anyone a list of concerns and put "high property taxes" on it, it will get a large response. Almost everyone thinks their taxes are too high. But we should not minimize this concern among woodland owners. In a state like Connecticut, if woodlands were taxed at the same rate as developed land, it would be prohibitively expensive for most people to own woodlands. Connecticut has a "current use" property tax valuation which was enacted under Public Act 490. According to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's website,

> "Public Act 490 is Connecticut's law (Connecticut General Statutes Sections 12-107a through 107-f) that allows your farm, forest, or open space land to be assessed at its use value rather than its fair market or highest and best use value (as determined by the property's most recent "fair market value" revaluation) for purposes of local property taxation. Without the lower use value assessment, most landowners would have to sell the land because they would not be able to afford the property taxes on farm, forest, or open space land. If you own forest land (generally 25 acres or more), you must have your land designated as forest land through the Forestry Division of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection using the services of a private certified forester." [emphasis added]

The data from the National Woodland Owner survey reflect the benefits of PA490 in several ways. Owners of woodland that do not qualify for PA490 (10-24 acres) are more likely to say that high property taxes are an important/very important concern than owners of 25+ acre parcels (75% vs. 59%). Of those who are enrolled in PA490, 74% say it is very important for helping them keep their land; 22% say it is important. Altogether, 96% of those enrolled attest to the significance of the lower tax burden. As of December 2014, 484,000 acres were enrolled in the PA490 under the forest designation (CT DEEP 2015). This includes all private forestland, not just family-owned.

The importance and popularity of this current use tax program came through strongly in the focus groups. It was mentioned spontaneously by several owners, sometimes in responding to others' concerns about taxes. The majority of owners interviewed were enrolled in the program. Enrollees appreciate the "huge break" in property tax rates. In several cases, they gratefully credit PA490 with enabling them to keep their land. "It's the only way you could afford to live on this kind of property," a Central owner stated. Most of the respondents see no downside to the program. "It's foolish not to be in it," an East landowner commented.

> *It's a great program, fantastic. Wouldn't be able to have the land if we didn't have that.* (Central)

> *We have a tax advantage where we live and it is a big advantage. If we had to pay what a developer has to pay, we probably wouldn't be there because it would be very expensive.* (East)

We went into it about 30 years ago. It was a nice saving on taxes. At the time when I bought the property we had 15 acres and I had an option to buy some more land. I don't know that I would have taken it up to buy additional land if I couldn't have entered the program. The taxes would have been very high – the cost for the additional privacy and whatnot around me would have been steep. (West)

What are their challenges? What support and assistance do they need?

Connecticut's woodland owners' biggest challenges are 1) keeping their land intact for future generations, especially for larger landowners; 2) maintaining forest health, that is to say, protecting their woods from invasive plants, insects, and diseases; and 3) knowing when and where to get good advice and assistance to manage their woodlands.

Traditionally, forestry and conservation professionals have developed landowner assistance programs to align with organizational goals, federal funding strategies, and perception of what the landowner's need. Ideally, these programs should be designed to both achieve environmental goals and meet the landowner's needs. Now, with survey data and focus group insights, we have better information about what kinds of programs and assistance the landowners want and need. A good start is to look at their concerns for their land. Many of them relate to improving landscape resilience, although the landowners would not call it that. They want to reduce the impact of invasive plants, insects, and plant diseases. They want to improve wildlife habitat. They want to leave their land intact for the next generation. They are looking for advice on caring for their property, woodland management, cost share programs, how to transfer their land to the next generation, and even payments for ecosystem services (Table 5). It is interesting that more landowners indicate an interest in advice about "caring for their land" than about "woodland management", which can be useful information when thinking about language and terminology used in landowner outreach.

Table 5. Percentage of Connecticut woodland owners (10+ acres) who say that various categories of advice and assistance would be helpful or very helpful.

More favorable tax policies	68%
Advice on caring for your property	52%
Advice on invasive plants	51%
Advice on insects and diseases	49%
Advice on woodland management	47%
Advice on how to transfer land to the next generation	42%
Advice on wildlife management	42%
Cost sharing for woodland management	33%
Payments for ecosystem services	32%
Stronger timber markets	19%
Advice on selling or giving away development rights	19%

Most of the owners in the focus groups manage the woods themselves and are relatively uninformed about effective methods. Some realize this and want more guidance. They either do not know where to turn for help or have been frustrated trying to get answers. Wariness about dealing with government is an obstacle to getting government help, however, even among some conservation-minded owners. They do not want the government to come on their land, tell them what they can and cannot do, or to deal with bureaucracy.

> *What I'm trying to do is just figure out what needs to be done. That's the issue where trying to find someone to give me some reasonable advice is the challenge. It's a forest and it's hard to walk through it. I don't know how it got the way it is but it doesn't look good to me. Something should be done, I think. I'm not sure what.* (East)

> *If I wanted to find someone to tell me how to grow roses, I'm sure I'd find a hundred of them. But if you're talking about what do I do with this area, with this land – what's the story with the soil? Why is it behaving the way it does? That's hard to find. I've mostly hit U Conn's extension services and stuff like that. They seem to be geared more towards growing grass and gardening kinds of things.* (East)

> *I probably shouldn't say this but there also is a certain disincentive to allow officials onto your property …. As soon as you do, if somebody finds a vernal pool or somebody finds an endangered species, whatever it is. I'm an old swamp Yankee and I defend our independence quite fiercely. I'm a person who cares greatly about our land and our vernal pools and our animals and everything. That's really important to both me and my husband. But I don't want people coming on my land and saying "oh, you can't touch that, you can't do this or you can't do that." It's my land and I love my land and I care for my land with all my heart, but I don't want somebody coming on my land and saying "you have to do this, you have to do that." I would just be really cautious and really careful as to who I invite onto our land.* (Central)

A significant majority of woodland owners prefer to get advice through written materials (61%). Having someone visit their land, the internet, and talking to someone come in at a distant second, all about 30 – 35%. Interestingly, despite some amount of anti-government sentiment, their preferred source of advice and information is a state and local government employee (60%), followed at a distance by private forester (34%) and federal government employee (32%). Land trusts were indicated by 22%. These categories are not mutually exclusive, survey respondents were asked to check all that apply.

It was evident in the focus groups that confusion exists about the difference between types of professionals, especially between loggers and foresters, as seen in other family woodland owner research (Andrejczyk et al. in press). Confusion also exists about state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) foresters, UCONN extension foresters and private consultant

foresters: most landowners in the focus groups couldn't tell them apart and some called any forester a "state forester."

Experience with foresters and loggers varies widely, and landowners are very concerned about finding trustworthy professionals, and about the condition of their land after harvesting.

> *It takes a little trial and error as far as finding good foresters. With 140 acres there's no way I could ever manage it myself. Over the years I've found some real nasties that just were taking me. With a little trial and error I found a very good forester and I trusted him. (East)*

> *About eight years ago the property east [of us] logged that 10-acre piece. They just cut the trees down, lopped the tops off, left them there, big stumps. Part of it fell over the stone wall into our area there, which is okay. Their log skidders went all over the place, caused extensive erosion, just because they were cutting on hills out there. I haven't been back there since but I was totally disgusted. Any thought that I had about logging, I said "no, I'm not going to do anything about it."* (Central)

Woodland Management and Wood Resources

Connecticut has a small but important forest products industry which contributes $500 million annually to the state economy in hardwood and specialty products (see Box). Although only 15% say that timber products are an important reason for owning their land, 21% of woodland owners have cut trees for sale at some time, with a smaller number (12%) who say they plan to in the next 5 years. Nine percent say they have received advice about timber production and 19% say that stronger timber markets would be helpful. This suggests that even though most Connecticut woodland owners are primarily motivated by aesthetic, lifestyle and conservation values, there is also a modest interest in timber management.

Those landowners who want to derive income from their woodland rely on a local wood processing industry, especially at the scale at which Connecticut landowners are likely to harvest. A viable forest products industry needs sufficient supply of wood and other products as well as a supportive environment for forest management, forestry and the sale/marketing of local goods. The Connecticut Grown program, recently expanded to include forest products, supports labeling and marketing for local products that are harvested, grown and produced using sustainable forestry practices. It is expected that this will grow recognition and demand for local wood products similar to the local food movement.

But timber production is not the only reason to advocate for active management of family woodlands. Well-managed woodlands provide wildlife habitat, enhance biodiversity and recreational values, increase resilience to disturbance, and benefit long-term forest health by reducing invasive plants, mitigating the effects of insects and disease, and planning for adequate regeneration. Many woodland owners believe that the "hands off, let nature take its course"

approach is the best. Which may not be true, especially in the face of so much disturbance (storms, invasive plants, insects, fragmentation).

Traditional Assistance Programs

Both awareness and use of traditional landowner assistance programs is extremely low (see Figure 5 for a list of cost assistance and other landowner support programs available to Connecticut woodland owners as of 2010). Only 3% say they have used a cost assistance program to help them manage their woodlands, and 83% say they are not at all familiar with the concept[4]. When asked about individual programs, awareness ranged from 11% - 16%. Awareness of other programs and organizations geared towards woodland owners varied as well, with Connecticut Forest & Park Association the highest at 26%, followed by Eastern Connecticut Landowners Association (18%), Coverts (15%), Master Wildlife Conservationist (12%) and Forest Interior Bird Survey (10%).

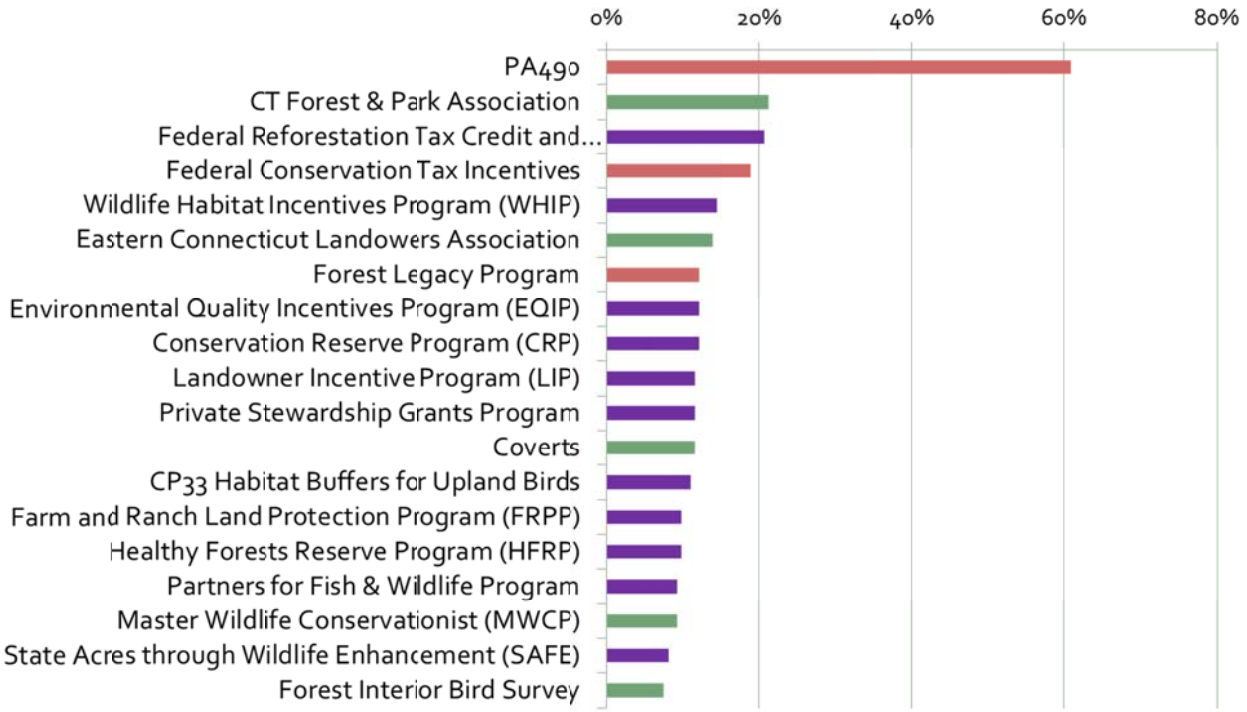

Figure 5. Landowner assistance programs, support organizations, and volunteer programs for Connecticut woodland owners. Percent of woodland owners who have heard of each program. Red are financial programs that effectively reduce taxes; green are organizations or programs that increase landowner involvement; purple are government financial assistance programs for land management.

[4] Since December 2009 signing of a Joint Memorandum of Understanding between Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, UCONN Cooperative Extension, and USDA NRCS, funding for the Connecticut NRCS woodland owner cost assistance ranking increased from 49th to 4th nationally. It is anticipated that this commitment will improve landowner cost assistance program awareness significantly.

Organizations like the Connecticut Forest and Park Association are great pals to have. They're a great resource and being a member gives you the ability to access their staff, ask questions. (Central)

When shown a list of current assistance programs (Figure 5), focus group participants were consistently surprised by the number of programs available to landowners that they had not heard of. "I don't think they're promoted very well, that's for sure," one commented.

There are all these different programs and a lot of them we all would probably like to hear about. Are they really available? (Central)

I'm familiar with a couple of them. I thought I was fairly well informed but I guess from reading this I'm not. I'm trying to match the names with my recollection of what I've heard. (East)

Focus groups also revealed that a deep distrust and skepticism concerning government are obstacles to involvement with state programs. A number of these independent-minded owners assume the help comes "with strings attached" that will take away their control of the land. Some assume researching and enrolling in programs would be complicated. The one traditional assistance program that woodland owners use and prefer is to get advice from a forester, specifically a government employee or consulting forester.

Reaching Woodland Owners

With both the survey and the focus groups, we asked questions about how landowners want to receive information, from whom, and what channels are best to reach them. The results are shown in Table 7. A few things stand out. This population watches television, reads newspapers and magazines, listens to the radio. The internet as a means to get advice about their woodland is only preferred by about a third of them. And conferences and workshops rate very low at 14%. The preferred source is a government employee, followed by private forester, then land trust. The responses for "another landowner" and "family member or friend" were so low they cannot be considered reliable. This is extremely important information for organizations who are doing landowner outreach.

The town dump. Honest to God, that's where the most information comes from in the community. (East)

When asked "where are you most likely to notice posters or flyers about landowner programs" the internet topped the list (Table 7). Local fairs and town halls were the next most popular. County extension offices were very low, even lower than town dumps. This is a clear indication that outreach materials are best placed where

landowners go about their daily business. And for some, that means they are on the internet. But they have to know where to go on the internet, so a good outreach campaign would use the other venues to get the main message out and drive people to the internet for more information.

Prefer to get advice from …		***Best places to publicize educational programs***	
State/local government	60%	Internet	49%
Private Forester	34%	Local fairs	28%
Federal government	32%	Town halls/community centers	34%
Land Trust	22%	Home improvement stores	26%
Family member/friend	*	Farmers markets	25%
Another landowner	*	Libraries	22%
		Town dumps/transfer stations	20%
Prefer to get advice by ….		County extension offices	*
Written materials	61%	Department/large stores	*
Talk to someone	35%	Local shops	*
Have someone visit my land	32%	Restaurants/coffee shops	*
Internet	31%	Supermarkets	*
Conference/workshop	14%		

* Respondent size too small to provide meaningful data

Table 7. Connecticut woodland owners preferred sources and forms of advice; and preferred channels for publicizing programs.

Matters of Size

In a state like Connecticut, where forests play such an important role in contributing to a healthy environment, providing places for relaxation and recreation, and maintaining a sense of character and place, we have to do our utmost to keep all our woodlands intact. In a highly fragmented forest, even small parcels can make a difference for the community, the environment, and the wildlife. One of the biggest challenges is to figure out how to get landowners the advice and support they need to keep their woodlands in good condition, regardless of the size. So it's important to know if there are differences in the values, attitudes, and needs of smaller vs. larger landowners.

Parcel Size (acres)	Owners	% of all 10+ acre Owners	Acres	% of land in 10+ acre class	% of CT Forest	Average parcel size	# Survey Respondents
10-24	9,700	58%	140,500	24%	8%	14 acres	53
25-99	6,000	36%	267,800	47%	15%	45 acres	101
100+	1,000	6%	167,100	29%	10%	162 acres	63

Table 8. Connecticut 10+ acre family woodland owners by size class.

In many ways, landowners' responses to the NWOS survey do not differ significantly based on the size of their woodland property. But there are a few things that stand out when we look at the data by size classes: 10 – 24 acres; 25 – 99 acres: and 100+ acres.

The larger the property, the more likely the landowner is to ….

- have inherited their land
- own a farm
- be concerned about vandalism, trespassing, poaching, and off-road vehicles
- post their land to restrict access
- hunt
- cut firewood
- remove invasive plants
- build and maintain trails
- receive advice
- participate in landowner assistance programs
- read newspapers

The smaller the property, the more likely the landowner is to ….

- Rate privacy and raising a family as important reasons for owing their land
- Be willing to sell their land if the price was right

4. Opportunities for Engagement

There are many opportunities for improving the stewardship of Connecticut's family woodlands. The challenge is to engage landowners in ways that are meaningful to them. Traditional assistance programs are often geared towards silviculture or other forms of active management, which although they play an important role in improving forest health and wildlife habitat, are not necessarily appealing to our 'woodland retreat' landowners. In order to get these landowners onto the engagement ladder of more and more active management of their woodlands, perhaps the traditional programs should be supplemented with lighter touch advice and assistance focused on activities the landowners enjoy, and solving the landowners' problems. Activities are primarily recreation, cutting firewood, and enjoying wildlife. Problems tend to cluster around three themes: keeping their land intact for future generations; keeping their woodlands healthy; and finding good advice and professional assistance. Once a landowner is actively engaged with a professional in small ways, such as getting advice on how to best cut firewood, manage invasive plants, or build a trail, they are more likely to take some of the bigger steps such as silvicultural management for bird habitat or stand regeneration.

Conservation/Legacy

High levels of concern about conservation and legacy suggest that landowners may benefit from more information about conservation easements and perhaps more flexible conservation arrangements. In focus groups, concerns about public access, government commitment to open space, and lack of sufficient funds for land trusts to purchase easements were mentioned as obstacles to landowners placing conservation easements on their land. Getting good estate planning advice is an obvious start, however, we learned in focus group discussions that many landowners have not made formal plans for what will happen to their land after they pass on.

Healthy Woodlands

Opportunities abound to engage woodland owners in programs and activities that improve the health of their woodlands. Most Connecticut landowners are fighting a (often losing) battle with invasive plants; hear the news about the latest exotic insect killing trees and wonder what they can do prevent or minimize damage on their property; and have dead or dying trees and wonder if they should cut them down or leave them to let nature take its course.

> *I go out and see a dead tree. "You come down, buddy." All the dead trees come down. I cut them up, my little wheelbarrow and cart, I take them in and stack them in the garage and cellar.* (Central)

Invasive plants are high on their list of concerns, and removing invasive plants is high on their list of activities. They need good information on what to do and how and when to tackle invasive plants or they risk making the situation worse. The same can be said for cutting firewood, much of which is coming from dead or dying trees, and perhaps young trees. Landowners who are better informed about successional dynamics, nutrient cycling, and wildlife trees will make better decisions about cutting firewood.

Many landowners enjoy wildlife, and are proud of the fact that they provide a good home for birds and other animals. Programs that help them enhance wildlife habitat would be well received, and could get some landowners starting on a path to a more comprehensive stewardship plan.

5. Understanding Urban/Suburban Owners (1-9 acre parcels)

Seventeen percent of Connecticut's forestland is in small parcels between 1 and 9 acres, averaging 2.3 acres (Table 2). They are primarily in urban and suburban areas, although there are certainly small parcels in rural areas. Those in rural areas are more likely to be connected to other wooded areas, and thus an important part of the intactness of the

forest. However, those in the urban and suburban areas are very likely to be in a highly fragmented forest landscape, interspersed with development. Although these small patches of fragmented forest may not provide the ecological benefits of the larger areas of intact forest, they do provide essential environmental services and habitat for certain wildlife species, and they contribute to the character and aesthetic of Connecticut's towns and cities. They are often on the forefront of invasive species problems and impacted severely by storms, resulting in degraded forest health conditions.

Thus, these small landowners should not be neglected – they need good advice and support to manage their woodlots and wooded backyards well. Currently Connecticut has only one urban forester – and there are 122,000 of these small woodlot owners scattered throughout the state. Knowing something about their attitudes and values, and what kinds of advice and assistance they need is a good start, but it is not enough. Innovative programs and partnerships are needed to reach and work with small woodlot owners.

In many ways, smaller landowners are similar to the larger woodland owners. Their reasons for owning are much the same – beauty, scenery, nature protection, wildlife (figure 6). One difference is the importance of this being their home – 87% rate this factor as important/very important, vs. 70% of the 10+ acres owners. The woods are part of their backyard. The other interesting difference is that they are much less likely to cite legacy as an important reason for owning their land.

Conserving their woodlands is extremely important - they almost unanimously say they would like their land to stay wooded (95%). And they have a strong sense of how their little piece of property benefits the larger environment and landscape - 88% say that keeping their land intact contributes to improving the environment well beyond their community.

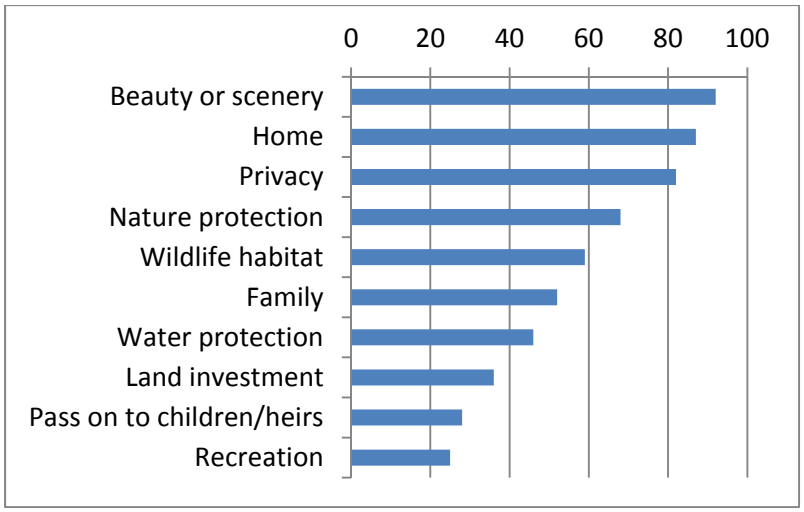

Figure 6. Percent of urban/suburban landowners (1-9 acres) who rated each category either very important or important. The categories are not mutually exclusive.

Although recreation is rated low as a reason for owning their land, it is an important activity – over half say they use their land for recreation, almost exclusively for hiking/walking (figure 7). They also use "products" from their woods, such as firewood, decorative materials, landscaping materials, and edible plants. They are actively removing invasive plants and cutting unwanted trees. All of these are management activities of one sort or another, whether or not they are thought of that way by the landowners. And almost none are getting advice. The numbers are so low as to be statistically unreliable. However, many would appreciate some advice (Table 9). Survey responses indicate they would find advice helpful on removing invasive plants (51%), caring for their woods (47%), enhancing wildlife habitat (31%) and woodland management (24%). Their preferred method, much like the larger landowners, is written materials, followed by the internet. Only 20% say they would prefer talking to someone and even fewer say they would like to have someone visit their land (15%). Just like the larger landowners they prefer by far to get advice from state or local government (65%). Land trusts are next highest at 35%.

Programs that would appeal to small woodland owners should be focused on what they value and how they use and perceive their property: small woodlot wildlife; trails; healthy woods; invasive plants and insects; growing useful plants; and preventing and managing storm damage. Programs delivered by local land trusts in partnership with state agencies might work best.

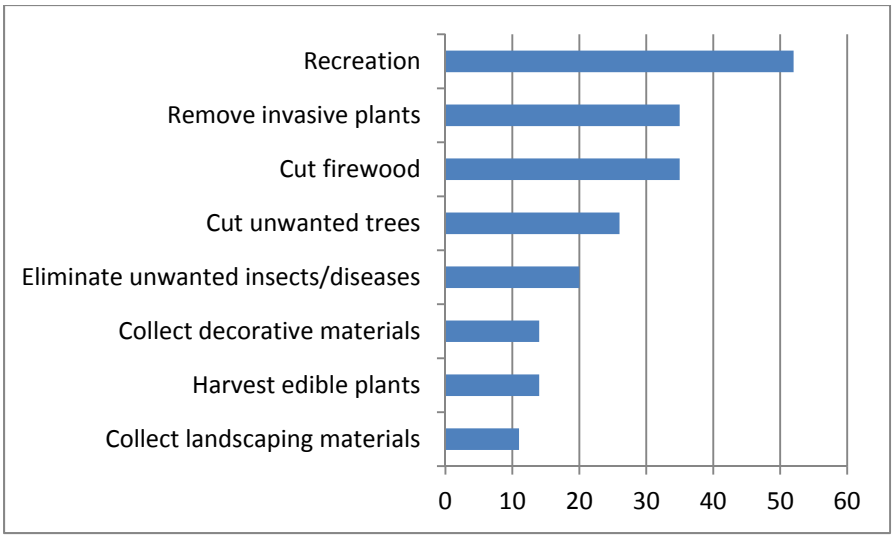

Figure 7. Percent of urban/suburban landowners (1-9 acres) who indicated they have engaged in each activity in the last 5 years. The categories are not mutually exclusive.

Table 9. Preferences for advice of 1-9 acre owners. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

How helpful …..	
Advice on invasive plants	51%
More favorable tax policies	49%
Advice on insects and diseases	48%
Advice on caring for your property	47%
Advice on woodland management	24%
From whom would you prefer to get help/advice?	
State or local government	65%
Federal government	32%
Land trust	29%
Another landowner	*
Private forester	*
Family member or friend	*

* Respondent sample size too small to provide meaningful data

6. Regional Differences

Survey data for all owners (1+ acres) were sorted by region of the state in order to see if there were any geographical differences. The regions are: northwest (Litchfield and Hartford counties); northeast (Tolland and Windham counties); southwest (Fairfield and New Haven counties); and southeast (Middlesex and New London counties). This could not be done for the

10+ acres woodland owners alone as the sample sizes get too small and the variances in the data too large. So although the regional differences are discussed here, it must be kept in mind that this is not a direct comparison to the data and discussion in section 3 on 10+ acre woodland owners as it includes the many more 1-9 acre owners.

There are more woodland owners in the northwest than in other parts of the state (Table 10). Although the southeast has the least, they tend to have more of the larger landowners. And the parcel sizes are the smallest by far in the southwest. This reflects the much higher level of development in the southwest compared to the rest of the state, hence the forests are more fragmented. Table 11 shows the top concerns for each region, and table 12 shows what kind of advice they would find helpful.

Table 10. Distribution of CT woodland owners by region; distribution of size classes within each region

	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwest
% of CT woodland owners (1+ ac)	25%	39%	15%	21%
% of owners in each region in 1-9 ac class	84%	88%	82%	96%
% of owners in each region in 10+ ac class	16%	12%	18%	4%

Table 11. Top Five Concerns (in order of importance)

NE	NW	SE	SW
taxes	taxes	*development	taxes
legacy	air pollution	*taxes	water pollution
misuse/vandalism	insects	insects/diseases	development
water pollution	water pollution	trespassing	legacy
insects/diseases	Invasive plants	legacy	misuse/vandalism

*tied

Table 12. Would like advice on (in order of importance, 30% or higher)

NE	NW	SE	SW
invasive plants	taxes	taxes	taxes
taxes	invasive plants	woodland management	woodland management
caring for land	insects	legacy	
Insects/diseases	caring for land		

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Butler, Brett J., Mary Tyrrell, Geoff Feinberg, Scott VanManen, Larry Wiseman, and Scott Wallinger. 2007. Understanding and Reaching Family Forest Owners: Lessons from Social Marketing Research. *Journal of Forestry* 105(7): 348-357.

Resources for Natural Resource Professionals and Forest Landowners

Connecticut Forest & Park Association
http://ctwoodlands.org/

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Forestry Division
http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2697&q=322792

University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research
http://clear.uconn.edu/

Sustaining Family Forests Initiative
sffi.yale.edu

Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively
engaginglandowners.org

Yale Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry
http://environment.yale.edu/gisf/

Audubon Connecticut
http://www.audubon.org/content/audubon-connecticut

Highstead
http://highstead.net/

USDA Forest Service National Woodland Owner Survey
http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/nwos/

Family Forest Research Center
http://www.familyforestresearchcenter.org/

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Connecticut
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/ct/home/

University of Connecticut Extension Forestry
http://www.canr.uconn.edu/ces/forest/

Eastern Connecticut Forest Landowners Association
http://www.ecfla.org/

USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program
http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/aboutflp.shtml

LANGER QUALITATIVE

A Qualitative Report on
Understanding Connecticut Landowners

Prepared for the

Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

Study #7271317
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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Purpose

"Understanding Connecticut Landowners Attitudes and Objectives" is a multi-phase research project undertaken by a partnership of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Connecticut Division of Forestry, US Forest Service National Woodland Owner Survey and US Forest Service Northern Area State & Private Forestry. This report concerns the second phase of the project, a qualitative study of landowners in the state.

As background, Connecticut is one of the nation's most heavily forested states, despite the fact that it is one of the most densely populated states. Nearly 60% of its land base is in forest and 77% owned by private landowners. This means private landowner management and ownership decisions have great influence over the quality and extent of the state's forests now and into the future.

Two of the greatest threats to Connecticut's forest ecosystem health are increased forest fragmentation/parcelization and forest landowner confusion concerning forest management. The Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Forestry is charged with providing assistance to forest landowners throughout Connecticut. Although the resources of the Division are small, with its partners it has a good deal of leverage to offer services. Partner conservation organizations share visions and provide a wide variety of landowner assistance. Among them are Audubon, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Connecticut Extension Service and Yale University.

There is concern that the goal of keeping Connecticut forests as forest cannot be achieved without effective communication of conservation program efforts. In order to deliver programs effectively, the state's Division of Forestry and its partner conservation organizations believe it is necessary to understand Connecticut landowners better: why they own their land, their attitudes, concerns and perceptions. The USDA Forest Service National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) provides a good deal of useful information on landowners nationally but currently its data for Connecticut are inadequate due to the small sample size, although the sample size will be increased in the future. To provide information and insights that can be used sooner, a special survey and landowner focus groups have been designed.

Phase 2 of this project, reported on here, is a series of focus groups held with landowners. It is modeled after the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative (SFFI) process for learning about these owners and the best ways of communicating with them.

B. Sample

Six focus groups were conducted with landowners, with two sessions of about 10 respondents held in each of the towns of Mansfield, Haddam and Torrington at University of Connecticut offices. Towns chosen provided a spread of locations around Connecticut. Landowners in surrounding areas were recruited for the groups, selected randomly from property tax lists for the towns within a 30-mile radius of the meeting locations. Throughout the report, these locations are referred to as East, Central, and West.

Screening requirements for respondents were:

- Own 10-999 acres in Connecticut that are wooded/covered by trees; all owned at least once parcel of 10+ acres. Most owners interviewed have under 150 acres in total (all parcels)
- Own their land privately through individual/joint ownership or through a family partnership/trust/estate
- Make decisions concerning their land either alone or share decisions about equally with someone else
- Mix in terms of attitudinal segments on reasons for owning; the balance of segments varied by location
- A few have a management plan or have received professional advice on taking care of their land and trees, and/or belong to a landowner or woodland association
- None are/were a forester or logger
- Mix of gender, age (21+ years old, most 50+), and length of ownership

The focus groups were conducted between August 10th and 19th, 2010.

C. Discussion Areas

The focus groups covered the following topics, developed with input from the various stakeholder organizations in Connecticut:

- Ownership description and attitudes
  - Brief description of the owner's land (number of acres per piece, location, what the land is like, length of ownership, residence or not)
  - What is valued most about owning land
  - Main issues/challenges of being a landowner

- Land management
  - What landowners do to take care of their trees/woodland
  - Reasons for commercial timber harvest, type of professional consulted
  - Use of a written forest management plan, interest in a plan
  - Ever consulted with professional forester

- The future
  - Any plans to sell, reasons/pressures to sell
  - Hopes for the land after the landowner owns it
  - Concerns about the future of the land staying as it is
  - Feelings about woodlands remaining woodlands
  - What feelings would be if an endangered species found on the land
  - Interest in a land conservation agreement
  - Incentives that might interest landowners in keeping woodlands as woodlands

- Programs
  - Assistance, programs wanted (unaided)
  - Reactions to a list of major Connecticut landowner programs: awareness of programs, enrollment – written, then discussed (program list and responses appended)

- Sources to reach landowners about programs

D. Caveat

It is important to emphasize that this study is qualitative in nature and that the hypotheses discussed in this report should be viewed as tentative.

E. Reading notes

Respondent verbatims from the focus groups have been edited for clarity and conciseness.

II. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

A. MAJOR HYPOTHESES

1. Landownership Attitudes

What Owners Value Most

Connecticut family forest owners spoke passionately about how much they love their land. Aspects of ownership they value most include:

- Privacy and seclusion – not seeing/hearing or being seen/heard by their neighbors.
- Peace and quiet – "a sanctuary," personal safety.
- Awe of nature – its "beauty" (trees are part of this), a sense of "discovery."
- Wildlife/animals – excitement about sighting different species of birds and other wildlife; hunting for a segment, horses for others. Some owners are "avid" bird watchers, eager to learn more and provide a habitat. Owners are divided in their views of hunting, a polarizing issue.
- Outdoor activities – enjoyment of the "physical labor" of owner chores, especially cutting firewood ("beats going to the gym"), and of recreation.
- Open space – very important to most of the landowners.
- Conservation – a segment of owners is passionate and knowledgeable about this issue; carrying on their "family legacy" is a motivation for some.
- Independence, self-sufficiency – a few owners, including commercial farmers, value being able to grow their own food, knowing they "could support" themselves and their families if necessary.

While Connecticut landowners are generally similar to those Langer Qualitative has interviewed in other states, some points of difference emerged: the conservation-minded segment may be larger; several Connecticut owners expressed a desire to share "nature" with others (young people, city dwellers, etc.); the view that physical chores of ownership are enjoyable did not come out in other focus groups.

Landowner Challenges

Connecticut landowners encounter a number of challenges, some quite serious and anxiety-provoking:

- Invasive species – owners "struggle" to combat plants and insects that destroy trees, flowers and gardens.
- Dangerous/problem wildlife – animals that scare or threaten children, family dogs, livestock and gardens; deer that carry disease. The state was blamed by some for releasing fisher cats and coyotes into the woods.

- Trespassers – this stirs anger and concern. Interlopers on foot and in sports vehicles damage and litter the land, take property, endanger or scare owners' families, increase the risk of forest fires. Hunters have frightened and accidentally hit some owners and their family members. Tactics for discouraging trespassers were mentioned, including making sure the land looks well-kept.
- Managing/maintaining the land – a great deal of work (some dangerous) and money is needed to deal with Connecticut's constantly-growing brush. Older landowners said this task can pressure them to consider selling their property. Information and advice is desired by some on problems (e.g., "bad" soil, keeping trails open, fallen trees). The desire for advice and help with managing small properties was expressed by several owners.
- Development – this is opposed by a number of owners because it reduces open space and can cause their property taxes to rise.
- Taxes – property taxes are seen as too high and unfair by some, although the 490 program is credited with making ownership affordable.
- Liability – if someone is hurt on the property, even trespassers there illegally, and invited guests. Confusion exists about the extent to which owners can be held responsible.
- Generating income – land-based businesses can be highly demanding and not profitable.

<u>Woodland Management</u>

Landowners' woodland management ranged from relatively rare major cutting to regular maintenance and cleaning up (trimming, etc.). Aesthetic, financial and other practical reasons can play a role in motivating owners' decisions on management.

- Selective and clear-cutting – only a few of the owners interviewed harvested, typically years ago and sometimes as part of a management plan. Goals include: for commercial cuts, to raise money for expenses, including taxes; to regenerate/thin the forest "to make room for new growth"; to remove trees that are "destroying" other trees; to create pastures and hayfields.
- Cutting firewood – both to warm their homes and because some owners enjoy the task.
- Trimming and thinning – to promote new growth, create/maintain trails for vehicles (regular and fire) and/or hunters, let more sunlight come through, install a road.
- Removing "dead trees" – several owners do this rather than letting trees decompose in place; some replant.

A segment of owners, who might be called minimalists, do little maintenance on most of their land. Reasons given are that it is too much work, nature should

take its own course, “rough” land attracts deer for hunting, and owners’ resistance to change.

A large majority of the owners interviewed manage the woods themselves and are relatively uninformed about effective methods. Some realize this and want more guidance. They either do not know where to turn for help or have been frustrated trying to get answers (the University of Connecticut extension services were mentioned).

Use of Forestry Professionals

Loggers or foresters have been used by several landowners, sometimes in conjunction with a forestry management plan. Confusion exists about the difference between the two types of professionals, as seen in our other research as well. Confusion also exists about state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) foresters, UCONN extension foresters and private consultant foresters: most landowners can’t tell them apart and some call any forester a “state forester.”

Positive experiences with forester professionals were described by several landowners. In particular, they appreciate walk-throughs of the land, where foresters offer useful information, sometimes dispelling “myths” (for example, that laurel should not be cut) and giving advice tailored to the owner. The recommendations, however, are not always followed. Other tasks performed by foresters include marking the trees and planning which trees to cut, mapping the land, help with pricing, removing old lumber and opening up roads.

Problems with finding a trustworthy logger, brought up by several owners, can be an obstacle to managing the land. Although some word of mouth exists about loggers’ reputations, several owners feel at a loss about how to find reliable people. Several owners have used the same person to recommend which trees to cut and then to do the cut; not surprisingly, this has not always turned out well. Loggers drew several criticisms: they only care about the money; make recommendations that serve their interests, not the owners’; have shoddy, unfair practices (e.g., where they cut, payments to the owner). The “mess” loggers leave behind disturbs a number of owners. They do not see the environmental advantages of allowing trees to decompose, and it might be difficult to convince them to accept the appearance.

Ways in which the satisfied owners found good professionals were through recommendations by peers and the DEP. Advice given by some respondents was to use state foresters or state-licensed ones, to rely on the Master Loggers program certification as a guide, and to work out a detailed contract in advance.

On the negative side, state foresters are viewed with suspicion by owners who generally avoid government oversight or involvement.

Written Management Plans

The few landowners with a written management plan spoke favorably about the personal attention and customized recommendations: the walk-throughs of the land; advice on which trees to cut, how to deal with wetlands; information on the logging rules; topographical maps of their land. They felt more knowledgeable as a result, with a longer-term view on achieving their objectives.

Lack of follow-up was described by an owner. Told 30 years ago that she did not need to do anything, she has not contacted the Department of Forestry again. Some owners noted that 490 enrollees do not need to have management plan.

Plans for the Land's Future

Most of the owners plan to keep their land as long as possible. Starting a land-based business is a retirement dream for some.

Aging is the key reason why some owners consider selling property now or in the future. They find it increasingly difficult to take care of the land or worry about being able to if their partner (typically the man) dies first. Those who have no children or whose children are uninterested in the land see selling as an option. Because Connecticut's population is aging, it is likely that the pressure to sell will increase. Business reasons for selling were also mentioned by a few owners.

Most landowners with children hope to pass down the land to the next generation. Several are confident or hopeful that at least one child will keep the land; some owners have expressed their wishes that it remain "intact," although they are careful not to make the offer with "strings attached." Other relatives in the same or younger generation are prospective heirs for some owners without children.

Possible threats to inheritors retaining the land include: estate taxes, which anger some owners; personal disagreements among heirs and neighbors can result in parcelization; rising land values in Connecticut make it harder for heirs to buy one another out.

Conservation easements are a principal instrument used by landowners to preserve the land after their tenure. They are motivated by the belief that their property is particularly beautiful or highly valuable to the area, or to continue their family heritage of preservation. Some owners without heirs to pass land down to are attracted to easements. Others whose children might want the property said their children support the idea. Immediate benefits were mentioned by one respondent who said selling to a land conservatory could "finance my old age."

Obstacles to landowners signing up for a conservation easement can be internal or external: the mistaken belief that easements require public access, opening the property up to "more trespassers"; land trusts lack funds to grant easements.

Sale of development rights interests several landowners. The sale provides immediate financial benefits and, some believe, the land remains in owners' hands and under their control. This is essentially the same as a conservation easement, since once the development rights are sold a conservation restriction on development is placed on the property, but landowners don't always understand the point. Again, landowners may not qualify and land trusts may not be able to fund the sale.

Family trusts are used by a few owners to prevent heirs from selling the land because of disagreements.

Selling land to the town was mentioned by a few as a way of keeping family property intact so "everybody can use it." Selling land to the water company was mentioned by one owner but another said this might not prevent development.

A segment of owners are non-planners who avoid thinking about their own or their partner's death. Those without children feel no urgency to plan, and some parents take a hands-off approach to letting children decide about selling. These attitudes are typical of what we heard in our other research, which suggests that resistance to planning is very deep.

Reasons to Keep Forestland as Forestland

Landowners declared they care very much about the importance of keeping forestland as forestland and forestalling massive development. Reasons reflect what they value about their land: love of the rural life; beauty of nature and the desire to share it; societal and environmental benefits (clean water and air, local employment, biodiversity).

Support for "smart development" was expressed by some owners who believe the state should be open to newcomers and have affordable housing for younger people – though not necessarily big box stores.

Endangered Species

Landowners expressed divided feelings about the possibility of discovering an endangered species on their land.

On the positive side, some have been or would be excited and proud. Tying in with the conservation ethic, some landowners believe the environmental benefits justify the inconvenience they might endure. The fact that such species make development close to impossible is a plus, some feel.

Negatively, a number of landowners would be upset. They believe endangered species would create major headaches: government involvement and oversight, restrictions on their land use, and expense. Some owners stated they would hide the discovery from the government. Saving what they see as unimportant, sometimes undesirable animals and plants is not important to them.

Incentives for Landowners

Respondents made several suggestions concerning incentives that would motivate more landowners to keep their land as forestland. Lower taxes, especially elimination of the estate tax, were seen as most important, along with a "more and better 490" to reduce property taxes. Other ideas were providing aid to older landowners, incentives to developers who donate to conservation easements, and changing the "forestland" designation to "eco land" so landowners can put more property in.

Land trust programs drew a few mixed comments. They were praised for educating landowners through seminars and connecting them to people with information, but criticized for requiring owners to do things some don't want to do ("dig pools of water for ducks").

Information that landowners would find useful was suggested on several topics: tree problems, issues like trespassing, developing a habitat for birds, and the needs of smaller owners. Programs to combat invasive species along roads (by the federal government) and help in building fish ponds were also mentioned.

Wariness about dealing with government is an obstacle to getting government help, however, even among some conservation-minded owners. They do not want the government to come on their land, tell them what they can and cannot do, or to deal with bureaucracy.

2. Current Connecticut Landowner Programs

Overall Awareness

Awareness of most landowner programs was extremely low in this research. Current Use 490 was recognized by a majority of respondents, a few had heard of the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), and there was only scattered awareness of some others. Consistently, respondents were surprised to find out that so many landowner programs are available. Requests for information to take home were made in all the groups.

A number of owners are not information-seekers about land issues. Further, they are unlikely to look for information from the state since they have no idea

programs exist and do not necessarily want help from the government. Online they would simply “Google” a subject or go to a site like the Audubon Society.

Making owners aware of programs, however, would probably not be sufficient to motivate them. Deep distrust and skepticism concerning government are also obstacles to involvement. A number of these independent-minded owners assume the help comes “with strings attached” that will take away their “control” of the land. Researching and enrolling are assumed to be complicated. Important though their land is to them, being a landowner is only one part of many owners’ lives, along with jobs and family.

The state government itself can be an obstacle, some owners said. Tax assessors don't offer help or advice on lowering landowners’ tax bills, possibly withholding information on purpose. Some owners avoid talking to assessors, afraid of opening themselves up to scrutiny or a tax hike. Several agencies (DEP, extension offices) were criticized for not providing information. Applying to enroll can also be “tedious.”

Current Use Program (490)

The importance and popularity of this Connecticut program came through strongly in the focus groups. The majority of respondents were enrolled in the program. They greatly appreciate the “huge” tax break, some crediting it with enabling them to keep their land. Most are totally satisfied, with no complaints. However, uneven implementation of 490 by town assessors was mentioned in most sessions.

The penalty on withdrawal before 10 years seems to be accepted by enrollees as reasonable and effective in discouraging sales to developers. However, some confusion exists: does it apply to landowners who build houses for children on their property, to putting land in a trust?

Other 490 issues and questions included: differences in acreage requirements of the three variations (Farm, Forest and Open Space); criticism that the program is less valuable/effective than it used to be; how parcels can be put together; the cost of the transition from the 10 Mill program.

Non-enrollees expressed favorable attitudes toward 490, saying they would enroll if they qualified.

Sources of awareness for 490 included: local/state newspapers; materials about farming by the conservation department; some town officials/assessors/clerks. This program was “well publicized” when it was introduced, unlike others.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

WHIP received several positive comments from landowners familiar with it as being successful in promoting wildlife. Some non-enrollees pointed to positive effects of the program: it improved "a very important piece of property" that was "overgrown" in the center of a town; provides partial reimbursement owners who create an open area near their house, which is good for hunters and wildlife lovers; helps landowners learn more about birds.

Negatively, an enrollee criticized the paperwork for reimbursement and another owner felt that too much money has gone to the wrong projects.

COVERTS

On the positive side, some owners said the program educates landowners who are then "obliged" to take the program back to their communities. The limited schedule, however, was cited as an obstacle to participation.

Other programs drew only a few mentions each (see the Discussion section).

Getting Information to Landowners

The state needs to do a better job of getting the information out, respondents strongly agreed. While the Internet is used a good deal for information, most users just do "general Googling" of a term; a few thought they might use a website, such as the Department of Environmental Protection or the Agriculture Department.

A Connecticut Landowners' Guide, suggested by respondents, would be a relatively short booklet explaining the key federal and state programs available to landowners. It could be posted online, made available in public spaces landowners go to like town halls, sent to deed owners (possibly with a minimum number of acres). Other suggestions were to give/send information with other landowner materials, such as the tax bill or pamphlet about 490 for enrollees; more help and information by state and local government, the University of Connecticut; use of word of mouth among landowners; materials at community places where owners interact informally, such as the farmer's market; media, like the Hartford Courant, small town newspapers and the Connecticut Wildlife Magazine; organizations like landowner associations and the Audubon Society.

B. IDEAS SUGGESTED BY THE RESEARCH

This research suggests that efforts are needed to increase awareness of Connecticut's landowner programs. The high level of awareness and interest in Current Use (490) can suggest ideas for other program. This program provides significant tax savings without few requirements and a long (10-year) withdrawal

penalty. A number of owners feel it has helped them keep their land, its intended purpose. It was well-publicized, especially when it was introduced, and has a simple name ("490" has no inherent meaning but is easy to remember).

Landowners are interested in learning more about other programs available but, at the same time, are very wary of those that might limit their freedom and control.

Ideas that might be considered for communicating with Connecticut landowners about the state's programs include:

- Focus on programs that owners might be most receptive to, that is, ones that lower their tax burdens, offer information and non-binding advice/ recommendations.
- Concentrate efforts on only a few programs rather than the whole array, which can be overwhelming.
- Develop a Connecticut Landowners' Guide or Handbook that concisely summarizes the major programs available, with resources for following up; make this available online and in places where landowners go (see below).
- Go to where landowners already are and will be likely to see materials, such as local places (e.g., town halls, farmer's markets, bulletin boards, coffee shops, even town dumps), hyper-local media (town newspapers) and local websites.
- Appeal to owners' love of their land, their desire to see open space continued for their families and the public, their dislike of massive development.
- Address "hot button" concerns that owners worry about and see as threats to what they love – invasive species, managing overgrowth, attracting desirable wildlife and keeping safe from dangerous animals, trespassers and liability issues, etc.
- Make topics intriguing and relevant, e.g., by addressing "myths" owners believe (such as that cleaning the woods is better than letting leaves decompose).
- Use/devise peer-to-peer programs since fellow landowners are more trusted than the government. Informal meetings (e.g., "lunch and learn") about dealing with the problems mentioned above will attract some, especially if they offer social interaction. These can be publicized locally.
- Provide information on how to find a trustworthy logger, how professional foresters can help owners understand their own land and its needs better.
- Target older landowners (60+) who may be vulnerable to selling off their land because of problems managing. Talk about steps they can take to help ensure their land will remain open space, including ones that might provide funds they can use, ways to pass down the land to children with different views about keeping it, etc. Conservation easements can be presented as a possible option.

- Improve cooperation by government offices and agencies so they help owners get answers to questions, offer information about relevant programs.
- Include information in materials landowners receive, such as their tax bill (inserts will need to catch attention so they are not quickly thrown out).
- Address bird lovers, for example, by partnering with Audubon Society on educational programs.

III. DISCUSSION

A. ATTITUDES TOWARD LANDOWNERSHIP

1. What Landowners Value Most

Connecticut landowners interviewed spoke with a real depth of feeling about their land and its meaning to them. "Love" of the land was declared – sometimes quite emphatically – by a number of owners; they described their land as "paradise," "heaven." In general, these attitudes echo those heard in the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative (SFFI) study and other landowner research Langer Qualitative has conducted. As one respondent explained, ownership is an important aspect of owners' lives.

> *Ownership of the land is a lifestyle. Whatever you're doing with it, owning it, is part of your lifestyle – just being a landowner, just the ambiance of your being, that you don't live in an apartment or in a multi-family or ticky-tackies.* (East)

Specific aspects of ownership that Connecticut landowners value most include:

- Privacy. A very important part of ownership is the fact that most owners cannot see/hear or be seen/heard by their neighbors. This "seclusion" frees landowners to do what they want (make noise, walk around as they wish, raise chickens without a permit, etc.). Some owners take pleasure in the fact that everything they see is theirs – it's their own little world. ("It's private land so we have the privacy of it, we control it.") The desire for "additional privacy" motivated a West owner to buy adjacent land.

  Interestingly, while one man declared he knows fewer neighbors than the dozen owners at the focus group, it was also obvious that he and others enjoyed the opportunity to talk together. This suggests that landowners are not necessarily anti-social but that they want the contact to be their choice.

  I don't have to deal with my neighbors having reckless parties and loud music. That's not my taste. I forget it about it when I come down my driveway. That's how good it is that I don't have to put up with some neighbor. (Central)

  We've got chickens. You don't have you get permits for it. You've got a big parcel, nobody bothers you. There's always complaints about having farm animals in small parcels. (Central)

  My wife and I enjoy it. I don't even know my neighbors. I wouldn't know them if I met them on the street. (Central)

Just the fact of standing at the highest point of the land and everywhere you see is yours. I don't have a king complex but it's just that I don't have to look at somebody else's stuff. (Central)

- Peacefulness, quiet, a benefit related to privacy. Owners value the "solitude," think of their home as "a sanctuary where I can feel peaceful" and "relaxed." Along with this is a "feeling of personal safety" for their families, including their pets.

  For us it's a having a safe environment for our kids to just be outside and to be on their own. (West)

  Same is true for my little dog. I don't have to worry about the cars where I am. (West)

  Especially the opportunity to get away from it all, I mean the daily tasks of business and to go home and be able to relax and enjoy the animals. (West)

- Nature. Owners spoke with excitement about the "beauty" of nature and their sense of "discovery." Trees and flowers are an element of this. Recognizing that they are "privileged" as owners, some open their land to others to "appreciate." There were stories of young city dwellers being surprised by standard country sights, such as a sunset. Feelings of spirituality and of control (a "Versailles complex") were described by some.

  We have encouraged people to come walk the trails. It's beautiful and if people really appreciate it and love it and that's the way they want to spend time. We have some neighbors who've asked us if they could walk on the property. Wonderful sledding in the wintertime. Families with their children and occasionally some of the actors or folks from the Goodspeed [Opera House] will come and ask if they could walk. (Central)

  Simply the beauty of nature, which sort of leads you a little bit in the direction of the spiritual. (Central)

  We have the Versailles complex. When you have a large property then you start thinking about how it would fun to shape the trees and all that. It's big-time gardening. (Central)

  Visual. What it looks like, what I look out the window at or sit on the porch and look at. (East)

  I'm a tree hugger. I just [love] trees, all kinds of trees. The air is wonderful, especially in the pine trees. I know it's going to sound like really a bit off-base, but the place to me is alive – the spirits and the trees and the waters and the wildflowers. You couldn't ask for any place better than that. (East)

  We had three interns this year stay on our [organic] farm. What I found interesting was that the girl from Yale, when she showed up, she stood on our

back deck and she said "wow!" It was just a normal sunset. We're all standing there like "what is she looking at? Is it the pond, is it the cows?" She said "look at that sunset." She had never seen a sunset before. Her parents don't own a car. She lives in Manhattan. I find that as a landowner, by sharing the property you have, it actually keeps you enthusiastic about owning it. It's an opportunity to share your land and nature with other people and teach them about it because most people aren't that fortunate to own a piece of property. (East)

Last year something that I loved was I called the school and they have a community service program what they do with the kids. [I] opened up the farm for the kids that needed to do community service to come in and work. It was really exciting to watch these kids because they were the day late, dollar short, didn't do their project. My phone was ringing and these mothers are like "Are you kidding? You're going to make my kid work in the garden?" I said, "Yeah." It was funny because they go out of their car, their heads were down, their feet were dragging. Three hours later I had them all sign a board with stakes and date it, their graduating class. At the end they were really excited about it. Which was nice to be able to share that. (East)

A lot of the kids that come [to our camp] live in the cities and they tell you the stories. Ladies come in on the bus and the kid from Boston. The kid looks out and he's looking up to the sky and he goes "what are those up there, mom?" And she says "those are stars." "Oh, just like in television." There was a thunderstorm and some of the kids came in and wanted to know if it was the Fourth of July again and we were having fireworks. They'd never seen stuff like that living in the cities. (East)

It provides a real sense of discovery for those who have curiosity about the outdoors and the world around them. A piece of property – even a tenth of an acre, if that's all you have – if there's anything natural on it, it's going to provide you with a wealth of things to discover and learn more about the world around you. (East)

- Wildlife/animals. A number of owners spoke of wildlife, albeit from very different perspectives. There is enjoyment and, it seems, a feeling of pride in sighting different species, from more common ones like deer and turkeys to more unusual ones like bears, bobcat, moose and mountain lions. The "change in wildlife" over the years fascinates some long-term residents. One owner described his land as "a refuge for animals," which he promotes.

  Birds were mentioned by several owners. Some described themselves as "avid" bird watchers, talking about seeing breeds like the pileated woodpecker and gray-horned owl. "You feel very fortunate that you're able to see them" since many people only see them in pictures, one owner said.

  Hunting is important to a segment of owners. Both they and some others allow friends and family members to hunt on their land.

Another group consists of horse owners and breeders. One East woman said she is "basically trying to turn" her land "into a horse property with trails."

We get a lot of pileated woodpeckers out our way. They have such a wonderful call and a unique flight pattern with the flying and swooping. And a lot of bluebirds. [I] walked by our bluebird box in the yard one winter afternoon on the way to the chicken coop and something flew out. I turned to see what it was and it was a bluebird. I said "what's a bluebird doing here in December?" We had six bluebirds roosting in one bluebird box over the winter. It was kind of an odd thing but neat to watch. (East)

One of the things I particularly enjoy, and it's been evident over the last 20 years, is the change in wildlife that we're experiencing. Very few deer 40 years [ago]. Today we have them coming out our ears. We've had bears up on the property, we've had duck. [Another respondent: Fox squirrels.] A tremendous amount of bird life. We're finding that over the years the property is sort of self-improving just simply by the wildlife that's out there. Gray-horned owls are just common to us right now. Just so many new things. That's important to me possibly [because of] having grown up in an urban area, although that was 65 years ago. (East)

It's the changing of what you're experiencing, every day. We had river otters go through. We had beavers come in and they had to be moved; that was the downside. The great blue herons that come into the pond. All of these things are just wonderful. Some people don't have the ability to see them in real life; they only see them in pictures. You feel very fortunate that you're able to see them. (East)

I have three nesting pair on my pond. They started off with just one nesting pair and now I've got three. I'm thinking to myself I never get a chance to fish on it too much but there must be something in there because they're having a feast in there. As part of my thing with hunting, I have cameras set up in the woods. You would be surprised what's out there – I've got bobcats out there. I never saw a bobcat but I've got some pictures of bobcat on the property. That in itself, just to have these animals coming back – the moose, the bear, the bobcat. (East)

- Outdoor activities. Several owners talked about the "physical labor" on their land being enjoyable and beneficial. It "beats going to the gym" (or, in the words of one owner by that name, it is "Club Jim") in terms of money and pleasure. Cutting firewood in particular is something a number of the men enjoy as "a labor of love." An 88-year-old man credited his longevity to his "hobby" of building stonewalls by hand. Gardening and growing an orchard ("an aggressive hobby") were also mentioned. Interestingly, the benefits of outdoor work did not come up in our research in other states.

Recreational activities are also important to a number of owners, of course. Among those mentioned are fishing, hunting, cross-country skiing, biking and hiking, and walking.

My hobby is stone walls. My driveway is 831 feet long and I'm building a stone wall on each side of that driveway. Where am I getting the stones? I'm digging them out of the woods by hand. I don't have a backhoe; I don't have a bucket loader. I do it all with a wheelbarrow and a shovel. That's why I'm 88 years old. (Central)

I don't belong to a health club; I go out back to Club Jim. I bring whatever exercise equipment I want, an axe, a shovel or a chainsaw. And I do a long-term aerobic workout, six to eight hours. (East)

I think it keeps me active, too. I don't like to exercise but I like to work. (East)

I think we all like physical labor. We don't necessarily want to go to a gym – we want to cut wood, we want to build wood duck boxes, we want to build bluebird boxes. We want to go out and clear out the invasive species and make it look it nice. We enjoy that aspect of it. (East)

I have about a two-acre fruit orchard where I grow about 50 different kinds of fruit. [I] work at managing my forest mostly by cutting the junk for firewood to heat the house. [Is the orchard an interest or business?] It's a hobby. It's an aggressive hobby. (East)

I enjoy my hunting. As a matter of fact, that's probably the high point of my year. It starts off in the early springtime with the maple syrup and [with] one thing or another, I am in the woods constantly. Four hours ago I was in the woods clearing brush and whatnot. I take my little tractor and I go out there and I'm in seventh heaven. It's work but it's a labor of love. (East)

Cutting wood to me has always been recreation. I did it since I was a kid [probably eight or nine years old]. When I was first married I lived in a small country estate my aunt owned. The place we lived in had no heat other than the wood burning stove. I cut wood from November to April. That's how I heated. The stove went out, it got cold and it got cold quick, so I always cut wood. But it was something I always enjoyed doing. I told my kids "you guys go work in the gym. I never had to work in the gym." I had the axe, no chainsaw. And that was it. (East)

We enjoy working outside. We're always making trails and just working on something. (West)

- Open space. A segment of owners is passionate about preserving open space, as mentioned above. They brought up the subject on their own, using environmentally-conscious language, such as sustainability, renewable resources, wildlife habitat, steward of the land, good forest management practices. Some have turned down lucrative offers to sell. Desire to maintain nature for the future and to carry on their "family

legacy" were mentioned by some. This benefits society as a whole, one said: "Yes, I get a certain enjoyment out of it, but I'm sharing the air quality, the water quality, the wildlife, the benefits of the woodlot with everybody."

Several owners mentioned in their introductions that their land is adjacent to state forest or state wildlife management areas. They see the benefit of large contiguous blocks of forestland with many different owners.

Preservation. You feel like you're doing something that needs to be done. You enjoy doing it, you have the beauty of knowing that it's going to be there longer and maybe what you're doing lines in with it. (Central)

I think that's very important. The property across the street from me was owned by a poultry farm and I was on the Central Land Trust. I convinced the two ladies who inherited that to give that piece of land to the land trust. Nobody can build over there anymore. (Central)

For me it was a resource for materials. I was able to take down trees and replace them. I built my house out of the trees and the stones but I got to replace them. Somebody else probably would have said make a baseball field or something. There are resources that are renewable resources maybe. (Central)

[Conservation] is important to me because I believe that there should be open space. That's why I've tried to maintain this as my family house since 1968. There's only the same dwelling which was our family home. I've come full circle. I didn't reside there until my father passed away and I moved in with my mother. (Central)

"Steward of the land" is my principal role in the fact that my grandfather around 1915, '20s started buying land that had been cut off for charcoal. His idea and his dream was to preserve this land, let it grow into a more natural state, forestland that had once been there, support the wildlife and improve water quality, air quality. My belief in being a steward of the land is, yes, I get a certain enjoyment out of it, but I'm sharing the air quality, the water quality, the wildlife, the benefits of the woodlot with everybody. I'm into anybody that wants to know what I'm doing out there. I'm interested in showing them, give them ideas about good forest management practices. I have neighbors that are asking me about the wildlife habitats that we've created. They've gotten excited, where if they had just looked without asking the questions or having somebody inform them they might have just thought, "oh, this is terrible." So being a steward for me has been being the third generation to fulfill the wish and a desire that the family has had for years. (East)

My husband and I are very adamant. We're approached every single year by at least a couple of people to purchase our property because our property line on one side runs along an unimproved town road, so it has frontage, if you will. I'm very proud of my husband that he has hung on to that land despite very generous offers. He loves the land. It's a family legacy. We just have no intention of developing it, selling it. We use it recreationally – he hunts, we camp

on it. Right now the high line is going to be expanded through the property and we have archaeologists and biologists and we have an entomologist that's been working out there. That's just been a blast, particularly with the entomologist doing studies on rare moths that he's finding on the property, and explaining that it's the environment underneath the high line which actually is attracting these sort of odd species that haven't been found anywhere else. We love it. That's all I can say is we just love it and want to keep it and pass it on and hope that the children will feel the same way as well. (East)

[I] came to have an appreciation for open space, forests, trees and wildlife as neighbors. My wife and bought an almost 20-acre parcel in Andover in 1995 [with a] house already on it. We bought the house in a subdivision on a 29-acre lot. It's a real lot, very remote, isolated, hidden from the road. Preserved land behind us, power lines on one side, so we're pretty well sheltered from further development all the way around. (East)

Just being a steward of the land. There aren't any land factories anymore. (East)

- Independence, self-sufficiency. A few owners, including those with commercial farms, spoke about being able to grow their own food (vegetables and/or meat). They value knowing that they "could support myself" and their families "on the land if I had to."

There's a sense of your own self-sufficiency. When you have a larger lot you really can do and create whatever it is you want. I could support myself on the land if I had to. (Central)

I enjoy being self-sufficient, being able to do what you want. It's going to be a family venture – my sons and my wife and I are going to do this ourselves. We plan on clearing probably 10 to 15 acres so that we could set an orchard, some strawberry fields, some berry fields, then utilize the rest as needed, probably doing some cattle. We've been investigating bison because they're pretty hearty. They can sustain themselves. Just keeping them – they're a little unruly. (East)

I like to get my own food. I don't want to go to the store and buy beef because I don't know who touched it, where it was raised, etc. I like to be able to shoot deer if I want to shoot a deer. We clean and eat all the deer we harvest off of our farm. To me that's just a great feeling. I've got two little girls and they love to go out and they like to go hunting with me. I can do that without somebody looking down their nose saying "why are you doing that?" It's my land. It's my right. When you own a little plot somewhere you don't have that. (East)

The ability to be self-sufficient; even if you don't utilize it at the time you know it's there. If I wanted to have chickens I could have chickens. And if I wanted to have sheep I could have sheep. In other words, I have the flexibility that I wouldn't have if I lived in the city. (East)

I agree with the word "self-sufficient." This is the United States. We own our own property, the freedom to be able to know that if something happened

tomorrow I can take care of my family. We can help other people. We have land, we have wood furnaces, we grow our own vegetables. Knowing where your food is coming from. Knowing what is in what you're eating is huge. Just being able to relax with your kids and go outside and sit by the pond and fish and take a walk in the woods, just being able to do it. Make decisions on your own piece of property, whatever it happens to be. Managing it, whether it comes to hunting, to logging or anything like that. (East)

Several comments show the combination of aspects that owners value most.

I have about 17 acres and state forest on three sides. I love it. I looked all my life for a spot where I don't have the road in front of me and peace and quiet on the sides. I have that there. Lots of beasties and we love it. We just love it. Can't grow veggies but that's okay; not without a 10-foot fence. We've got coyotes and everything. I love it. I go for a walk every day and check things out. Every day is something different. (Central)

[We] bought it really just for our pleasure and to bring up our children in a natural environment. (Central)

I was buying it hopefully to subdivide some day but once I moved there I have no interest in subdividing it. I'm 2,500 feet from the nearest neighbor and I love the privacy. I built the house out of materials from the land which I always wanted to do. I'm an engineer. And my kids love it, which is why I bought it. I raised them there; now most of them are gone but I still like it there. I'm into forest management. I do a lot of civil engineering work. (Central)

My husband and I always had a dream that we would have a farm – not an animal farm but just a land farm. We bought the property and about half is open and half is wooded. We have two small man-made ponds. We love it. It's like we're in heaven every day. We really believe in preservation of open space. We're at the head waters of the Salmon River, which is a very important head water in Connecticut. We love it. We've built a house there and that's where we live. (East)

2. Landowner Challenges

Much as they value and take pleasure in their land, owners also encounter various problems, some of them quite serious. Even some of the positive aspects have a downside.

- Invasive species – plants and insects that destroy trees, flowers and gardens. This subject sparked intense discussion. Owners described their "struggle against" species such as the Asian Bittersweet, Multi-flora rose, Barberry, Japanese Knotweed, and their concerns about the potential damage by the Asian long-horned beetle and the gypsy moth.

We have this threat by the long-horned [beetle]. Is there a long-term plan for the eventual invasion from that beetle and how will it impact on us as forest? There's some thoughts of clear-cut and burn the forest, which is not good, or you let nature take its course; you find a natural predator, things like that and the gypsy moth which has invaded. I'd like to see somebody planning something. (Central)

We have a state forester for our western end of the state come in and talk to me, particularly about the invasives, which were a great concern. They're just taking over. We used to have diary cows on the land back years ago and they kept the prickly ash and a lot of the stuff down. Now it's the brush hog that has to do it. It's labor intensive. He had a suggestion: "you need to raise goats. They'll eat anything." I'm not sure I want goats. (West)

- Wildlife. While they may be exciting to see, animals such as coyotes, bears, and fisher cats can also be frightening. They are considered a threat to the safety of children, family dogs, livestock, as well as the gardens owners work so hard to grow. The state was blamed by some for releasing fisher cats and coyotes into the woods. Deer are a big problem in Connecticut ("a complete nuisance"), both because they eat plants and, of course, because of Lyme disease. Landowners' opposition to hunting will lead to forests without "young trees," a East man warned, a comment that reflects pro- and anti-hunting division.

  Wild animals – I thought that was going to be a great part of [owning the land] but they kill all my livestock, my garden. I'm going to put a 20-foot fence around my garden. (Central)

  We have a wood road going to the end of our property. My wife used to always walk that wood road until she started seeing coyotes. Then [we] started seeing the news about coyotes attacking kids. A few weeks ago I saw a black bear right by our house when she wasn't home and I didn't even tell her. (Central)

  Wild animals. [The] fisher is a very, very vicious animal; scared the living bejabbers out of my wife one night. She comes running home and she says "there's a fisher back there. He scared me. He growled at me, he chased me." She had to run all the way back off one of my roads. We don't have fishers. The state had been in there and had installed fishers. If I didn't like it [what] could I do about it? (Central)

  The coyote was brought into the state of Connecticut by the state to curtail the turkey population. They didn't think the turkeys would prevail because they fly and they get away from the coyotes. Now they have too many coyotes and that's the biggest problem on my property [which] is adjacent to state forest, a 4-H camp. (Central)

  Wildlife is supposed to be wonderful. I tried to grow some vegetables this year. My brother says "after the fourth time they're not so cute." All of my beans and peas, all of them, were eaten by chipmunks. I got nothing. (East)

We've enclosed our orchard with [a ten-foot-high] deer fence because you can't start new trees, at least where we are, without the deer just decimating them. (East)

The state's deer population has done nothing but quadruple on a year-in-year-out basis. There's less and less people to hunt and there's more and more people that want to say "I'm sick of these deer destroying my landscaping but I don't know if I should let you hunt because it might upset my neighbor." This underlying philosophy [is] that we've all got to hold hands and sing kumbaya. We're going to end up with forests a lot like New Jersey and Pennsylvania where you don't have any recruitment; you don't have any new trees coming in and you end up with a monoculture so you walk in the woods and there's nothing left. You have browse lines. That's a big problem because what happens is you don't get the younger tree species coming in to replace the old. (East)

We're not far from the Mohawk State Forest so we get a lot of wildlife that sort of travels around all of that area – bears and coyotes and deer and fishers which they released into the Mohawk State Forest and now come up where we are, which is probably a good 10 miles from the heart of that forest. We had to fence in about six or seven acres of land because there were bears in our backyard and we had young children, we have dogs. And bobcats and, of course, the deer, which are just a complete nuisance. (West)

- Trespassers/others on the land. This issue provokes a good deal of anger. Owners are infuriated by at interlopers who feel entitled to come onto the owner's land, littering it, damaging it, taking what doesn't belong to them, sometimes endangering or scaring owners' families. Uninvited hunters and sports vehicles drivers (dirt bikes, snowmobiles, etc.) in particular act "like they own" the land. Some landowners stand up to the trespassers – one woman said she "chase[s] them" and another that her husband "has a reputation" which scares trespassers off. Forest fires are a very real worry.

  Our trespassers come from all over the place – all-terrain vehicles, motorbikes. They just cross over, cause erosion, go right through the brooks. (Central)

  With trespassers I worry about forest fires. If I had a forest fire I won't have anything. (Central)

  Kid drove in with a car, wrecked it and it went on fire. Not good. We didn't have a vehicle to get into it either. (Central)

  Being able to share your land with others in a way that's positive and not negative. It's hard to welcome people on your land when they're trespassing, so it's a very tricky balance. Especially if you're in an area [like ours] – we abut a state park and we have a trail that runs right into our farm, into our woodland. (East)

Part of the property is campground and our house is there; part of it's just woods. We don't even like to have the campers walk through there. It's like off-limits. Just keep the campers where the grass is cut – kids are safer that way. (East)

I had one ATV come through and within 20 minutes I had my pick-up out there and I dragged a treetop over the end of the trail. No more ATVs. (East)

Keeping the snowmobiles off in the wintertime. They go across like it's public land and it's not. (West)

Problems with hunters scaring or even accidentally hitting people were mentioned by a few owners. One allows hunters on the land, setting rules which he says they follow.

I used to let people hunt there until I got shot. (Central)

We had a bullet through our house. (Central)

I was shot at as a child [when] my brother and I were just playing on this piece of property. They don't care; they just stop and pull out a gun. (Central)

Me and my son was chopping corn in the field and feeding it into the chopper. A guy was down in the lot. A pheasant flew across and he shot at the pheasant. Good thing the tractor was there because I only got four or five bb's in my pack. We turned around when it hit the tractor. My son, he got hit here [in his chest]. (Central)

[We border] the state forests. I can't tell you how many times I've seen guys in camouflage walking down my driveway with a gun. It makes my mother an absolute nervous wreck. I said "Ma, yeah, they're trespassing but at least I knew what they were doing." The one that made me really nervous is the guy I saw walking down my driveway in camouflage and no gun. I want to know what the heck he was doing out there. I know the vast majority of hunters are responsible, smart people so anybody here that hunts and is responsible; I am not saying anything against that. But some of the people that have ended up in our backyard I can't believe anybody giving anybody that dumb the license to carry a gun. It's truly scary. (East)

I've never been afraid to spend time in the woods – during hunting season, out of hunting season. I do permit hunters; I do manage the hunting. Connecticut law says that you can take a certain number of whatever. I'll do a rough inventory and I'll tell them what they can take. "I've got x number of permits and you can take x number of deer." When they're gone or when that number of turkeys has been harvested, that's it; it's the end of the season. "You're going to hunt over here. You're going to hunt over here." We separate them by terrain. They all know that if they see somebody out there that they don't know to speak with them and find out why they're there. That's been a very effective control. The word is out – you can't get away with anything on my property. (East)

Ideas on how to discourage trespassers were exchanged in a East session: maintain the land so it looks taken care of, keep a target with some bullet holes "so they know there's some crazy redneck with firearms."

One of the things that you have to do to reduce the amount of trespassing is to manage it. If it looks like it's vacant and nobody's paying attention to it, it's an invitation. (East)

I accidentally discovered a good way to keep trespassing down. I had set up a target and was just shooting. I had a range, safe backstop and was feeling lazy so I didn't take the target down. I used my trail again. I thought "boy, that's kind of intimidating with the target there in the middle of the trail" because as you come around and look at the other side you realize you're down range of a shooting range. [I'm] not saying you have to use it but you might leave a target with a few holes in it out. Just so they know there's some crazy redneck with firearms. (East)

On the negative side, one owner said that a path can attract ATV vehicles.

Having a path through the property is sometimes a problem. There is access to that path if you go through the wild, wild woods for just a little bit. People with all-terrain vehicles sometimes find my path and they say "hurrah." Then they come up and they do a lot of damage. I don't like that. (Central)

- Managing/maintaining the land. "The general upkeep of the property" requires a great deal of work to prevent the brush taking over. ("Stuff's growing faster than I can cut it down.") Maintenance also costs owners "lots of money" for equipment or to hire others ("one of the big expenses of summer"). Some work is also dangerous.

  Aging landowners in particular find maintenance a challenge. Some are already considering selling their property, while others feel that day may come later. A woman whose husband is older said she probably would not be able to hold on if her husband predeceased her.

  Knowing what to do about certain problems is an issue for some landowners, such as "bad" soil, keeping trails open, fallen trees. There is a need for "some good advice" on what to do, one owner said.

  How do you keep trails open so that you're familiar [with] where you have your boundaries? How do you manage your woodlands from the point of views of trees, fallen, broken limbs, dangerous? There's a lot to do to manage. You have to have equipment; you have to have somebody who's physically capable of doing it. (Central)

  General upkeep of the property. The fields that surround my home which probably encompass at least five to eight acres. I have a tractor and I actually know how to drive the tractor and mow these fields sometimes but recently I've

had to hire somebody because of the time factor. I like to keep the gardens. My mother had beautiful perennial gardens and those are still intact. The forests do need to be thinned somewhat for new growth. I want to keep it as. My father and mother worked hard for this land and I'm trying to keep it as nice as I can. (Central)

I see the problem as managing the land. Whether it's expensive or if you want to keep it the way you want to keep it, that stuff grows faster than I can cut it down. When I first moved there I thought, I hope I don't clear it all out just for firewood after a few years. But now I find – perhaps I'm getting older, too – that stuff's growing faster than I can cut it down. So to manage it and keep it the way I want is becoming very time consuming. (East)

If this glacial kind of soil is bad, I think I've got that. It's not that it's bad it's just that it's difficult to grow in. Trying to find someone to give me some good advice about what might be reasonable to do to improve or just leave it. (East)

If you actually actively manage your land and you have very much of it, it takes a considerable amount of effort. It looks a lot easier on paper than it is in real life. I don't know if it's a problem; anybody who's going to do it is doing it because they enjoy doing it. I keep track of my time on the property. The last three months or so, I've probably had a chainsaw in my hand over 500 hours doing projects that needed to be done. (East)

- Development. A number of owners worry that there will be too much development in the state. This reduces the open space they so highly value and can cause their property taxes to rise. (On the other side, some owners talked about the need for a certain amount of development to provide affordable housing, as will be discussed.) Concerns about development came up strongly in our other landowner research as well.

  We adjoin the state forest so on the other side of my property we have probably a good 800 acres. At one time on our side of the property we had probably about 700, ,800 but unfortunately the adjoining neighbor made a decision to develop the property, so they put 20 homes in there. It was a travesty in two ways. Number one, the people that bought the homes didn't realize what they were getting. It was nicknamed Swampy Acres for good reason. These are very, very expensive homes that they put in there. They ended up diverting water from one of their retaining ponds. (East)

  Preserving it as open space and open land as farmland so that it's not developed is probably a primary concern. Open land, farmland, especially in our neck of the woods, is at a premium. It probably has not been hit as hard by the recession in terms of the price level for the properties [as] other areas have been. To keep it open as farmland so that it doesn't have houses on it, because that's forever – or practically forever. It restricts the movement of wild animals and wildlife and that sort of thing. The notion that corridors in amongst homes and that sort of thing take care of it – it doesn't. You need big plots, you need open space in order to have healthy biodiversity. (West)

Another challenge on a base level is paying the taxes to keep that land open. More and more there's development on the property and that raises the tax rates on those who've lived on that property for a number of years. We're the third generation to live on our property. (West)

The prices of land around go up then with that the taxes go up. (West)

- Taxes. Property taxes were brought up as a challenge by several owners, both the high amount ("too damn high," "outrageous") and the perceived unfairness of assessments. As mentioned above, development is seen as causing property taxes to go up.

  There is a fear of government intrusion. I have a piece of undeveloped land and I put in a huge driveway. It costs you some bucks to do that. Fortunately, we fall into some area of tax benefit because other people with some lovely waterside, riverside properties are paying a tremendous amount in taxes. I couldn't possibly afford to pay $45,000 that some of them are paying. (Central)

  The town of Central, any piece of property has one building lot but you can't build on it. Imagine anything like that? That's taxes. You're assessed for one building lot automatically, no matter what [size the lot is]. (Central)

  I just hope that they're going to continue to give a tax break to the large property owners. That's all my concern is. (Central)

- Liability. This is a potential issue if someone is hurt on the owner's property, whether they are trespassers or invited guests (friends, people at an owner's campground). A suit could be very expensive for owners.

  I fish in my pond, which is okay if they're friends and relations, but it's a liability factor, too, if somebody drowns. (Central)

  We've had somebody threatened us with a lawsuit when we caught them one morning at 5 o'clock with their all-terrain vehicles going through. (Central)

  Mine is so desirable for people to trespass on you worry about liabilities. (Central)

  Discussion in a East group shows landowners' confusion about the extent to which they would be held legally responsible.

  Some of the townspeople wanted along the river to make trails along the river. It sounds really nice but if somebody's on your property and they get hurt you're responsible.

  Not exactly. Under Connecticut law there's a statute that does protect you. Unless you are charging a fee for them to go on your property you are protected. Except you have to defend the lawsuit.

[That] didn't stop the Connecticut, whoever they were in Hartford or wherever, where the lady got hurt riding her bike on the reservoir property and then sued the reservoir for millions of dollars.

We do have friends that sign waivers if they come on to the property with camping or ATVs or anything like that.

- Generating income. The "working the land" segment with businesses (such as produce and tree farms, horse breeding) said these are highly demanding and often not profitable ventures.

  [To another respondent:] It's funny you say the word "enjoy." Being a veggie grower, I'm exhausted right now. I can't think of anything that I enjoy right now on that farm. I'm just constantly rebuilding, putting it together, everything that we're trying to do. (East)

  Like all other sheep farmers in Connecticut, I just attempt to lose as little money as possible with them. I raise them to breed and stock and eat and sell for wool and stuff like that. (East)

- Zoning restrictions on cutting – a complaint of one owner.

  One thing that was very important for me to get involved [with my town's zoning board] was the fact that I wanted to go out and cut a tree once in a while. I had to get a forester in there to satisfy the state and get a permit as silviculture farmer to be able to cut without paying a fee every time. That was what our town has resorted to now. You can't cut a tree unless you bring in a professional get your rating as a tree farmer. Probably the most important thing is dealing with the politics that we're going to be facing down the line. That's getting to be more and more prominent. (East)

3. How Owners Manage Their Forestland

Landowners' woodland management ranged from relatively rare major cutting, to regular maintenance and cleaning up (trimming, etc.). Some landowners are minimalists who believe in doing practically nothing to change the land. Aesthetic, financial and other practical reasons can play a role in motivating owners' decisions on how to manage the woodland.

Connecticut land is seen as difficult to manage, as mentioned earlier. It quickly becomes "overgrown," requiring "a lot of work."

We do extensive maintenance. We're encouraging the meadow birds to nest. Lots of meadow birds nest in the fields. We mow paths and trails through the orchard and through the woodlands, but we mow the orchard once a year. It's 30 acres of mowing in among oak trees. It's a lot of work. (Central)

Fighting the noxious weeds. It's never-ending, like the three-headed Hydra or whatever of Hercules. You pull something out and it comes [back]. (East)

Ways of managing the woodland described by owners include:

- Selective and clear-cutting. Mentioned by only a few owners, "harvesting" mentioned was typically done years ago, sometimes as part of a management plan. Commercial cuts were largely motivated by financial reasons, as would be expected (helping to pay taxes, putting a child through college, etc.). During the recession, trees do not fetch good prices so cuts are not worthwhile, some owners said. Other goals include "regenerating"/thinning the forest "to make room for new growth," removing trees that are "destroying" other trees, creating pastures and hayfields.

  [To pay] taxes. It's not cheap to own land, no matter how you figure it. I don't care if you put it in forestry or anything else. All towns are not created equal and the tax structure is different for every town. My town is very bad. (Central)

  One of the motivations was that our daughter decided that she wanted to go to an Ivy League school. We also felt that if you own 20 or 30 acres worth of forestry that it should be managed some, and having a professional do it with the equipment that they have. I couldn't have done it myself. (Central)

  My forester told me a forest is like a vegetable garden. If you want good vegetables you have to take out the weeds. (Central)

  I do this on an ongoing basis. We have several lots and we're in a two-year rotation; every two years we do a harvest. It's important to manage it for a healthy tree stock. Trees will get too old, they'll die and they'll come down. Maybe it's beneficial but it'll also take other trees with it. (East)

  I've only owned it for three years. I've got some ideas of what I want to do. I want to manage a portion of it as a sugar bush; hopefully we can start some of that in the next few years. There's some other areas where certain species are taking over and like to try and do something about that. Particularly beech. I've got a lot of beech and it's kind of destroying a lot of other things in certain parts of the property. Not much you can do with it, I understand, other than just keep cutting it and let the other things strengthen to the point where they can keep it down. As far as sugar bush management, selective cutting and managing the prime specimens. (East)

  We were a cut-your-own-Christmas-tree business for about 30 years. Then we got older and we decided that it was not a road to wealth. We were just too tired to trim all those trees all the time and spray them and do all things you're supposed to do, so we ended up cutting them down. Now the trees are gone and we have hayfields again, but they're going to have to be replenished. We're going to have to plow and re-seed with new hayfields. We do have a farmer that comes in every year; he cuts the hay standing and bales it and buys it per bale

as standing hay. We don't have the machinery to do it but we can keep our fields open. (East)

I had some logging done for pasture. Then while [the logger] was there he went into the wooded area and told me which trees he thought should go. That worked out very well. (East)

I bush hog all the open fields, I bush hog the trails in the woods. Did a selective cut a year ago and will probably do a [same] kind cut in five or six years just to give the hardwoods more room to grow. What I'm cutting right now for firewood are all the dead ash trees. I had a guy do it. The nice thing about him as a logger is that he also sells firewood so he takes more of the wood out of the forest than a lot of loggers do. (West)

I've logged off twice. The last time we clear-cut so that the cedars, the nurse trees can come up and bring up some of the pines again. There was good money at that time [1990]. My friend comes in and checks it every once in a while to see if we need to take any more out of it. Right now it's very cheap so we don't get anything out of it. Just leave it sit there. My neighbor has some cows on it so he keeps on bush hogging. [He's a private logger], very honest. (West)

I actually manage our forest. We have a forestry plan and I have a forester. Last year we selectively cut about five acres; this year we clear-cut about 10 acres. Mature forest. We're going to just let it totally regenerate. It's not going to be made into pasture or anything; it's just going to be forest. We're using every stick in the forest – logs, firewood and all the branches got chipped for mulching. Everything is in place to regenerate. All the young plants are already there. Other than that, we constantly stay after invasive species. All the open areas, the pastures, we bush hog them, we cut all the edges and cut all the stone walls back every year. (West)

We have a very active population of woodcock. What we don't have, which historically we had large numbers of, were grouse. I saw one nesting grouse this year. That's the only one I have seen; I haven't seen any families, I haven't seen any young. We have a good turkey population, coyote population. The long and the short of it is that our forests have matured, many of them. In the mature forest the animal-bird population is virtually 10% of what I have experienced growing up. This is my birth home, so growing up there, the populations in the forest, [it's] a dramatic change. You've got a complete canopy, you have virtually no undergrowth. If there was any undergrowth the deer took care of that. You really have this dark forest with a huge canopy of 60-, 80-foot trees. That's part of the impetus that I feel now for changing our forest by bringing it back and letting it come again as a young forest, which would provide habitat for all of the things which we are now missing. (West)

Preservation leads to a wildlife desert because you have these canopies; you have dark forest, you have no wildlife. One of the reasons I wanted to cut my forest was to open it up a little bit, get some young growth in there, create better habitat for wildlife. Conservation – you see it in the Adirondacks – it's a disaster

up there. You can't even take out dead trees. There's going to be a huge fire up there. There's disease. (West)

- Cutting firewood. A number of the landowners do this not only for "winter warmth" in their homes, but also because they enjoy the task, as mentioned. Allowing others to cut trees and keep the firewood is a way some owners enlist help with thinning.

  [I] give wood away. People come in and cut. There's just so many trees that need to be thinned that one person can't get it all done so I help people out by letting them have firewood. (Central)

- Trimming and thinning. This is done for several reasons: to promote new growth; to create/maintain trails for vehicles, especially emergency ones in case of fire, and for hunters; to let more sunlight come through; to install a road.

  Our biggest concern is fire, especially now that it's the dry season. We're surrounded by a great deal of state forest. At least we've done our little part because we have wetland. The only access for them is through our property to get to their property so we maintain right-of-ways to the state can get through in case there is a fire. (Central)

  I have installed a road around the perimeter of my property roughly. You have to maintain that and it's a lot of work, believe it or not, because trees drop a lot of wood. Saw them up and go over with them [with a] rake or take the bulldozer out if something big is down. You've got to do that if you want to have access to your property and it's reasonably overgrown. Land in Connecticut grows all kinds of stuff. (Central)

  My property was high-graded 25 years ago. The nice oak was taken out and left me with the rest. My effort has gone into trying to thin out and clear out the stuff that's competing with the better stuff before I can get a good cut from it. In the meantime adjoining properties were commercially clear-cut just within the last five years. That's put my property as being the only one with a good oak crop come September and October, which is attractive to deer and turkey. It's altered my management strategy a little bit. One of the key management things that I've been doing is trying to get access to the different parts of my property so I can bring in wood and I can bring in deer, I can cross-country ski and take my wife around. She can't walk well and this gives me a chance to take her around different parts of the property. So access, trails. What I've done on those it try to search out what the previous landowners had used as trails and reestablish those. (East)

  Mine is almost exclusively woodland. In order to get around and through there you've got to keep those trails open through those laurels. I've got about 30 acres of laurels that I swear are trees. Just keep[ing] those open is a lot of work. I did have a logger come in where I do my maple syrup. I had him cut out the ash so that the maples would mature more. (East)

We have to manage all of the trails and it's all the time. The guys are either out there on foot or they're on an ATV with a chainsaw, snowmobiles in the wintertime. They're always going through checking, seeing what's going on. It's constantly something. We don't use any chemicals or any sprays. We put nothing weird into the property. The pond was closing in on itself because of all the shade trees. Had to go in with the tractor and cut them and pull them out, clean the pond back out. Every day it's something different. (East)

- Removing "dead trees." A number of owners seem to believe it is a good idea to do this, not realizing that it may be better to let trees decompose in place. Some make a point of replanting.

  I go out and see a dead tree. "You come down, buddy." All the dead trees come down. I cut them up, my little wheelbarrow and cart, I take them in and stack them in the garage and cellar. (Central)

  We believe in thinning the property. I have people come in, take dead trees out; we replant. I actually go out there and plant seedlings that I get from the state so I feel that I'm not just taking. It helps me tax-wise because I own 65 [acres]. (Central)

An environmentally concerned owner who has been "very actively" involved in management for almost 30 years described "a lot of work" to get the land "back to a healthy stand."

I'm very actively in the management, have been since the early 80's. The management has not been just [to] have somebody come in and do a management cut. It's been a specific design and prescription for our property and our desires and what we want to do. A lot of it is based upon biodiversity, having a good healthy stand of timber, income-producing stand, wildlife habitat, including species for food stocks and stuff like that. In the wildlife pond, we have beavers there. People go "terrible beavers" and the loggers look and they see all this valuable timber going, but they're all part of the system that seems to work well. They're creating their own little early successional habitat around the pond every time they go in and start making a new lodge or what have you. I'm active to the point where I'll be out with the forester, I'll be making decisions on species to keep and asking the questions of why we should do this. Since it's been such a long term I've actually seen the results, not only the good results but some of the bad results. Woodland management theories have changed over the years and thank goodness they've gotten better. But, you know, when you start with a piece of property that had nothing but weed trees or really not viable stock on it after the charcoaling – and it sits for 60 years and just left to grow – you've got a lot of work to do to get it back to a healthy stand. (East)

Several other comments show the "endless," "constant" work done by owners to manage their land, sometimes with the help of a forester or other professionals.

I did forest it. I do maintain it by collecting the firewood out of it, take the dead trees out and thin it. That's an ongoing process. There's wetlands on the

property and I'm not allowed to cross them by all the rules and regulations. You can't even drive across a brook to get to the other side. About 20 acres I can't access legally with my machinery. But I do thin it [and] maintain trails on it, walking trails to get at the forest. Some of the trees have grown enormous in the last 20 years, gained a good 15 to 20 inches in diameter. Those need to be thinned out in order for new growth to take over. I've had a couple foresters in there and they've advised me on what to take out and how to thinn the forest. This was about 20 years ago. I do follow that guideline. (Central)

We have a couple different sections of woodland. Both sections were logged a number of years ago but I still go and I thin out some of the dead wood and clear some areas, too. I have some trails going through if I want to get firewood. I have pastures and hayfield and the cows kind of mow everything else, because if I didn't have them it'd be a jungle. I just like to maintain the woods as they are and get the firewood because I burn wood for heat. (Central)

I rehabilitated an old meadow. It would have been a pasture until probably [the] mid-1960's. Cleared that out and that's now my orchard. Built a quarter mile of trails so far; I've built a trail what will accommodate a pick-up truck for firewood. Kill poison ivy every time I can – I know you need it but I still don't like it. My land must have been logged about 25 years ago judging from the numerous large oak stumps that are pretty well decayed out there. Wish I could have bought it with the oak trees intact and kept it that way. Now I have a lot of black birch that's growing in succeeding that; that'll be the next thing to grow in quickly. A lot of that has some kind of a canker that it doesn't kill them but it ruins them as far as any kind of wood value other than for firewood. [I'm] cutting a lot of that out and stabilizing the old trails that were there that the former owners used to ride the quads on. Hauled rocks, filled in three-foot-deep ditches, stabilized them, got them seeded, got everything all stabilized. (East)

We logged it through a local logger. The driveway is actually an old lumbering trail, but that was 15 years ago. Now there are old apple orchards right about the house and I keep those cut so they won't fall down because they're such gorgeous trees. They get trimmed every two years or something. We go around trying to get every clinging vine off of the trees and the walls. That's endless cutting back, but that's about it. The forest, it's just there. (West)

I keep pastures down with the bush hog and try to keep brush down wherever I can. Over the years we've had a forester come in twice to give recommendations for a logging, which we did do the two times. The trees were mature and crowding one another. It had to be done to open up for sunlight for new trees coming along. (West)

We have somebody come in every couple of years and just walk through the land and see if there's anything that's damaged. Basically that's about all we do. The trees that we have around the house – a number very, very old locust trees and old, old maple trees – get a little bit more attention. I have arborists come in once a year and check everything that's anywhere close to the house. I have somebody come in and clear out all the invasive stuff around the meadows and the boundaries of the property to keep things off the sidewalks. It's just part of maintaining the property and maintaining the grounds. You have to do it. (West)

Minimalist owners do little in the way of maintenance on most of their land. Reasons they gave include: it is just too much work; it is best to let nature take its course, especially to avoid disturbing wildlife; a certain amount of land should be allowed to "let go rough" to attract deer for hunting. Some consulted with foresters but did not follow their advice. "I guess I don't want [my land] to change," one explained.

> *I don't do any maintenance on the property; I just let things fall. Whatever happens happens, except for the area around the house, maybe four or five acres. The rest is taking care of itself; that's what happens in nature.* (Central)

> *We have several open fields. One of them we've let go because it was just getting to be too much. Five, six acres are open fields and that's a big task to keep it open. It's shrubbery and trees have grown.* (Central)

> *Those of us who hunt, if you like deer, there should be sections of the forest that are just let go rough, called a refuge for the deer, because if they don't have food, water and shelter they're not going to be around. They'll go somewhere else. You've got to have real heavy brush and a place where humans really can't or shouldn't go if you want the deer.* (Central)

> *There are sections I don't want anybody to walk through. I don't even walk through it because it will disrupt the animals.* (Central)

> *The only thing that we do sort of actively is we'll plant some food plots for the deer to raise healthy deer on the property because [my husband] hunts. We let people hunt on there but there are areas that are off limits totally for any hunting, us included. We do maintain a very elaborate trail system for our own enjoyment.* (East)

> *I did have the DEP come in with a forester to look at the land about 15 years ago, telling me for a sustainable cut what could be removed and what shouldn't. A few months ago I went to a program where you might be able to donate or give up the building rights to your land. The state has some programs on that. Basically through all that with the last 15 or 20 years, besides just cutting firewood on it, I haven't done anything. I'm one of the landowners that the foresters say "you should do work to improve your land so that it becomes better forest." I've looked into things but just haven't done it. Besides firewood, it's just been growing.* (East)

> *I guess I don't want [my land] to change. About 15 years ago [the forester] said "you have a nice stand of black birch and it'd be worthwhile cutting that." It was a good market at the time. A lot of that has gone into canker now and I probably lost most of the value on that. I just like it the way it is, don't really want to be bothered. I like more of a mature forest and just don't have that finalized plan. It's nice the way it is.* (East)

Uncertainty about how to manage the land is an obstacle for some landowners. Some do not know where to turn for answers; others have been frustrated trying

to get answers, for example, from the University of Connecticut extension services.

> *What I'm trying to do is just figure out what needs to be done. That's the issue where trying to find someone to give me some reasonable advice is the challenge. It's a forest and it's hard to walk through it. I don't know how it got the way it is but it doesn't look good to me. Something should be done, I think. I'm not sure what.* (East)

> *If I wanted to find someone to tell me how to grow roses, I'm sure I'd find a hundred of them. But if you're talking about what do I do with this area, with this land – what's the story with the soil? Why is it behaving the way it does? That's hard to find. I've mostly hit U Conn's extension services and stuff like that. They seem to be geared more towards growing grass and gardening kinds of things.* (East)

> *How do you go about having somebody come in and let you know, "oh, you know what – you don't need this type of undergrowth. It's going to end up choking out your trees that you want to keep. It's going to cause more overgrowth into your paths." How far do you cut back with the glacial till? Do you remove the top surface and just whatever rocks there are that are loose, pull them out, put them aside, do the stone walls? They're Connecticut potatoes – that's what they call them.* (East)

4. Use of Forestry Professionals

Loggers or foresters have been used by several landowners, in some cases in conjunction with a management plan. Confusion exists about the difference between the two types of professionals, as has been true in our other research as well. Probed on which type they worked with, owners often were not sure. It is important to keep in mind that references to "foresters" in this discussion may sometimes be about loggers and vice versa.

> *Forester, you've got to take a test to get the license, right? I hired one to look at the land, also. A logger, he might be a forester but he's got the equipment and he's going to come cut the trees.* (Central)

Positive experiences with professional foresters and loggers were described by several landowners. In particular, walk-throughs around the land were seen as very helpful. Owners felt they received useful information and advice tailored to them, although they did not always follow the suggestions, as mentioned; some described very detailed plans. One owner appreciated having "myths" corrected (laurel should not be cut). Other tasks performed included marking the trees and planning which trees to cut, mapping the land, help with pricing for cuts, getting rid of old lumber, and opening up roads.

Some owners found a professional through recommendations, including ones from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). It takes "trial and error" to avoid "the nasties," one owner cautioned.

> *Hiring a professional logger is an option. It manages the forest. We hired a guy, a forestry graduate student from U Conn. We went together and we marked all the trees. He pointed out where the roads would end up. I think it enhanced the property, not only because it took all of the old lumber, but [it] also opened up several roads. If we have a forest fire back there we can get at least a brush truck back.* (Central)

> *I had to hire [a forester] to put my property in forestry when I bought it. Paid $500 but after I did it I thought it was well worth it. The guy took me on two four-hour walks around my property and taught me a lot about logging and forestry and better ways to do it.* (Central)

> *What I liked about the guy I hired, he ended a lot of myths about forests and taking care of forests. I said "what about the laurels? I know the deer like to hide in the laurel." I've got laurel that's been there since 1944 since it was clear-cut, the whole 30 acres. Used to be a sheep farm. I can't walk through the laurel. It's maybe over 100 years old. I can't get through it and I'd like to use the land. He says "laurel's a weed. You've got to look at it like weeds in your garden." He's got over the myth of the thing that like you can't cut laurel because it's the state flower or something. [He] did make a plan that we ended up signing where a certain number of board feet was priced at a certain amount. As they took the logs out I sat there with the forester and we kind of checked it.* (Central)

> *I had two experiences with foresting property. I did two sections about 10, 15 years apart. One was a local logger came in and did it. It was supposed to be cut 14 inches above and selectively but he damaged a lot of the forest. It's recovered since then. The other section I did a little smarter. I had a professional forester come in, got a management plan there. Again, the rule was 14 inches and above. When they cut it he was very careful, he didn't damage any of the forest. The crowns he cut so that they lay flat and they rotted. I went in there and took most of the crowns out, got 250 cords of wood out of the crowns. Kind of nice. And I had some kids come up and they logged. That part of the forest recovered very, very quickly. In fact, you didn't notice it after a year or two that somebody had come in there. It's back to 24, 25-inch trees on there now, big black oaks and whatnot.* (Central)

> *It takes a little trial and error as far as finding good foresters. With 140 acres there's no way I could ever manage it myself. Over the years I've found some real nasties that just were taking me. With a little trial and error I found a very good forester and I trusted him. He's reached a point now where he's shown me that we should try to take out junk trees that are not going to be productive and the stuff that can be used for firewood. Of course, firewood is flooding the market right now so it's very hard to sell it. What few logs that come out hardly justify the cost of getting all this junk out of there. But 140 acres of forest that's been just picked over for that past 40 or 50 years is very difficult and it needs a really good professional. I started through the government. I accepted a $2,000*

grant. Once you have them map out everything as far as the types of growth that was there and where the trails should be so that it didn't cause eroding. It takes the management to know what to do with it. His final statement was we should take all the junk out and leave about 25 good trees to the acre that will be harvestable in about 10 years. (East)

We had a forester come in; I think the last time was about 15 years ago. The agreement is that will be a sustainable cut. I don't want him clear-cutting. I experienced that in the West. It's a very, very low maintenance type of thing. He cuts only mature things but also will trim it to open it up. When $100,000 gets through what we see is a lot more evenly spaced trees, more regularity. But it's not so much the regularity, it's the ability for the tree to grow in a proper fashion. It was "show me what you're going to do and let's walk through the property and let's make sure we both agree" and that was it. (East)

Basically it was prepared by a professional forester. Came in, looked at it. We set up the ground rules. They came in and they abided by them. Everything that was designated was cut. I walked through it with them so that I knew what was going to be cut, what wasn't going to be cut. To look at it today – it's probably 15 years – it's hard to realize that it ever was cut it's grown so much now, except for the fact that you can still see the stumps. A state forester, an independent person. He was licensed by the state of Connecticut. Actually came with a very good recommendation by the DEP. I talked to several people at the DEP. Apparently what happened, instead of paying him directly he took a certain fraction of the income from the cut. (East)

We brought in a guy from [a forestry company]. He was an independent, he just happened to work with [the company] Forestry and he recommended people to check it out. Basically [we] decided to do it because we were seeing some of our old field trees [rot]. My concern was first let's see if we can do something with these because these are really, really big monsters and most of them aren't of much use at all. We went ahead, brought the forester in and upfront I said "what I want is sustainable. I do not want to think about clear-cutting or anything else. We're not going to maximize the dollars out of this thing. We're just going to do this in such a way that we improve it to a certain degree and keep it the same." It was very straightforward, common sense. (East)

The reason why I did my last logging, which was two years ago, was because I purchased a big piece and in order to get it certified as forest you have to have a forester come in and say "yes, there's trees here," which costs you quite a bit of money. Once he did his survey he recommended that the white oak on the property was over-mature and that it was time to get rid of it. Even though the market wasn't that great, I decided to have it cut. How I got the logger that I did is because I worked in construction all my life and I knew all of these different people. There was a couple people that I knew I could work with that I could walk around from one tree to the next and say "don't take that, take this." I knew that I wouldn't get any flack from them. He's a builder and a logger. I got things done the way that I wanted. I had things done when I wanted it, when there was snow on the ground and I knew that very little was going to get hurt as far as the vegetation goes. (East)

I had the total plan made up by [a company], probably 20, 30 years ago. He mapped out all the trails that had evolved over the years and the types of forest that was growing there. I went to the school and found a graduate student and worked with him very closely. Got a lot of valuable information out of him. He actually did a logging for me. He's the one who's made the present recommendations for what we're doing. (East)

I had a forester I used for years. We have a whole forestry plan and then he went through all of our woods cutting 30 years ago. Now everything they do on the place they put it on paper – our concentrations of soft woods, hardwoods, [etc.]. We had an actual plan in place. The current arrangement I have for the clear-cutting is that I have a company that's come in and they'll take the whole tree. They'll take the saw logs, they'll take all of the branches – everything for firewood. Then they chip all the branches and use it in their mulch operation so you really end up with a very clean forest. (West)

We had a state forester in, the fellow who looks after the western side of the state. They're stretched so thin. I was told at the time at the COVERTS program that every property owner, maybe of some substantial-sized property, got one free visit from the state forester and that's about all they could do for you. So we did have him over. He walked the land and he was quite helpful. He talked a little bit about some of the pines we could log off but we haven't done that because I don't think it would make any sense. It might open up the canopy a bit but there aren't that many huge white pines around. (West)

Problems with finding a trustworthy logger were brought up by several owners. The choice really matters because cutting a tree means "it's gone." Word of mouth seems to be common since several owners talked about loggers' "reputations."

We haven't logged yet just because we really haven't found someone that I trusted. That's a tough thing, you know. They have a lot to say. But, boy, you have somebody come in and cut down your tree, it's gone, so we've just kind of taken our time on that. (East)

Specific criticisms of loggers were:

- Only care about money. They make self-serving recommendations to clear-cut. When one respondent would not let a logger cut in an area, the company lost interest in the job. Landowners should only listen to professional foresters who do not benefit financially from a cut, using a separate logger, some respondents advised.

  I had a forester that was not tied to a logging company. He actually warned me about certain loggers. I feel like I got a real honest report from him and a lot of education. The foresters that came out that were tied to a logging company, they just [had] dollar signs in their eyes. That's all they saw. (Central)

- Unfair practices. This can include underpaying, taking a very long time to pay, cutting on neighbor's land. Some owners went so far as to accuse loggers of "cheating."

  I guess my cousin was in need of money and he convinced me that we should have it harvested. I wanted to seek out some different harvesters rather than, "oh no, this guy's great, this guy's great." We found out later that once you mention this guy's name he's notorious for underpaying you and taking more and going on other people's property, and so on. He didn't do that with us but he did it with another guy. We probably could have done a lot better if we'd have done a little more research and found somebody that was a little more reputable. He was a logger. (East)

- Leave "a mess" after the cut. Tree tops, stumps and roots, as well as rocks can be "quite costly" to clean up. A logging company that said it would "let nature rot it away" was rejected by one owner. The aesthetics bother owners, some of whom do not see the environmental advantages.

  To clear about five acres where I built the house and the barn, I had a forester come. I've also had loggers come. I wasn't there to see all of this because I wasn't living right there at the time. It cost quite a bit. The stumps and the roots had to be taken out and trucked some place to New Haven. Plus I did have a ton of rocks and stuff like that which they ended up burying in one field. I have mixed feelings about it. I think they probably did it correctly, an environmentally sound way but it was quite costly. (Central)

  Just about 20 years [a corporation] said they're going to clean my land for me. I said "what do you want to do?" He said "we'll come in and cut down some of the big trees, we'll take them out." I said "what are you going to do with the tops?" "Oh, we'll leave them there." "What are you going to do with the stumps?" "Oh, we'll leave them there." "Oh, you're not going to have the trunks. If you don't take the tops and the stumps you're not going to get the trunks." They wanted to leave all the trash there and let nature rot it away. They would have made a mess out of my 28 acres of woodland. I didn't let them on the land. No way. [They] said "we're going to pay you good money." I said "I'm not looking for money." (Central)

  About eight years ago the property east logged that 10-acre piece. They just cut the trees down, lopped the tops off, left them there, big stumps. Part of it fell over the stone wall into our area there, which is okay. Their log skidders went all over the place, caused extensive erosion, just because they were cutting on hills out there. I haven't been back there since but I was totally disgusted. Any thought that I had about logging, I said "no, I'm not going to do anything about it." (Central)

  [Logging is] always in the back of my mind. I guess I just like it the way it was. Logging makes a heck of a mess. Have the tops everywhere. (Central)

  I had mine logged maybe 10 years ago. They made a mess and they damaged the trees I did not want to cut. I marked them all but they came in with the big

equipment and a chunk of bark was off; the tree can't sometimes survive that. Also they left piles of junk that really could have been used for firewood but was too heavy for me to lift. I cut with the handsaw a few things so that whole pile would sink down and then rot. We're just about now at ground level with the rot. It takes a long, long time for that to go away when once it was defaced. I wouldn't do it again, I would not, unless somebody comes in with a horse and buggy and pulls the trunks out nicely. Not with heavy equipment. No, no more. They have these big wheels that come through the forest and I lost all my lady slippers because of that. I'm a little bit of a botanist and that bothered me a lot. I thought maybe they'll come back but they didn't. (Central)

In contrast, a company that leaves "a very clean forest," taking everything away, was praised by an owner.

I had a forester I used for years. We have a whole forestry plan and then he went through all of our woods cutting 30 years ago. Now everything they do on the place they put it on paper – our concentrations of soft woods, hardwoods, [etc.]. We had an actual plan in place. The current arrangement I have for the clear-cutting is that I have a company that's come in and they'll take the whole tree. They'll take the saw logs, they'll take all of the branches – everything for firewood. Then they chip all the branches and use it in their mulch operation so you really end up with a very clean forest. (West)

The difference between a "horrible logger" and a good "forestry company" is clear-cutting everything vs. "basically [doing] their job," according to one owner. (The "fancy-ansty guy" recommended turning the wood into a boat mast.)

It's hysterical. When we first got the property I called three completely different offers. The first one was an independent logger with the worst reputation in the state of Connecticut, to bring him in to see what he thought. The second one was another one with a great reputation that kind of worked a little independently. Then an actual forestry company that was going to come in, manage the land, do some cutting. We walked the woods and we marked the trees we wanted them to cut. Had a few that we had questions about. Told everyone of them exactly what we wanted, the same thing. The horrible logger with the worst reputation told us we should just cut it all down. He just wanted to clear-cut everything. The fancy-antsy guy that was recommended was like "we'll turn this into a boat mast." The forestry company basically did their job – wanted to come in, manage the forest. They had some good things to do. (East)

Using state foresters or state-licensed ones was recommended by some owners. One advised using the Master Loggers program certification as a guide and working out a detailed contract.

The state foresters can give you a whole lot of help in finding foresters and loggers. There are some programs now that the loggers themselves are developing. I think it's the Master Loggers program, which certifies that a logger performs at a certain proficiency and ethical standard. If somebody is enrolled in this program and they get complaints, guess what, they're not in the program

anymore. There are ways to help eliminate the undesirables. They're in every business. I've been fortunate and the people that I've dealt with have worked with me, they know what we want. I've educated myself. Is this guy going to do what I need him to do and am I going to get fair value? I'm at that point where I do it enough now that I'm able to judge. In the last five years I've had three different harvesters. They've all been good, they've all worked well with me. I'm getting input all the time. I was actually out with the logger this morning looking at the job that he was doing and critiquing the work that he was doing. I was also critiquing the job that the forester had done marking this particular lot. Very important is a good contract that specifies how high the brush can be, what happens when he damages trees that you want to keep, the limitations as far as operating near or in wetlands. The whole scope. It all has to be there in writing and they have to understand it. (East)

A lot of times I go right to the Department of Agriculture. Their job is to try to help or at least assist or protect the farmers and the growers. They get all the complaints, all the problems. They get all the wonderful people that they hear about and they can often send you off in different directions. (East)

The state of Connecticut has a forestry school that teaches foresters. Then they put them out into different people who need them. They have to get a license after they graduate from school, a test. I'm in the process of having that happen to my own farm. They don't charge you anything; it's a free service to mark and tally your timber. In the past, because I've timbered three times, the state of Connecticut Department of Forestry were more than happy to help you find somebody to mark and tally it. You'll find if you have a lot of timber that there are thieves out there. If you're not careful you can get burned pretty bad. It's good to get a forester who will mark and tally your [woods]. They'll help you in who to send your bids to so that you don't send them to people that … for every tree they cut down, they knock three others down …. They are very concerned about doing good work. (East)

State foresters, however, are viewed with suspicion by owners who avoid any government oversight.

The thing is you got a forester and the state gets involved. As soon as they get involved, that cruds up everything. They didn't put a property line in so we had a state person come over with a GPS and put [it] in on one section. The forester figured well, we'll stay 40, 50 feet off that line and should be okay. Then some bigwig calls up and says "that's not good enough. You touch one tree, you get near our property we're going to fine you $5000 a tree." So he wouldn't go near that section. [I] lost a lot of money there that could have been cut. It's still there, all because of the state. Then somebody comes in to look for a vernal pool – that's the state also. They're looking on top of a ledge and everything for a vernal pool. I'm laughing, not going to tell them anything. You have a lot of people come on the property, you've got inland wetlands. And you've got the water company; they come up all the time whenever they feel like it. That vernal pool stuff, you know – they can't wait to find those things. They fly over and take photographs to show that this pile or manure or something is on your property or something. Liability, too. One fellow said he had people come in and cut but an

insurance man told me "don't let one person step on that property to cut wood. Let it rot. You're better off. They can sue the living daylights out of you." So we don't. (Central)

5. Written Management Plans

The few landowners with a written management plan spoke favorably about the idea. (One owner had a plan in a different state.) They appreciated the personal attention and customized recommendations, as mentioned earlier: the forester's walk-through of their land; advice on which trees to cut, how to "deal with brook crossings and standing wetlands"; information on the "logging rules"; and topographical maps of their land. They came away feeling more knowledgeable about "how to think about the forest." "You learn a lot" about what the land and the "material" on it are worth, an owner stated. The long-term plans "give some continuity to what I'm doing there" yet can also be modified. While some owners did not follow all the recommendations, they do sometimes "use it as a model."

I've had a couple foresters in there and they've advised me on what to take out and how to think about the forest. This was about 20 years ago. I do follow that guideline. [Did they give you a written management plan?] They did back then; they showed me which trees they were taken. They forested about 20 acres. Using that as a model, I do the rest of the property now. I haven't reforested yet but it's coming up, any time in the next ten years. My goal is just to maintain it as a forest, a nice natural habitat. I do a pond. It's there for fish, herons and whatnot. It's a nature conservancy is what it really is. And it's beautiful. (Central)

This was a comprehensive report and stewardship plan that they did in '95 on the piece. They did a whole layout, recommended what I should do and what I could do. At the time I believe there was some SIP money and monies available for the government to help you out through certain programs but that's all dried up now. I started [the plan] but then [with] time constraints and whatever, it kind of fell to the wayside. The trees are still there, it's just that everything he recommended just got a little bigger. You learn a lot. They walk around it. I forgot what we paid for this; we had to pay a portion of it. It was worth it because if somebody didn't know what their land was worth or the worth of the material on the land or whatever, it's a good way of doing it. (Central)

Basically it was prepared by a professional forester. Came in, looked at it. We set up the ground rules. They came in and they abided by them. Everything that was designated was cut. I walked through it with them so that I knew what was going to be cut, what wasn't going to be cut. To look at it today – it's probably 15 years – it's hard to realize that it ever was cut it's grown so much now, except for the fact that you can still see the stumps. A state forester, an independent person. He was licensed by the state of Connecticut. Actually came with a very good recommendation by the DEP. I talked to several people at the DEP. Apparently what happened, instead of paying him directly he took a certain fraction of the income from the cut. (East)

My first farm was in Rhode Island and for tax reasons I had to have a forestry management plan done. Basically what that consisted of was I had to write it and the state forester came out and walked the land with me. They said "it's one contiguous stand of oak and it's not really good quality oak. It needs to be cut back. You need to build brush piles and you need to girdle some trees," which means ring a tree to kill it. It creates nesting habitat for woodpeckers and things like that. It was useful because it helped me to understand how to enhance the wildlife, which was one of my goals. It was also useful to have a third party tell me "look, you're going to get firewood here. There's no point in leaving these trees growing here thinking that in 20 years they're going to be something when they're actually not going to be anything." You can leave a meeting like this [the focus group] and hear horror stories. You can think "oh boy, I'm sitting on a goldmine. I have all this great lumber on my property and I have to interview six different loggers and get six different ideas. They're all going to try to take advantage of me and put the screws to me." The reality is the state forester might be able to just tell you straight up "you've got firewood. Cut it down. Let some new growth come in." (East)

It's not a complicated document. It's probably about six, eight pages. They have a couple of nice schematics in there, topographical maps showing the various areas of the farm. We have three different brooks, we have five ponds. One of the things in the forest management plan is how we deal with brook crossings, how we deal with standing wetlands. There's a lot of things in the plan that deal with the system of logging rules that you have to have – how you're going to access, where you're going to have the set-up for the staging area, where they keep the equipment, that sort of thing. It just lays out the property in a very logical way. It talks about a 10-year plan, a 20-year plan, a 30-year plan, so it gives some continuity to what I'm doing there. Occasionally we modify it. (West)

Lack of follow-up was described by one owner. Consulting a forester, she did not need to do anything at the time. Decades later she doesn't know if she should take any action and has not contacted the Department of Forestry again. "It's been 30 years so we're still in the waiting mode."

When we bought our property half of it was forested. We did call the Connecticut Department of Forestry and they sent a forester out. He said there was nothing really to do with it then. It had been logged off probably 20 years previous to that and he said it was just scrap. He said "just wait another 15 to 20 years." Well, it's been 30 years so we're still in the waiting mode. We have to call them again. [Is that something you're considering doing?] Oh, absolutely. He was good. We were going to have him come up with a written plan but there was nothing really to recommend except waiting. So that's what we did. (East)

Some owners noted that 490 enrollees do not need to have management plan. "All you have to do is to get your land into forestry, you have to have a forester come out and just walk it or survey it or whatever," a Central owner said.

6. Plans for the Land's Future

Most of the landowners said they are not considering selling some or all of their property. "No way!" was typical response. Not only do they want to continue living on the land, some dream of starting a land-based business during their retirement.

> *We'd like to keep most of it wooded so that it stays private. My husband wants to do a vineyard for part of the property; he's working toward that. We're starting to clear some of the space. That's what he'd like to do with it as a future thing, retirement thing.* (Central)

> *Long-term plans for the property, I'd like to have a vineyard there and perhaps raise some Christmas trees.* (East)

Aging is the key reason why some owners are considering selling now or in the future. Older respondents said they find it increasingly difficult to take care of the land. Widows may sell rather than trying to manage the property, according to some male and female respondents. Some owners who have no children or whose children are uninterested in the land see selling as an alternative.

> *I will have to sell sooner or later because we're getting too old to keep it. I already have almost buyer, actually. It's a lot of upkeep, which [I] can't do it like I want to see it. It would be private [not for development].* (Central)

> *I have about originally 135-some odd acres, which the major portion was in forestry. I logged the land and I split four lots out of it. I sold some pieces as I got older and older and was unable to ambulate as much as I wanted to. I'm kind of holding the status right now, trying to decide where I go from here. [I now have] probably 70-ish, 60-ish [acres].* (Central)

> *Got four pieces of property, two that I'd like to sell now [and] another larger piece that I hunt on. If I were to die – my wife is much younger than I am – she could sell that piece of property. The piece of property where we live, the 37 acres, I imagine she would live there, sell the other three.* (Central)

> *I have seven children and so over the years we've had meetings. None of them really wanted to own the place. I'm going to be 78 in September and although I'm healthy, my physical situation is not good. I can't do the things I used to do. Over the years I've had a lot of interest. I have my own little meats facility. I raise sheep for meat purposes and dress them off right there and sell them right to the freezers. That I can still do. But as far as going out and clearing my trails, if the club car won't get there I don't get there either.* (East)

An older woman said she expects to sell because it will be too difficult "to take care of everything anymore" and her children are unlikely to return. "I do sympathize" and "we're all in the same boat," other owners told her.

I just figure at some point we'll sell our property because I don't expect that our children will settle around here. There's no work for them. They might [come back] at some point, but there'll come a time when my husband and I won't want to take care of everything anymore. I don't want to be an old person living up here. No, I don't – particularly if I'm on my own. My husband is British, my children are Chinese and it's likely that they'll scatter when they get older and at least for some period of time not live here. I wouldn't consider keeping the house just so that they have some place to come back to. I want them to go out into the world and do what they want to do and find some place for themselves. Our house is an old house, a large house. The property requires a certain amount of maintenance and the house requires a certain amount of maintenance. There's going to come a point when I don't want to deal with it anymore. (West)

Business reasons for selling were mentioned by a few owners: developing an investment property, upgrading an organic farm.

[My wife] would kill me if she heard me say this but about every four years I buy a different farm. This is my third one; I've been upgrading. Maybe I get bored with the farm or I don't like to stay in one place too long. This one probably has just about everything but I would like to have some more sandier loamy soil for the type of [organic] production we're doing. We have like 93 acres. About 60 of it is statewide prime agricultural soil – that's a lot but I'd like to have a little more. (East)

The piece that I tried to develop I got approved for building lots. It's not where I live. I wouldn't do that where I live. I live in the forest and I like it the way it is. (Central)

Further into the future, most of the landowners with children hope to pass down the land to the next generation, as would be expected. Several are confident or very hopeful that at least one of their children will want to keep the land. These children "love" the land and "have the same values" as the owners. While they may give the land with "no strings attached," some owners have expressed their wishes that it remain "intact."

I'd like to leave it to my daughter. I co-own the property with my brother. His children are only 10 and 7. The intention is that this will be given to our children and to hopefully keep it intact as it has been for the last 40, 50 years. My daughter is 19; she's in college but she loves it there and she's an only child. (Central)

We have no pressure to sell but we're obviously getting to the age where we have to consider what's going to happen. I'm very fortunate that I have my son who has a home on the property. The agreement is we're going to deed all of the property over to him, possibly some to the girl, with the understanding that he will manage it. Because he has the same values that I have I feel very confident it will stay in the condition that I hope it to stay [in]. (East)

Basically, I never want to give up mine. I'm going to hold on to it until the day I die. I've got three kids. One of them is very interested and he's retired service. He's in Texas right now but he's planning on coming back to Connecticut. He's very much like-minded as far as keeping the land just the way it is; he may cut off a little piece for a house for himself back there but nonetheless we plan on keeping it just the way it is. (East)

We'd like to leave it to the sons with the hope that they would keep it intact but no strings attached. It was given to my husband no strings attached. [Have you discussed it with them?] Yes. One of them borders our property line and my youngest son just bought a home in East. They're both interested in keeping the land the way it is. (East)

My oldest daughter is very interested in buying my parents' house after they pass away. My father, who built their house from the ground up totally himself, has left instructions that if any of his heirs want to buy his house, the rest of the heirs are to do anything in their power to help make it happen. That doesn't mean that one's going to get given it and everybody else is going to be cut out, but everybody is just supposed to cooperate. Our girls are very, very close so I guess that would make it logical hoping that our youngest one would want our property. (East)

Other relatives are the prospective heirs for some owners without children. One couple, for instance, has talked with their unmarried siblings about taking over the land.

We're leaving our property to his brother that's not married and my sister that's not married. They both like it enough that may just decide to move in and take over and continue it along. Who knows? We didn't have any children. (West)

Possible threats to inheritors retaining the land were on some landowners' minds.

- Estate taxes – these can pressure heirs to sell. "The taxes will kill him," an owner said of his son. To lower the future tax burden, one landowner has taken the step of developing "good quality timber"; another thinks owners should be able to "sell our carbon sink." Anger about estate taxes has come up in our other research and, of course, is a political issue.

  We have a son that would like to keep it but the thing is you've got to look at his finances versus today's taxation. We are taxed more than necessary, I think. (Central)

  I tried to get my kids interested by giving them each four-acre lots of one of the farms that I finished with. One of those boys has gone along. I've been a selectman in the town for four years and I got him to be a selectman. He's now acquired one piece of land, starting to talk about his daughters farming but he's not ready to take over the 140 acres yet. The taxes will kill him. That's the problem. (East)

I'm facing the reality. I have three adult children, as a group or as individuals none of which would be able to afford to maintain this property. It has me thinking a lot about what do I do for the next generation? How can I save some of this for them? What can I do in the immediate [future]? What changes could be made to the laws to facilitate perhaps my being able to retain this in totality with the family? In other words, can a tax liability burden be reduced? How could it be reduced? I have this notion right now everybody hears about carbon footprint but if you own a well-maintained forestland it's a carbon sink. Why, when corporations have to pay for their carbon footprint, can't we sell our carbon sink? (East)

If the state changed the inheritance laws it doesn't hurt just foresters, it hurts farmers even more because prime farmland has an even higher value than maintained forestland. If somebody's a millionaire with money in the bank, a quarter of a million or whatever goes to probate and then the rest gets split up. But you can't do that with farmland, you can't do that with forestland. Farmers are in the same situation. (East)

People like ourselves affect the change. You look at the family farm that was 400 acres in the 1920's, 30's, 40's, whatever. Now you're lucky if it's 50 or 100 acres because of the way it's been nibbled at and the necessity – generationally it hasn't been able to be kept as is. I've always thought that maybe there could be some way that if it retains its ownership as a lineal descendant that there's an eased tax liability. But there's a penalty paid the minute the lineal descendant lets it go to some other source so the family farm could stay intact better without the financial burden that comes about. (East)

It takes a certain amount of financial ability and responsibility to take care of [the 800-plus acres]. I have a daughter who lives in Oregon, a son in Connecticut and a daughter in Connecticut. Co-ownership would probably not be a viable alternative because I think there would be a lot of sibling bickering as to what to do with the property. There may be one entity in the group that would say "we want the money, let's do something, let's get rid of it, let's sell it." And there's the one in there or the two in there that might continue in my footsteps and do it but couldn't afford to. What I've attempted to do through the management and the harvesting program is to make the land profitable enough so that maybe you can squeak by. By having a well-managed stand and good quality timber that maybe you can meet tax liabilities over the years even though you don't personally have income to do it. Part of my objective is to try and maintain this as one entity but realizing in fact that maybe you can't. (East)

- Personal disagreements. "Sibling bickering" (as the owner quoted above mentioned) can result in parcelization, and neighbors sometimes "battle" over development issues.

The adjoining landowner has just deeded that her land's going to be turned over to a Farm Bureau on her passing away. She had to do that – beautiful piece of property, 100 acres. Next landowner also has about that amount. He runs a stewardship program on his property. My property is adjoining. In the midst of all of that is another property owner that is from the New Haven area that owns

120 acres that a developer wants to get back there. I have two neighbors saying "don't you dare let him in" because his only way to the land is through right-of-ways from my property. He's interpreting the deed as it's big enough for a town road and I say no it's not. So there's been a battle going on. I've been fighting to keep it the way it is. I went to one of the meetings recently about the land trust and what you could do with it in the future. I haven't made a decision but there's the pressure from the neighbors and there's the battle which could turn legal which all weighs into what happens in the future. I think everybody likes to just keep things the way they are. That's what my neighborhood would like, too. I want to keep it the way it is. But there's a fight to do that. (East)

- Rising land values – another financial barrier. As prices in Connecticut go up, it is harder for people to purchase land. "How could she buy out her brother at the prices these have become?" a West woman asked about her daughter. "It's horrible," she said.

  My son's in San Francisco and my daughter's in Great Barrington. Originally I left an apartment in New York to my son because living across the continent he could probably use that, and the house in Connecticut to my daughter. Even though there're inequalities, nevertheless it made more sense. Now I sold the apartment. But it's hard to know who would want what. Maybe they will just get what I have. The hitch is that would mean that if my daughter wanted to take the place in Cornwall assessed at – I mean, we bought 147 acres for $14,500. Recently I saw land on Lake Road. Someone needed just three acres because deal had fallen through so the neighbor kindly just sold her the three acres, I assume not trying to make a gigantic profit. It was someone who didn't really need to or anything either. He had 80 acres, he sold three to her. The three acres cost $120,000. So if my daughter – who just does little higgledy-diggledy work here and there and lives a borderline economic life – wanted to move down from Great Barrington to Cornwall, they could sell off the 25 acres. But how could she buy out her brother at the prices these have become? So it's horrible. (West)

Several landowners have taken or are considering steps to ensure that their land will remain woodland after their tenure.

The importance of estate planning was stressed by some landowners.

> *Multiple owners have the right to start a lawsuit to force the sale in order to get their portion. And multiple owners have multiple creditors so if your cousins have a personal liability disaster, their creditors want their portion of the value and they can do the same thing. This estate planning stuff – trusts and life insurance policies – I hate to pump lawyers, but some of the stuff is just invaluable.* (East)

Conservation easements are a principal instrument used by landowners to preserve the land. Some are motivated by the belief that their property is particularly beautiful ("really scenic and wild") or highly valuable to the area. For example, an owner in a East session described the property as "a little gem" with "a wonderful vista coming into town; it's kind of a gateway into town and it really

is important." Family heritage can also play a role. A East man spoke with pride about the fact that the easements and management plans "are still there" 50 years after his father and neighbors preserved 2,000 contiguous acres "on a very pristine watershed to improve water quality enough to have a population of salmon return."

Conservation easements seem to have special appeal to owners who do not have heirs to pass land down to after their deaths. Some owners whose children might want the property have also decided to enter an easement and said their children support the idea. A Central woman and her husband have had a "very rich conversation" with their children on the subject. (None of the owners said their children oppose an easement.)

Benefits to the current owner were mentioned by one respondent who is considering selling "to some land conservatory to finance my old age."

> *I'm sure that we probably will sell our property at some point when it's no longer manageable but our property is conserved so it can never be developed. We do have two lots along the edges that we set aside when we did the easement, just in case our children ever wanted to build there. We had a really great experience when we made the decision to conserve the property. We involved our children in the conversation. [We] had wonderful talks about what is their conservation ethic and what is ours and how they feel about preservation of the property as opposed to building 36 houses on it and having a better inheritance. They both were very much in our camp in terms of conserving the property, which is why we did it. It was a very rich kind of a conversation.* (Central)

> *If everything stays the way it is for me financially, most of the land will be going toward either the land trust or Audubon or something like that. We worked very hard to make it the way it is. It was originally and old chicken farm with fallen down buildings and things. We built a seven-acre pond in the middle. There's streams and things. I'd hate to see it being developed and put houses on. [Do you have children?] Yes, they have to live with it. There's still a very nice house sitting there on whatever acres.* (Central)

> *I think it's definitely a conversation you have to have with your offspring on what's really going to happen with the house and the lot and all these good memories that you have. The end result was the both of our kids weren't interested in any of the lots but they were interested in the preservation. I think that we're probably going to do some type of a gift to the land trust. We don't have any neighbors and this will permanently preserve that.* (Central)

> *I bought [my land] primarily for my children; in the event that they needed a place to live, they could live there. Fortunately they've all been successful and they don't need the property. But I'd hate to see after my passing the land be developed. I won't see it but I don't care for the thought right now. There's many, many options, whether I donate the land to a land trust or I sell it to a land trust or put it in a trust for 100 years or something. I haven't decided which option to do. It's going to be a coordinated effort between myself and my*

children. I'll be doing something like that unless some emergency happens and I need to liquidate. (Central)

I'd like mine to stay wilderness forever because it's really scenic and wild. I thought about possibly selling it to some land conservatory to finance my old age. Then I can still walk on it. Part of my back 25 acres where the big trees are, I've only been there a few times in my life, but I wouldn't want to see it developed. (Central)

We're very active in the local land trust and we hope to keep our property always the way it is, somewhat the way it is – at least open fields and forest. There's so many different ways that you can do that that we're exploring. We have a son who lives now in Denver. He's only 24 so he's got a long road ahead of him, but he loves the property. He had his hut down in the woods and he just knows every stick and stone and everything. I'm sure he would want to locate himself there perhaps someday. I'd like that available to him, but I don't necessarily want him to selling if it's a big development. No interest in that whatsoever. We've talked about it. [Our land has] got a wonderful vista coming into town; it's kind of a gateway into town and it really is important. Our town is really at a cusp of either going to a Glastonbury or staying a rural community in Bolton. It's a little gem because we're so close to Hartford and it still has a very rural feeling to it. We really feel it's very important to keep that. You can sell your developmental rights, you can break off pieces, you can keep a couple building lots if you want to. There's so many different things you can do. There's different interested parties. The state, the local land trust – all these different entities out there that would in some way give you monetary reward for you keeping it the way it is. (East)

My property came from a 2000-acre estate in which the owner and his wife, as was true with his parents, did not have wills. The upshot was within a year of his wife dying, following her husband, they had to sell, so the 2000-acre estate was divided up into various developments, subdivisions and parcels. We got one small piece of it. We're hopeful that we can put a conservation easement on ours that will keep it in the type of condition basically as undeveloped property in perpetuity. No guarantee. Who knows if they're going to change the laws but that's the dream anyway, that it would go to our heirs. I don't think that turning it over – giving it up through taxes, forcing the sale – is a productive use of land. Particularly as our population grows, we are needing lands for these kinds of purposes more and more. Since we're fortunate enough to be blessed, we hope to be able to leave something for another generation. (East)

My grandfather's generation and his cronies were the ones that were buying this land that had been charcoaled off. They wanted to hunt and fish and there was upland game and birds and stuff like that. My dad and our neighbors got together and decided that they would all go in the same direction as far as forestland preservation; they're all under the same types of conservation easements. There's probably close to 2,000 contiguous acres that will never be developed. That's sizable. It's on a very pristine watershed. Very important. Water quality was an issue. The thought that you could improve the water quality enough to have a population of salmon return was an intriguing idea for them 50 years ago. As like-thinking people and neighbors, they got together and said

"this is what we're going to do." There's multiple owners now because it's gone through a couple of estates and different ownerships but the easements are still there, the management plans are still there. (East)

It is worth quoting at length the comments of a West man who has put much of his land into an easement to "protect" it. An "avid bird watcher," he said that his children support the idea of "protecting" the land ("they're all committed to the farm being a farm"), and added with satisfaction, "I feel I've done my part." Answering another landowner's question, he stressed that the landowner retains control and can continue to "recreate."

We've developed a succession plan for our farm. On the biggest level what I've done for our farm is permanently protected 225 of the 265 acres. That took a hundred pounds of weight off my shoulders because I always worried about what would happen to the farm. We have about 10,000 feet of road frontage and it would be highly developable. We didn't want it. So on the first level, the bulk of the land has been protected. On the next level we have three children and we, in addition to our home, kept two other parcels open. They're not in a conservation easement so if all the children decided that they wanted to come back to the farm there would be places for all of them to be. I'm not saying they will; that's going to be up them totally. Our daughter has expressed and interest to come back with her husband and two grandchildren. We're pursuing currently a plan, maybe a four- or five-year plan, where she could come back to go into the main farmhouse with us the owner of the farmland. We love our children equally and they will get a third of it no matter how they work it out. I think they're all committed to the farm being a farm. I think we've done our part as far as putting conservation easements in place so it cannot be broken up.

It's ancestral. They're fourth generation on this land and it's their birth home as well as mine so they're similarly committed to it as a family place on earth. They really enjoy it. They're outdoors people so they really relish it. Our son just was married there this past Saturday. Another chance to create these little mileposts on your land which are very meaningful in their lives. Now we hope that our two grandchildren will come back and live there, in which case their lives will then become intertwined with this land. If it happens, great, if it doesn't happen and they choose to sell it at least it will stay together. It won't be broken up, it won't be subdivided. Oh, they could carve up a couple places, I suppose, if they needed to capture money but the bulk of it, all the fields and the views, are totally protected. It cannot be divided and it cannot be sold except as a parcel which really relieved me of a lot of responsibility I felt about the future of this land. Now whether anyone's going to work as hard to take care of it as I feel I do, I don't know. I feel I've done my part.

The 125 in the state of Connecticut – you cannot subdivide the land, you cannot build roads, houses, septic systems, wells. No gravel mining. All of the commercial things that you could otherwise consider for your land, that's out, which basically leaves passive-active recreation, I suppose; farming, open space. The beauty of it from our point of view is we still own the land. It's not public land. It's private land so we have the privacy of it, we control it. We chase the snowmobiles off. I can recreate on it. I fish, I do hunt. We're avid bird watchers,

so we do all these different things for the birds. People ask me where I live, I always say "paradise" because that's how we feel. (West)

Conservation easements were used in combination with insurance to pay estate taxes by a East owner's father.

My dad had an estate plan. It included maintaining this property and giving his heirs the ability to maintain the property. Through his estate planning he designed it so that upon his death the value in the conservation easements would be donated to a land trust which would reduce the tax liability on the land itself. He also took out life insurance policies that were paid back into the estate, so that if there was cash needed in order to settle the estate taxes above and beyond, there was cash available in his estate to do that through life insurance policies. So, be it 20 acres or 200 acres or whatever, if you sit with somebody who does estate planning and tell them, they're aware of all the little technical details in order to be able to do what you want to do. For those who would like the land to stay within the family the way it is now or perhaps preserve it so that it can't be developed, there are instruments to do that. You don't have to do it in your lifetime but you can do it upon your death. It might be important. (East)

<u>Obstacles to landowners signing up for a conservation easement can be internal (owner understanding and attitudes) or external (funding)</u>.

- <u>Public access</u>. Some owners believe, incorrectly, that enrollees have to open up their property to "more trespassers." (This concern also came up in our research in other states as a major barrier.)

  Four-ninety's a taxation program under the inheritance. [My] family sold a piece of property in town; because it has a nice rock outcropping and [was] something my parents wanted to do. But we're not exactly enthusiastic about the stewardship of government. They invite people on it. We [would] have more trespassers.; they have different ideas than we do. Part of it is the lifestyle ambiance of ownership which is now separated off and it's not yours anymore. (East)

- <u>May not preserve the land</u>. The town can change how the land is used in the future, another point we heard in our other research. This, of course, defeats the purpose of the donating the land.

  I've seen towns buy parcels of property and say they're buying this for Open Space and they buy it with Open Space funds. Ten years down the road it's a soccer field. (East)

  In 20 years when somebody forgets what the promise was, what good is it anyway? (East)

- <u>Land trusts lack the funds</u>. A West landowner, for example, had explored the arrangement but said this "never went anywhere" with the conservancy.

We had spoken a number of years ago when we first came into the property with the Nature Conservancy about the possibility of some kind of a conservation easement. It never went anywhere in particular. It's a strange situation. Part of the property across the road needs to be left intact for the house in the event that the septic system needs to be replaced because we live right there next to the brook. That preempts that piece ever being sold or going anywhere else. It's questionable whether Nature Conservancy is interested. Somebody like Nature Conservancy wants money to be left with the property so that it can be maintained. (West)

Interestingly, the idea of selling development rights interests several landowners. While this is really the same as an easement, some landowners think they are two different things. These owners are attracted by the prospect of immediate financial benefits and believe (mistakenly) that the easement would not affect how they manage their land.

A lot of farms are selling the development rights and getting a good sum of money for it. [They're] getting perhaps half of the value but they still own the property; they can pass it on to their kids. It just cannot be developed. That's if you really want to preserve it and need money. (Central)

[An incentive for landowners to keep woodland as woodland is] buy the development rights. The people stay there, you farm it, you own it but the state pays good money, excellent money. (Central)

The state buying development rights to the property is a good way to go if you want to keep it in the family and you want to keep it doing what it's doing now. Some of the trusts that are out there, at least some of the ones that I've heard about, you basically give up a lot of your rights when you sign it over to a particular trust. People can come on the property and hike and so on. You're limited in what you can do sometimes. (East)

There's one parcel of 165 acres which is basically right in my backyard. There's a 17-acre piece and another 20-acre piece. Those two pieces I would sell but I would rather sell the development rights to them rather than sell them to somebody that's going to build on it. I think in both cases it would be very difficult. One of them would be extremely difficult to build on because our town has planning and any house lot has to be on a town road. One of these parcels is not on a town road so it couldn't be built on but the town seems to think that it's still worth taxes. Just to sell those development rights just for the income. If I got my half maybe I could buy out the other two guys and then I would own it. If the three of us die then it's going to be six or seven or something like that. So one reason why I would like to sell the development rights is so that at least it would be preserve from being developed. (East)

Landowners may not qualify (or may think they do not), however, and land trusts may not be able to fund the sale. A East owner said she did not think the state

would be interested in her property since others are “in a lot more danger of being developed than ours is.”

> *We did talk about it once or twice. Neither one of us want the land developed at all. My husband, who has no idea of the value of things, just said “we should just donate the development rights to somebody and then we won't have to worry about it.” It's like “whoa, Nellie. Do you have any idea how much money you're talking about, you know, just giving away?” If it ever came to that point I would love to be able to sell the development rights and use it to help improve the land or improve the farm. But last I knew [in] the state of Connecticut, the criteria for purchasing development rights was [that] it has to be in a lot more danger of being developed than ours is.* (East)

> *How much money does the state have? The purchase of development rights is a wonderful, wonderful program but it's perennially under-funded. There's finally some money flowing out of that Land and Water Conservation Fund which has been locked up maybe 10 years now. There's a pretty sizable kitty there that's supposed to be going back to the states for these kinds of things.* (East)

> *One of the troubles is the state of Connecticut is spending money on development rights and they don't have money in the budget. They just have little bits and pieces of money they're stealing from, and they're running deficits. I don't know how much land the state of Connecticut can loan.* (East)

> *[The state is] currently focusing on acquiring grassland for grassland species birds. With the advent of forest growth everywhere now that people aren't making charcoal anymore, I guess there's more forestland in Connecticut than there's been in the last 100 years. Grassland is disappearing so they want to preserve grassland for the disappearing grassland sparrow or grasshopper sparrow. They're throwing a lot of effort at that.* (East)

Family trusts are used by a few owners. The legal arrangement can prevent an “exit strategy” in case heirs have different desires about dividing up the land. A Central man who expects his children to keep the property is still “working on a trust now, just in case somebody gets cold feet.” Trusts are sometimes used in conjunction with conservation easements.

> *[I’m] working on a trust now. The kids want to keep it. They don't live with us, don't live on the property but one of them's going to wind up with the house and they want to keep it. The grandkids love the place. We have three houses that are in the family on this piece so it's kind of a compound. Everybody's planning on staying, keeping it. Everybody's financially sound enough to know we're going to keep this original homestead so hopefully it'll stay that. [The trust is] just in case somebody gets cold feet. You could bail but you're going to have to be able to get bought out. It's pretty intense when you get into that trust. Some of them are irrevocable, some of them aren't. You've got to watch how you do it [and] you've got to watch the lawyer that's writing it up, too.* (Central)

> *My mother has partial multiple ownership in inherited land and there are six brothers and sisters. I've been encouraging everybody to consider some kind of*

exit strategy. When my mother runs out of cash we've got to convert the real estate to something you can spend at the grocery store. None of us wanted to change it so our exit strategy is going to be a difficult thing. We're seriously looking into setting up a trust for our family in the hope that we can set up shares and turn it over to the offspring. Part of the solution, I'm hoping, is a conservation easement [to] reduce the taxes. (East)

Selling land to the town was seen by a few landowners as a good option. It keeps family property intact and available so "everybody can use it," rather than "being divided up because of estate taxes." In some cases the town has approached the owner, while in others the owner initiated the idea. Participants in 490 seem to view the sale as an extension of the Open Space program.

First of all, I've had an offer that's very difficult to turn down. Secondly, there is an organization that will help you get it back to the town you live in. My land is all under Open Space 490 Act and I'd kind of like to keep it that way and have the town of Ashford buy it. We're working on it, because that'll keep it under Open Space, the townspeople will be able to use it. If we need to expand our schools or whatever, it's 100 acres damn near and it will give the town an opportunity to do that. It'll be under Open Space, everybody can use it. If I'm successful it will happen. (East)

We've made provisions. [Our land is] in forestry and Open Space. We have it in Free Cut. When we purchased the piece of property and we took the minimal out that we just allowed just in case. We have children and just want to keep the land, preserve the land. Work with people that put up owl boxes and leave the wetlands alone, do what you need to do to fix it. (East)

I've been approached by the town wanting to buy land from me for open space. However, 90% of the land has conservation easements on it. They're not owned by the state; watershed conservation group owns the rights. So for me, that was one generation from my dad to me to make it so that the land didn't have to be sold. It reduced its estate tax liability. But when I pass away the next generation will either have to cough up money or lose part of the land. It's a difficult thing to see, quote, "the family farm" being divided up because of estate taxes and those types of liabilities. (East)

Selling land to the water company was mentioned by one Central owner, but another cautioned that doing so might not prevent development.

You can always do what we did, if the water authority needs a clean source of water. When you have a development go in you've got pollution caused by that development so what the water authority wants is to pay you cash money for your land. There's a deed restriction where there's no development. (Central)

You've got to watch them guys, too, though. You seen what they did on Ironworks Road? That was all water company land. Nothing but houses now. (Central)

A number of owners are non-planners who have given little if any consideration to future arrangements. They made statements like “I haven't really thought that far ahead,” “if I die I die” (if, not when) or talked vaguely about coming up with a plan “at some point.” Contemplating the future, particularly their own or their partner’s death, is uncomfortable; after their death they won’t be around to care anyway, some said. Those without children feel no urgency to plan, and some parents take a hands-off approach: children should decide for themselves, be free to sell land if they need money. If the children disagree, they will just have to “battle it out” among themselves. These attitudes are typical of what we have heard in our other research; resistance to planning seems very deep.

> *We have no children. Be nice to sell it an hour before I die, but even then I have no idea. I'd like to stay until I can't do it anymore.* (Central)

> *We don't have kids so I imagine we'll come up with some sort of plan at some point.* (Central)

> *I have three sons. I think one would be interested if he could have the whole thing. The other two I imagine would sell it. But I'll be dead then.* (Central)

> *It's constantly being evolved into a better horse property and I would like to see it someday go to somebody who wanted a horse property. It wasn't when we bought it and we've done a lot and there's more to do. I don't know if that would be anybody in my family or not, but I'd hate to see everything we did just let it go. It is divided; it's our home with six acres and then we have a 24-acre lot. It's not a good time to be selling anything right now, so I wouldn't even consider that. Nobody [my children] would be interested in it right now. They would like to live in the city; no interest whatsoever.* (East)

> *My father was either pragmatic or cynical. He said that you cannot ensure for all time your desires for property so do with it as makes you comfortable while you're around. When you're gone that's somebody else's problem. Transferring property with restrictions has never been something he or I have considered. It's an asset – you may need that cash that you can get from an unrestricted sale.* (East)

> *I don't know whether my three children, who are settled in various other areas or other places in our town, are going to be interested in that piece of property. It's a beautiful piece of property as old and rickety as the house is. We've discussed it with them but things are always in flux.* (West)

> *That's a tough situation. We find ourselves in it. You have four children, two are very interested in it being preserved and two are not. Our thinking is we're going to leave it to the four and then they're going to have to battle it out. What else is there?* (West)

> *I have no idea; thought about it but I have no idea. Well, if I die I die. That's it. I don't know what's going to happen.* (West)

7. Reasons to Keep Forestland as Forestland

Asked directly how important it is to them to keep forestland as forestland, landowners asserted that they care very much. They want to forestall the development that is wiping out a lot of open land. Their reasons reflected what they value about their land: their love of the rural life and desire to see it continued ("we're happy with it the way it is; we don't want it to change); their enjoyment of nature's beauty (trees, wildlife) and desire to share it; societal and environmental benefits (discussed below). The cliché which invariably comes up was repeated – "they don't make any more land" – showing the awareness that land is precious. Owners feel they have a responsibility: "If somebody doesn't do it, nobody's going to do it."

> *Open space – just to share it, for other people to walk in. That's important.* (Central)

> *Just look at what's going on in the world and it's nice to see places being preserved. If somebody doesn't do it, nobody's going to do it. And we're the somebodies. It's really a plus.* (Central)

> *The guy we bought this property from, when I was buying the property from him, was very concerned about what was going to happen, what we were going to do with the property. I said "you don't want it developed?" He [says] "no," which you really couldn't; there was only spaces for two or three homes. I told him just what we were going to do. He said "because I'd like to see that property stay that way forever. That old wood road we used to take a horse and buggy down on Sundays." It goes along a stream. He said "I would just like it to stay like that. I built all those stone walls out there." I would like to see it stay that way myself. Hopefully, I hold on to that property until I'm much older than what I am now and then whoever gets it after me – I don't have children – I'd like to say the same thing to them. "I want it to stay just like this. I told this guy when I bought it from him I would keep it that way." Because it's beautiful.* (Central)

> *I grew up in Amsterdam, Holland and then we moved to a little wider area. Then we lived too close to suburbs. Then we lived in another piece with two acres of land. We said "Oh God, this is so cool," then eventually ended up where we live now. I think for people that have grown up in environments that have not [had] this, the draw is even greater than people that have lived like that because they may not realize how lucky they are. People eventually came out of big cities and are able to live like that now, I think the appreciation is probably even stronger.* (Central)

> *When I first came here and I spoke to John [another respondent] and asked him where he lived and I told him how I loved driving down the hill into Salem, the farms on either side, and so forth. He told me that he drives that route every day on his way to work and how beautiful it is. That really matters to people. As far as I'm concerned, the highways and byways through Connecticut where you're driving through beautiful countryside – woodlands, farms and hills – actually has an effect on our health and our spiritual lives.* (Central)

We're 20 minutes from downtown Hartford and it's a gem. The abutting town, Glastonbury, which is much larger in square miles, [is] just turned into a big suburbia. I don't believe that most of our townspeople want that identity for our town. We're a rural town. We have old Italian farmers in town, we have old New England heritage. It's just a wonderful little town. To keep that you have to have people that are willing to preserve their space, so those people have to step up to the plate and do it. (East)

I love being outside. I love working and having something to do. Lord knows we're never at a loss for something to do when you've got that kind of property. Especially when the weather's nice, ah, to be outside! If you lived in the city it's like what can you do? (East)

Looking around, most of you all look very healthy, which is a lot different than when you take a look at most of the population. You look really good so work agrees with you. (East)

Things go away and never come back. It's really pretty much that simple. There are no land factories – what's gone is gone. We like to think that we do our part to preserve something, then just be delighted to host various species of wildlife, insects. We're just thrilled to death that we have that. The clean air, the lichen on the trees – it makes you proud. (East)

[We are] privileged in this country because we do have the space and the land, beautiful space and beautiful land with national parks, etc. We are very privileged because we not only live in Northwest Connecticut, but we also have the ability to have larger tracts of land, which we value in a number of ways which are very much a part of what that land is all about. (West)

I think it's very important. They don't make any more land. When you put houses on it, then it requires schools, fire, police, roads, town employees. It costs to have a house on a piece of property. You just have the land that you can enjoy; it doesn't cost anything. We enjoy just having the open land and working it ourselves. We live in Wolcott. It's a small town, rural town. We just like the way it is right now. We would like to keep our land as open and not available for development as possible. (West)

The value of our property is the land and having the space. Our neighbors have similar amounts of property and it's all contiguous so I think it would be very difficult to develop it. I think the town that we live in, the people share those values as well. It's the minimum five acres and nobody's eager to see a whole lot of development. Our town is 1,400. What people pay in taxes and service the town can provide. And we're happy with it the way it is; we don't want it to change. We feel that we're the stewards of this piece of property. It's a very old house. It's a lovely piece of property. We have a spectacular view across the valley. The value of our land would deteriorate considerably if there were condominiums in the distance. We moved up because of this and we don't want to see it change. (West)

The beauty of our landscapes. The combination of woods and openness and views that we have is something that we covet, something that we protect and something that we work very hard to keep. It's painful for me to consider – whether my children ever are there or not is something I'm not going to try to control. I'll do everything I could to make it possible for them if they choose it. The thing that's important to me is that someone takes care of the land, to just go back in the brush and Multilflora Rose. It's unthinkable. It takes a lot of effort to keep that from happening. To keep it open, to have those views, to have meadows birds. We keep track of birds and today we had our first northern heron. They come in the spring and they come in the fall. (West)

To some the issue is simple:

If you love it why would you want to develop it? You can't help but say "I love this, this is beautiful and I want to keep it just like this." (Central)

It's kind of a lifestyle. If you have to ask why, you probably wouldn't understand. (East)

The impassioned comments of two landowners about preventing development are worth quoting at length. One is a man planning to buy an older friend's land (they attended the focus group together).

It's an aesthetic thing with me. I think it's a pleasant, lovely place to be. This happens to be a ruralish, woodsyish place and those kind of places should still exist. Growing up in lower Fairfield County, – I've been there 30 years – I've watched Trumbull go from small horse farms, more open land; they just crowded it all out. They used to have three-acre zoning, it went to two-acre and then it went to building lots. The estate where I grew up on where I cut the wood, the neighbor had 12 acres. He sold it to a developer and they put in what amounts to a housing project. They put up tract homes and it's almost like condos with their own streets. Just wiped the whole neighborhood out, the whole area, just cut it right down. Down the street from there, the same thing. Everything that used to be farm or open land was just bought up and developed right out of existence. Anybody [who] had a farm up there was almost wiped out. Most of the land down there is doing the same thing, just because the land prices were more valuable than having a farm or having open space. They just ate it all up.

With Connecticut growing the way it is, everyone's properties are going eventually come to the same pressure. The Northeast is still one of the most habited places in the country. It's a loss that we're giving up all of that land. I think the private landowners [are] under the pressure, either from monetary reasons or from families. "What are we going to do with this land? Are my kids going to farm it? Who's going to take it next?" That becomes a problem. Bill has considered maybe breaking up parts of it if I'm not able to buy it because nobody in the family wants it. He can't sell it off as possibly the whole farm. So what happens when he passes? He wants to retire. You see places that were around for 20, 30 years – they're gone, they passed away, the place is in disarray until it goes through probate. Or the state comes in and just takes over the land. Then they do what they will with it, then they can sell it for development rights because

they're always looking for money. They can care less about the open space, whether they say so or not. They're about the dollar. (East)

A Central man related with sorrow that the place he grew up in is now "paved" over for stores. He talked about his children's friends helping him build his house and how they cherish the memories.

The only way I could describe is the heritage that comes with living on your own property. I go back to my mom's house – she's like 93 – and I look at the place that she settled down in the middle of Wallingford. There was 80 acres around it that my grandmother owned. We were the only house that was on it which was a shack and which my father rebuilt in the '50s. I go back there with my kids now and basically of the 80 or 90 acres that were around us in the middle of what was called the "fire run" down there, [what] was the race track on Route 5, it's probably 98% paved. I could stand in the middle of the Wal-Mart parking lot and Dunkin' Donuts and say, "I used to do this over here." And my kids don't see anything.

My kids split all the rocks for the fireplace with all their friends from the football team. All the team, they help build the house. I had more kids in my property splitting rocks and cutting wood. They come back and they show their friends – they're in their 20s now – that "we picked this tree out to build the door for my house." It's like you hear the joy in their voice. I want them to have that when their children have grandkids. I don't want a Wal-Mart next to me. The money I would make on the subdivision, I'm better off burning the house down. I will burn the house down before I'm going to sell a piece of the property. I'll just put a trailer on there and collect the insurance. (Central)

Societal and environmental benefits of open space/forestland were mentioned by some owners: clean water and air ("trees make air"), local employment, biodiversity. Again, it was the conservation-minded owners who brought up these reasons, sometimes in response to direct probing.

As far the whole country or the world, you need trees to take in the carbon dioxide to give off oxygen. All that stuff is necessary as being something that we like. If we weren't this way, we wouldn't have the property. (Central)

I think one of the larger rationales behind conserving property and keeping it contiguous is that it's important for us to have greenways and corridors for wildlife. Being able to encourage other to link with yours to try to help create those wonderful corridors really makes a difference to the landscape and the health of the wildlife. (Central)

I'd like to know how much clean water my land produces and how much oxygen it produces for public benefit. I'm replenishing aquifers by managing my forestland properly with good water. I've got to be proud of that. (East)

We provide employment. We're the people who keep the aborists employed and the people who come with the brush hogs and the guys who do the planting. During the summer season there's almost always somebody on my land doing

something. That's just to maintain it and to take care of it. So I guess I don't have an issue with people building big houses and keeping big tracts of land because it does provide employment and goods and services for a lot of the local people who need that work. (West)

It maintains the integrity of the environment, the ecology. Your prairie birds, your meadow birds require large somewhat isolated meadows to nest in; they require that those meadows not be mowed during nest time. We're blessed in Falls Village by having as much forestland as we do because it maintains the biodiversity and the natural diversity of our habitat, of our ecology. Without that Great Mountain Forest, which is one of the biggest [property owners] in the state, we wouldn't have the diversity that we have. You may not like a bear in your backyard – it's kind of a kick – or a moose in the front yard, or the variety of hawks. They are there because the land is there for them. And that's, from my point of view, the greatest reason for preserving our land. (West)

Without the lands we couldn't live on this earth. It's not suitable for life as we know it without this land. (West)

Concerns about "how we can keep land productive," going beyond simply preserving it, were raised by an owner who is "passionate" about conservation issues.

The subjects everyone's talking about are things that I'm really passionate about – land preservation, rural character, agriculture. I spend all of my free time reading about it, thinking about it. You look at Europe and they've sort of figured out how to preserve their countryside and we've turned America into this big sprawl. The town I grew up in southern Rhode Island, I joined the land trust, sold the farm to the Nature Conservancy and worked with the foresters. The biggest problem is that there's no revenue stream or profitability stream to make a living off of a piece of land in New England anymore. If you made it so that local food, local products – whether it be lumber, wood – was profitable, you wouldn't need to worry about developers coming in and buying land because the landowners would not part with it. If you made the taxes such that they were maybe non-existent, you would have a cheaper form of preservation than you do conserving bodies of land that come off the tax roll and everyone burdens them on their shoulders. The next step is once we save it then what? Now it's off the tax rolls so everybody's carrying that weight on their shoulders now. From a farmer's perspective you have these lots like your fields could potentially end up being weeds. They're drifting onto my land and now I've got to go out there and pay people to pull them out because I don't want to use chemicals.

Just preserving a piece of land, you can't just sit back and pat yourself on the back and feel good about it. You have to think, "Look, I'm going to preserve this piece of land for what? What purpose?" It still has to have a purpose. It can't be just "well, for the butterflies and deer to run around on." Because you walk on an average piece of conserved land in my town or towns I've lived on and they end up being nothing other than species [like]Multi-Floral Rose, Bittersweet. Somebody carves a trail through so they can go bird watching and they never do or maybe occasionally a woman will walk her dog through, but they have no real

use. We need to think about how we can keep land productive. You need to keep agriculture and the rural culture of the community profitable. So buy as much as you can local. When you set aside your land and preserve it try to think outside the box and say "I'm just not going to be happy with preserving it. I want these fields utilized" because at the end of the day a worked agricultural property will have far more wildlife capacity on it than that vacant 100 acres down the road the grows up in brush that everybody calls the nature sanctuary. (East)

Support for "smart development" was expressed by some owners. They don't want Connecticut to be turned into acres of paved-over land but they are not totally anti-development. Newcomers "sustain this area" and its economy, and it is important to have "affordable housing" for younger people. One owner, however, questioned how much the affluent newcomers really contribute to the community.

On the subject of stewardship I always get kind of mixed emotions because I'm a civil engineer. I work with a lot of developers and see a lot of property developed. I'll walk around some pristine piece of land that somebody wants to develop and kind of have bad feelings and I have good feelings. It's nice to be employed but sometimes I look around and say "gee, I wish I had the money, I'd just buy it from the guy and leave it the way it is." Being in the business I'm in, I pay a lot of attention to what goes on in the land use regulations, how it affects not just forestland but farmland and other valuable land resources. Sometimes I get concerned that maybe people get pushed in the wrong direction to use those resources wastefully. (East)

A lot of the younger people that come here grew up here. In many cases they're people who've made their money and make their living in other places. They live here or come on the weekend. But [the] bottom line is they come here for the reason that we all love about our land. That's what keeps the housing prices up, that's what keeps everybody – the contractors, the landscapers, the snow plowers – in business. Very often it's not the generation of the people who've been here but rather the people who have come here from other places that sustain this area and keep the market high and keep the stores in business. I think that our market is sustained by a fairly vast segment of people who want privacy, want all of the things that we covet about our land; they come here for that reason. It may be that they'll buy a parcel of land for one house but they're not buying a parcel of 100 acres because they're coming up to build 20 houses. They're buying it because they want the privacy, they want the view. The person ultimately may buy that property because is going to be a person of means that will keep it. (West)

The way that's being reconciled currently in most communities is through affordable housing, but affordable housing is controlled by the local community. Much of that housing is already there, incidentally. In some cases it's been built, new housing, but in many cases they've taken, for example, the old farmhouses in Northfield, putting in units in those big buildings. It's recycling those properties in a way that is going to allow young families to live there. (West)

I don't mind having houses as long as I can bring my friends in. That's what I've been doing. Young people cannot pick up any kind of land anywhere so they have problems. I sell them like 1½, 2 acres. I think it's good to have young people on the hill. Plus they need a spot. Everybody's always saying "they have no place to come. They have leave. All the children have to leave." They have to leave because the old guys don't want to sell. (West)

It's all wonderful to have this land and keep it the way it is but there's also the problem in this part of Connecticut in that there's no place for the young people to go, to build a house. The towns depend very heavily on volunteers for all kinds of things and you can't have volunteers if you don't have any young people living around. The fire department doesn't happen, the ambulance doesn't happen, all that stuff is a big problem. I think there's a tension between the two and I don't know how you resolve it but it really does exist. You've probably got to have some kind of "smart development." You can't just say freeze this in time. It's dynamic. (West)

Part of the problem is that a lot of the development that goes on in our village coming along that way is big houses, big expensive houses. It's questionable how many volunteers do they provide. In some cases the children go to our very fine private schools instead of the public schools. (West)

8. Endangered Species

Reactions of landowners to discovering an endangered species on their land would be divided. Some owners have actually experienced this, while others answered hypothetically.

- Positive attitudes. They have been or would be "delighted," "happy" "thrilled" to discover such a species, some owners said. One West man said of finding a bobolink, "we have welcomed it." Another owner bragged about having found a lady slipper. The conservation ethic of some landowners came through in a East owner's statement that protection promotes "biodiversity, diversity of wildlife" and is important even if it is "inconvenient." What some would view as a disadvantage can be a plus, a Central owner said, since this would be "almost like the kiss of death for development."

  I wouldn't mind having some endangered species on my property because that's almost like the kiss of death for development, even someone that comes after me. [I worked on a property] in Portland and it happened to be the highest concentration of northern rattlesnakes. They said you just have to put a big note that there are endangered species, rattlesnakes, on the plan that someone's going to look at to buy. Good luck selling that property with that on there; you're never going to sell it now that they know the rattlesnakes are there. I think it's a beautiful thing – I don't know if great horned owls are endangered or not. (Central)

I'd like to find some in my right-of-way so I can stop the developer from going in the back to develop that property. What's the resource then? Who's going to come out and identify that? (East)

I would definitely want them protected. That's why we work so hard to keep the land open. (East)

Above the inconvenience is biodiversity, diversity of wildlife. I think it's all a good thing. If it's inconvenient or I can't harvest a certain area because of a certain type of salamander or bird or what have you, I think that's a good thing. (East)

When my husband was clearing for the house he actually saw a lady slipper orchid at the foot of one of the trees in our front yard. It was just like a sign – oh, we've bought paradise. I don't usually brag at all but I was just so proud of our lady slipper orchid. Somebody that my husband works with was coming out to see the property and I told him. He just turns and deadpans, "what's that?" Talk about sticking a pin in my balloon – didn't even know that he was supposed to be so impressed. (East)

We'd be delighted. We do everything that we can to provide as many different habitats and to attract as many birds. In the 15 years that we've owned our land, because of the bluebird houses and some of the other plantings that we've done, we get many more species of birds than we used to [and] butterflies. I've tried to learn and to study and to figure out as many different things that we can do to provide the habitat. We're fortunate that I can afford to indulge myself and hire people. I would anticipate that anybody who bought our property in the future will have similar interests in preserving it that way. As far as we can control who we sold it to, they would do that. (West)

If you're not going to develop, it would be a matter of great excitement to us to have it. (West)

- Negative attitudes**.** A number of landowners think that an endangered species would create major headaches for them. ("Once it happens you've opened that Pandora's Box.") It could entail government involvement and oversight ("G-Men dictating"), restrictions on what they are allowed to do, and will "cost you money." Even routine maintenance can be prohibited ("you might find yourself not being able to cut your lawn"). A Central owner complained about having had to change a driveway because of some amphibians. (Another respondent, however, told her that the DEP would have done this "for free.") Some owners stated they would hide the discovery from the government to avoid the hassles; their tone of voice implied that the inconvenience to owners is not justified to save small, trivial and sometimes undesirable animals or plants.

  We had to move the driveway which cost a ton of money to put in; it's over half a mile long. It's not paved, it's just gravel. We had to reroute it because the state licensed forester told us that we had amphibian crossing on the area, two or

three, maybe five of them. Then they said the others weren't that big. That cost about $5,000 to put each culvert in; that's just a pipe in the ground. It had to be engineered, it had to go along with all the town regulations and the planning commission and all that. I'm not out to run over the eight-foot black snakes that I'm seeing in the driveway but I have hardly ever seen them go through the culverts. I'm just saying that, yes, it costs you money. (Central)

If I was in that position I think what I would do is I'd just dig a trench and put a pipe in and not tell anybody. (Central)

Endangered species becomes a major consideration if you're a property owner and they have deemed part of your property as habitat. I think I'd have a tough time. (East)

I definitely would not want it. The second that happens you've lost major rights to your property. (East)

One year into the purchase of [my] 330-acre farm in Vermont I found a little paperwork under the easement protection that there was a particular breed of white-nosed bats that lived on the property. There was a decibel sound ordinance on the property which basically said you couldn't even operate a tractor at certain times of the year; it was maybe 50 acres of woods so you needed a tractor most of the time. So forget about shooting a gun, forget about a four-wheel, forget about a snowmobile. There's an example of you don't want to find a critter living on your land and then call up everybody and think it's wonderful. Then all of a sudden the G-Men are coming out dictating to you how and when and what you will be doing. (East)

If you are on federal property – we have a large area in ours – you're not allowed to mow your field within 25 feet of the brush line because there'll be certain animals that like to use that area. If you ignore that long enough you eventually have no field left. (East)

Sometimes it can be a pain just because if they, say, found a certain bird on your property maybe they would say "you've got to stay out of that whole area." And maybe you wanted to harvest that timber. I don't know if that's true or not. (East)

Salamander – you cannot touch them. There are too many rules; you can't even get near the place. But I want the oak trees to be protected because the deer like to eat the acorns and I like to eat the deer. I don't care about skunk cabbage. You can't drive through it – a cease and desist order on you or something. (Central)

If knew that the state was going to come in and tell me I couldn't even have my swimming pool anymore I wouldn't tell them because we all know the story of the salamander. I have forestland and I can't even go across the brook and I can't go here. The amount of land, if you look at all the restrictions we have on it, you add another one if you found a species. You wouldn't be mowing your fields. You'd be sitting on your porch rocking, hoping you didn't run over an ant. (Central)

A few East respondents said they agree with the idea of protection but that the inconveniences to owners should be reduced. This suggests that they do not recognize that limitations are needed to achieve that goal.

> *I would be willing to support it if considerations like that were addressed.* (East)
>
> *I support the notion of endangered species and trying to protect them; however, not at the tremendous expense and hardship to owners of property.* (East)

9. Incentives to Maintain Forestland

What kinds of incentives would motivate more landowners to keep their land as forestland, respondents were asked. (In most of the sessions, the question was raised prior to their seeing the list of current Connecticut programs.)

- Lower taxes. Invariably the first suggestion was to provide more tax relief – this is "number one," "the best." Eliminate the estate taxes, at least on homes that have been in a family for generations, respondents declared. The anger at these taxes was demonstrated in an owner's statement that they are a "regressive and repressive system." Lowering the property tax with "more and better 490" would also help, some said. Offering a tax "incentive to maintain the property" was another suggestion.

  The inheritance tax. If I drop dead and my kids get my property they're going to get murdered in taxes. They have to sell it. They're not going to have a choice. There will be no choice for them, whether they want to keep the land or not. (Central)

  Maybe an incentive to maintain the property. "Gee whiz, I took out so many dead trees, then I get ten dollars off of my [taxes]" – some kind of maintenance program that would help some people who are like non-professional farmers or not necessarily involved in agriculture. (Central)

  Some adjustment in our tax system. For example, a property owner who's lived on the property for generations, it's been in the same family – you haven't tried to make a profit off the land by selling it, you keep it. Your taxes rise apportionately or geometrically at times because there are other developments in your town that are taxed much more highly than the land that didn't have a house on it or had a little tiny house on it; that drives up the marketable value of your land so that you pay higher taxes on it as well. I don't plan to sell my land so why should I have to pay the taxes to live on that land in anticipation I'm going to be selling it? Tax it to the person who buys it when it gets on the market. That is a very simple and reasonable approach to help generations keep their land in family without having to pay the exorbitant taxes that occur. (West)

  I think that one particularly egregious aspect of the tax system is the estate tax. Under current limits, you could live a very frugal and poor life and die rich

because of your land. The land is determined for tax purposes at fair market value on the date of death. If you have 100 acres with a particularly good view and you put a good life on the land with Social Security and modest income, nevertheless, your children, heirs, beneficiaries might be forced to sell the property to pay the inheritance tax. The way that we finance government, primarily municipalities, is dependent on the value of the land, which I think is absurd. There's no value given to open land. Yes, we have a 490 program. It takes some of the sting out of the taxes but I think the question of what we can afford to pay for municipal taxes should have nothing to do with how many acres I own. The question is what is my proportionate share of supporting a good educational system, fire department and ambulance system? It's just a whole philosophical debate that never seems to take place about how we finance these things that we need in our life. Somehow it's all gotten tied in this regressive and repressive system of taxation related to how big your house is and how many bedrooms you have and how many acres of land you have. (West)

The fairness of a flat rate per square foot was debated in one session.

Everybody should pay the same amount per square foot. And that would take care of a lot of the difference. (West)

You can have a thousand square foot house and make a million dollar income and you can have a five thousand square foot house because it was an ancestral home and live on $10,000 a year. I think there's great inequity in that. (West)

- Other ideas. Suggestions from one respondent each were: provide aid to older landowners, who are land-rich but cash-poor; offer incentives to developers who donate to conservation easements; change the "forestland" designation to "eco land" so landowners can put more property in programs.

  People end up selling their land when they get older, when they don't have enough income to take care of themselves because their health is failing. Which is really one of the main reasons why I'm a supporter of a public health plan that somehow gets even paid as part of that from, say, the taxes, just to make it fair for people so that they preserve things. Maybe a special law just for conservation of land so people don't have to sell their land. People are selling their lands because they have to. There's always that family sitting there, the five kids that are all gone and they were factory workers. They just lived on the land; they don't have a lot of money. They're land-rich but they've got to sell it just to survive in their later years. That's why land goes. (Central)

  In East Central there was a development put in way in the back of us. The developer, I think, put 17 lots in and he gave half of it to the town. Therefore, he was able to get a tax deduction for an enormous amount of money and by doing that he got the piece of property almost for nothing. This is a good incentive. The piece that he sold was all under the power lines. It was for recreational purposes, not a very great piece of land. (Central)

An incentive for me to be able to keep my forestland and not want to leave it is to somehow change the regulations of the state forest designation. Let's call it something else besides the state forest. I'd like to be able to take 10% of my property and put some meadows in but the state discourages me from doing that. I put in Christmas trees that are now 30 years old and that is not forestland to the state of Connecticut. I had to take that out, even though these trees are 30, 40 feet high, 10, 12 inches in diameter, 14 some of them. That to me is a detriment because I can't really do and stay on that piece of land. Let's say I have an inkling to get an eight-acre meadow. I might just sell my piece because I can't even work that into my forestland. They discourage you from doing that. I'm right at my limit right now. I can't go any less than what I am to keep my tax designation, see. I'm right at 25 [acres]. The state will not let you cut your forest trees and make meadows. If you wanted to make a 20-acre field you would lose that 20 acres out of your forest designation. It would come out for your taxes. You'd have to pay regular tax on that land because it's not forest. You have to change your designation. I go through 250 pounds of sunflower seeds to feed my birds; my birds are all on my lawn and bluebirds feed in fields. The Audubon Society should get involved with the state forest and say "look, we're losing farms." We have all this forestland. Think about how many acres this group has. If we could make 20% of that into fields to encourage birds to come in – they're losing their flyways constantly to development and to just farms going back. Why don't we call it state eco land? Rethink this 1928 law that came in that it's got to be woods, it's got to be native species. (Central)

Land trust programs were mentioned by a few owners. On the positive side, some see the trusts as educating landowners through seminars and by connecting them to people with information. Negatively, one owner said the trusts require owners to do things he wouldn't want to (digging pools for ducks).

Our local land trust is very active. What they do is periodically give seminars on conservation easement, selling development rights. What your rights are, what the town's rights are, what the state's rights are, what's available. There's a bonding commission from the state some years ago where they were buying up a lot of farms in Connecticut, but they were buying development rights so the farmer could stay on the property until the farmer died and then the property went to the state. (Central)

Land trust organizations. They can put you in touch with other individuals, be it foresters, attorneys, that can network you with individuals that could tell you more or make you more informed about your property. (Central)

Where I used to live two ladies owned 40 acres – I used to lease it – wanted to turn it over. It's finally in some trust land. But before that there was somebody was interested in it. They told them they had to dig pools of water for ducks and stuff. I don't know whether it was the Audubon or whatever. They were going to have to put some money into it before they would take it over. (Central)

Most of your local land trusts have a very active volunteer board. They are interested in protecting land and in many cases would be willing to have volunteers meet with landowners to talk about the various tax incentives and

means of protecting land and conservation easements. Unless you have a huge tract of land you can't get the Nature Conservancy [interested] but your local land trusts are great sources. (West)

Landowner programs suggested by one or two respondents each included:

- Information/advice – about tree problems, dealing with trespassing, developing a habitat for birds, serving the needs of smaller landowners.

  A landowner of any size should have some place, for instance, just like this here [the focus group], where you can walk in and say "hey, I have 200 acres or 150 acres. I want to keep it the way it is. People are coming in, they're walking all over it. Some people I allow to do that and some are trespassing. What can you tell me?" They should have access to all of these programs and advise me accordingly. That'd be a heck of a big help. (Central)

  Tell me why my black birches are dying. They're slowly all dying, even the big ones. (Central)

  My sense is that a lot of these [existing programs] apply to large tracts of land (East).

  How to provide habitats that birds particularly might like. I looked out and saw that the jewel weed which ordinarily I might have chopped down was being used for hummingbirds. I have these lovely hummingbirds out there being happily shared by something I hadn't intended. (West)

- "Combat invasive species." An owner, who had earlier vociferously warned about government intrusion, suggested a federal program to remove invasive plants on roadsides as less onerous than the programs landowners enroll in. (These comments show the inconsistent attitudes of some owners.)

  We have this threat by the long-horned [beetle]. Is there a long-term plan for the eventual invasion from that beetle and how will it impact on us as forest? There's some thoughts of clear-cut and burn the forest, which is not good, or you let nature take its course; you find a natural predator. Things like that and the gypsy moth which has invaded. I'd like to see somebody planning something. (Central)

  I think it would be great if there was more of a federal push to combat invasive species, not just on your particular land but roadways, along the side of the road. It should be a major, major push, a major focal point because from an agricultural perspective you spend so much money combating invasive species. They can say "we have this great program" but you've got to apply for the program and you've got to do it a certain way. (East)

- Help in building fish ponds.

I owned a piece of land in Vermont. To build a pond the federal people came in and surveyed it, marked it and whatever. You got all that done for free and [the state] gave you so many hundred trout per acre. The federal people told me how to build the dam, specs on the dam and all that stuff. (Central)

Wariness about dealing with government was expressed again, even by some of the conservation-minded owners. "Fiercely" independent, they avoid having "people coming on my land" and telling them what they can and cannot do. Anger was expressed by one woman who said "the state can flood my land without me being able to do anything." Dealing with "bureaucracy" can also entail frustrations and a lot of paperwork.

I probably shouldn't say this but there also is a certain disincentive to allow officials onto your property for the very reason that some of the people have discussed here. As soon as you do, if somebody finds a vernal pool or somebody finds an endangered species, whatever it is. I'm an old swamp Yankee and I defend our independence quite fiercely. I'm a person who cares greatly about our land and our vernal pools and our animals and everything. That's really important to both me and my husband. But I don't want people coming on my land and saying "oh, you can't touch that, you can't do this or you can't do that." It's my land and I love my land and I care for my land with all my heart, but I don't want somebody coming on my land and saying "you have to do this, you have to do that." I would just be really cautious and really careful as to who I invite onto our land. (Central)

The state can flood my land without me being able to do anything. They have a pond. They built a dam and from that dam comes a brook that crosses my land. Now in the dry season the brook is a trickle but let it be wet and I go for a walk in the morning and somebody over there opens the dam. I can't cross now. I'm in a river, okay? The water comes come shushing down. I'm all right because I'm a grownup, but let it be a couple of kids, they won't make it. I need a call from them. "Hey, we're going to open the pond. Stay away from there." Or keep your kids out of there. In my 20 years there now I have rescued three times some children out of the state forest that were lost. (Central)

Any time you're in a bureaucracy you can find some people that are knowledgeable and some that aren't. There's some of them need a reality check. (East)

A question that always comes up in my head on any of these programs is, what do you have to do to comply with them? If you're talking about cutting the grapevines, for example, do you have to have somebody come out and count them? The administration aspect of it. If I have to spend ten hours filling out forms in order to get reimbursed for cutting one grapevine I'm not going to do it. (West)

B. CURRENT CONNECTICUT LANDOWNER PROGRAMS

The major programs shown on a list were grouped by type:

- Tax programs
- Cost assistance programs
- Landowner associations
- Volunteer opportunities

Respondents checked off programs they had heard of and are enrolled in (Appendix B).

1. Overall Awareness

Awareness of most Connecticut landowner programs was extremely low. Of the programs shown on a list, only Current Use 490 was recognized by a majority of respondents. A few had heard of the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), and there was scattered awareness of some others.

Consistently, respondents were surprised by the number of programs available to landowners that they had not heard of. "I don't think they're promoted very well, that's for sure," one commented. Several asked if they could get a copy of the list to take home. (A brief description of the programs, along with their website urls, was provided at the end of the sessions.)

> *They ought to advertise their programs a little better.* (Central)
>
> *There are all these different programs and a lot of them we all would probably like to hear about. Are they really available?* (Central)
>
> *I'm familiar with a couple of them. I thought I was fairly well informed but I guess from reading this I'm not. I'm trying to match the names with my recollection of what I've heard.* (East)

This research suggests that a number of owners are not information-seekers about issues related to their land. Respondents in a Central focus group discussed whether many landowners would in fact take "the initiative" to look for information about the programs. As one noted, this is "something we don't know really exists." If they do go online, they would simply "Google" a subject or go to a site like the Audubon Society's rather than the state government's.

> *Isn't this on state of Connecticut website and shouldn't people be able to go and research these programs themselves and find out about these things? They're not secrets, right? You have to have the incentive and the initiative to go and research them yourself. I'm sure the state of Connecticut doesn't have the money to actively promote these. [Have you ever gone on the website?] I haven't had a reason to but if I thought about it and I wanted to do something I'm sure I would do that.*

So you're saying we should go research something that we don't know really exists.

No, I'm saying that you know that the state of Connecticut and also the federal government has programs out there. If you have the initiative and you want to learn more, one of your resources could be the Internet, to go on to the state of Connecticut website or the federal government websites and look for them. If you still can't find it or you're still confused or whatever they must list people that you could contract or offices. Or I would do any kind of search. If I wanted to know about birds I might Google Audubon Society, I might Google bird watching. It's fairly easy to do on the Internet. I understand that some people don't use computers or don't have access to computers but they could still call the phone number. If they had a phone book I'm sure there'd be a listing of state government offices that they could contact.

I think it's ironic that people want the state to drive all this communication and spend money on communicating with the property owners. But then on the flip side we're complaining that the state sticks their fingers into our private business too much. That's why I say it's a mutual-side thing. It's not just one-sided. It can't be. If you're going to send out a 10-page mailing or something it's going to cost money so maybe they're going to increase the taxes to help cover that mailing.

The only reason I ever called the local rangers or thought to call was when I had trouble like a wounded animal or whatever. They were always very helpful but I never thought of asking them for any programs.

A few programs were described in generally vague terms rather than by name.

I think the DEP actually has a program, don't they? I can't be specific about it because I haven't been involved with it but – where they will help you by coming in and doing an assessment on your property and giving you advice about managing. (Central)

<u>Deep distrust and skepticism concerning government are obstacles to involvement with state programs</u>. A number of these independent-minded owners assume the help comes "with strings attached" that will take away their "control" of the land. (In today's political environment, these feelings may be especially strong.) Some assume researching and enrolling in programs would be complicated. "Trying to figure which program and how to apply it is a struggle," a East man said. He added a comment that probably applies to many other owners: "Yes, I'm a landowner but I have a full-time job and a family and sometimes I like to play and not do work around the property." For smaller landowners in particular the return may not worthwhile, others said.

The reality is that the minute you let the state in to walk on your property and do anything and give you a couple of bucks all of a sudden somebody's controlling what you can or can't do. That's why we don't let anybody on our property. (Central)

You have to be aware that if you do get into any of these programs and you do take the government's money that there are strings that come with that. I heard somebody talk about pulling stuff out of their pond. You take the government money, they start walking on your property. They don't say anything and then all of a sudden you get a letter in the mail that gee, you're not supposed to touch anything within so many feet of a pond, even though it's on your land and you pay taxes on it, it's a man-made pond. One old farmer said to me when I was young, he said "Don't ever take the G-Man's money because once you got 'em on your land you'll never get 'em off." (East)

I don't want people to come anyway. I don't want the activity. (East)

I think I've heard about the Forest Legacy program and the Landowners' Incentive program and Wildlife Habitat Incentives. I think my piece of land is too small to really do much with in terms of those. It's not real – they'll offer money for something and I have interests in what I want to do. Trying to figure which program and how to apply it is a struggle. There's a thing of if I do apply then I have to spend the time performing. Yes, I'm a landowner but I have a full-time job and a family and sometimes I like to play and not do work around the property. I guess I'm reluctant to commit to something that has a performance deadline, following a plan. (East)

It's a couple thousand dollars. Most of the things I want to do I have to invest money to get started with, so it costs me time and money and I get a little back. Maybe it'll reduce the cost but maybe I'm just not a big enough landowner with enough activity to really be interested. Now if I had a couple hundred acres, I think it would apply a lot more. (East)

The state government itself creates obstacles, according to some owners. Tax assessors, several said, don't offer help or advice; their job is to collect more taxes, not to lower landowners' tax bills. (We have heard this view expressed in our other research as well.) Some owners are fearful of even talking to the assessor, afraid that they will be opening themselves up to scrutiny and, worse, to a tax hike. A West owner talked about problems the difficulty of getting information to solve her problems, the need for landowner "education" so they don't make "inadvertent mistakes." Several agencies (DEP, extension offices) were criticized for not providing information.

I think there's a disincentive for assessors to give you any information, and I think that that's really wrong. When you go to the assessor and you complain about you bill, there's little or no information that the assessor provides you that helps to lower the assessment on your lot. If she gives you information it's going to reduce the taxes and her job is to increase your taxes. When we were trying to decide [what] to do there were no advocates around that would help at all. There were a couple of really good textbooks written by school of forestry people on how to conserve your property and lower your taxes. (Central)

You talk to them, your taxes go up. One year I was paying taxes on the guy's property next to me. When the deed was executed and went to her they never changed it. (Central)

The lady I bought my property from was paying taxes on it since she got married and her father gave it to her in 1937. She never saw the property. She called every year to try to get her taxes reduced. She was paying $3,500 a year on a piece of property that she should have been paying $100 on, or less. I was the first person that told her, "if I don't buy this property I'm going to tell you how to reduce your taxes. That's a crime that you're getting forced to do that." I guess it's a good thing I said that because after I said that she sold me the property. (Central)

The town officials, I've been told, or the mayor doesn't want to have any possibility of getting out of that [10 mil program]. He wants everything to be reassessed at the 50-year mark with the thought that "we'll get lots of tax money." What you'll get is ticky-tacky houses and more kids for schools and some of your old residents just leaving because they can't live in the quiet place anymore. (West)

I think it comes down to education. I just like to learn as much as I can about the wildlife, plants. Inadvertently I think mistakes are made with property and I'm sure I've made them, where you think some plant looks really nice and you stick it in and then you find out that's an invasive plant. Oh my gosh. Like the classic euonymous burning bush that's slowly overtaken – I'm sure that's how it got started. Like learning when we cut trees sometimes to leave the shrubs. We actually leave branches on the ground for smaller animals to habitat, the rabbits. They kind of all provide housing for them. I enjoy learning things like that and how to help them. Learning to control the water and plants is an issue. I find that information harder to find out. It seems like there's a lot more restrictions and nobody wants to get into it because of the liability. "We can't talk to you about that." I can't find anybody to help me out with it. My dam has recently given way on one side of it and I need to have it repaired so that my pond remains full and right now it's about half empty. I've been finding it very difficult to find information. They want you to get permits. "We can't tell you at all how to do it." It became such an astronomical thing it hasn't been done all summer and I have to do something with it. (West)

A larger landowner enrolled in multiple programs said that while it is fairly easy to apply, it is quite tedious.

LIP, EQUIP and WHIP programs – I've made applications in all those and have received funding in some of them. It goes back to creating wildlife habitat, early successional forest habitat. The monies are available through all three of those programs; you make applications and one program has got the money and one doesn't. Maybe you're approved, maybe you're not. It's a tedious process but if you have a proper management plan and you're able to talk to the agency people about your desires and what you've done in the past, it's fairly efficient, fairly easy to get involved and get the monies. I'm now working on my second application and have two more sites that I want to prepare for monies. (East)

2. Current Use Program (490)

The importance and popularity of this Connecticut program came through strongly in the focus groups. It was mentioned spontaneously by several owners, sometimes in responding to others' concerns about taxes. The majority of owners interviewed were enrolled in the program, as mentioned earlier. Respondents typically referred to it as "490" or said their land is "in forestry."

Enrollees appreciate the "huge break" in property tax rates. In several cases, they gratefully credit 490 with enabling them to keep their land. "It's the only way you could afford to live on this kind of property," a Central owner stated. Most of the respondents see no downside to the program. "It's foolish not to be in it," a East landowner commented. The tax savings enabled one owner to buy additional land.

> *[There is a tax break] as long as you keep [the land] undeveloped. You let it go the way God made it and forget about it. My property now, I can't sell it. When I die, it goes to my family. I don't know what's going to happen to it then but as of now no one can build on that property while I'm alive. The taxes are like $600 a year; we had it designated forest and it went to $60. If you can do that, then your taxes go way down.* (Central)

> *A portion of my property is also in forestry for tax purposes because I couldn't afford to keep up that large a piece of property if I didn't have help from the state.* (Central)

> *You can do a 100-lot subdivision on a piece of property and if you don't sell it, it stays in Open Space until you sell every little tiny bit of it. My brother did a big subdivision 20 years ago, never sold the property, and his taxes have been $100 a year every year. Most towns as soon as you file that map, boom, you get a tax bill – boom, boom, boom. And they want it right now.* (Central)

> *It's a great program, fantastic. Wouldn't be able to have the land if we didn't have that.* (Central)

> *We have a tax advantage where we live and it is a big advantage. If we had to pay what a developer has to pay, we probably wouldn't be there because it would be very expensive.* (East)

> *If it wasn't for 490 I would think seriously of having to sell. We're retired, we have a limited income. Our taxes are high enough as it is, to add the remainder of that land, especially if it were listed as a developable lot. Just happened to one of my uncles who still owns a substantial amount of property and it's a terror – very large chunk of money.* (East)

> *It's definitely beneficial. That's why we got into it.* (East)

Couldn't afford to have the open space without it. Couldn't begin to afford the taxes without it. (East)

With 100-plus acres I certainly wouldn't want to pay taxes on that if it wasn't in the 490. I believe the state says it's $100 an acre. The town of Wolcott charged you $200 an acre so they're getting a little bit more money of it. But it's still better than having what it would be whatever they would consider the value of those acres other than the two that we have for our house. (West)

We went into it about 30 years ago. It was a nice saving on taxes. At the time when I bought the property we had 15 acres and I had an option to buy some more land. I don't know that I would have taken it up to buy additional land if I couldn't have entered the program. The taxes would have been very high – the cost for the additional privacy and whatnot around me would have been steep. (West)

The penalty on withdrawal before 10 years seems to be accepted by enrollees. It makes the program effective in discouraging landowners from selling to developers, some respondents said. Owners interested the program need to be "careful" about penalty, one advised, meaning they need to be aware of it.

The taxes in our town are outrageous. I definitely get a tax break by doing that. It kind of encourages [you] to want to keep your land intact. It's just something to think about before you sell it to a developer because you know that once you put it in there that if I go to back out of this there is a penalty. Both ends kind of work because people make really rash decisions. Let's face it – the big pieces of land are because of the farmers, the people that grew our food. As time went on, farming, you couldn't make any money off it. It was back-breaking work so the farms disappeared; the kids don't want it. (East)

Four-ninety is a program that I think has to exist to encourage people to keep maintaining their land and it takes most of the sting out of municipal taxes on that. You can question whether it's doing enough and whether it could do more, but I don't think any of us would be happy with the result if it was taken away. (West)

It's pro-rated. If you sell the property after one year of tax deferment, the penalty is large. But then you get to the ninth year and you have to have some money, you sell the property – well, it's not as big a penalty. After 10 years it's pretty much free and clear but you do have that 10-year window. (West)

In the farm and forest programs it's 10 years from the date of ownership or the date of qualification, classification. The open space program is 10 years from the date of classification. You've got to be careful about that. There's a recapture tax that starts at 10% and goes to 1%. (West)

The penalty provisions confused some: does it apply to landowners who build houses for children on their property, to putting land in a trust?

I had a question. Our land is in three parcels and it's all into forestland. What if we took a couple of parcels and put it into a trust for our children? Will that take away the forestry? (Central)

No. After ten years you can do what you want with it as long as you maintain your 25 acres minimum. If you have 10, take out two or three lots, it doesn't matter. You just change your assessment. I did it before 10 years and I had to pay an assessed penalty. (Central)

I don't want to pay more taxes because I put it in the kids' names. (Central)

Some other issues and questions concerning 490 were raised by one or two respondents each.

- Differences in acreage requirements of the three variations (Farm, Forest and Open Space).

  There are only three programs. There's farm, forest and open space. If you're not a farmer and you're not a forest owner with 25 acres or more, the only other program that you can qualify for is open space, which is designed for smaller property owners. But the town has to adopt an open space program in order for you to qualify. I don't think Merrill has one. (West)

- Not valuable enough. The criticism that 490 is less "effective" in reducing taxes today was raised in two sessions. Other respondents either vehemently disagreed or said there are no "disadvantages" to the program.

  As far as I'm concerned 490 and its objectives have been kind of diluted to the point where it's not as valuable as it used to. I understand people with five acres can be under Open Space 490. As far as a tax advantage goes, there is none on our town. (East)

  I don't see any disadvantages. My recollection is that it didn't help all that much in my case. (East)

  I would say 490 is not as effective as they thought it would be when it was enacted. Because what happens is the assessors put it all on the house lot and they attempt to devalue the 490 land so you don't get the kind of break you really should get I think. (West)

  I disagree with him on that. (West)

  I think it's a big help. I disagree. I think it's big help, yes. (West)

- Putting parcels together.

I'll tell you another thing they won't let you do. You can own 10 acres here and 20 acres here that abuts it. You cannot add them two and make forestland out of it. My sister, they won't let her do it. (Central)

- Transition from 10 Mill program. A West owner with one parcel of land in this program said "your tax rate will go up" a lot unless there is amnesty when it changes to 490.

  Right now the larger piece of property is in this 10 Mill, which is a travesty in this state from about 60 years ago. We're trying to get out of it. There's a controversy in the town and in the state where they're trying to give an amnesty period for people who are in 10 Mill to change it to the 490 program without penalty. The town fathers in Cornwall don't want to allow that because if they do they're going to lose tax revenues, but those tax revenues are penalties, not taxes that they would be lost. It's not really like they're losing anything, it's more like "well, we can gain." What happens is the property becomes reassessed at today's values and that includes standing timber and so on. Your tax rate will go up. You have to pay the taxes that you would have accrued over those years; it's the interest on the taxes. If we had to pay the penalty, say, next year – if this thing doesn't go through – it could be as much as $120,000 that we have to pay. (West)

- Possible political favoritism at the town level.

  The underlying negative there is that you have individuals that don't really have any experience – they get elected to positions that ultimately dictate the tax advantage to an individual. You can't do that. Suppose Bill was on the wrong side of the political spectrum and the politics shifted in this town and they decided, "well, he's a pretty big tax base we can tap into. Let's leverage the 490 against him"? That happens. I bought a farm in Vermont and I saw things like that go on up there. It's no different in Connecticut. I think it should be something that it's defined by the state, enforced by the state. (East)

Non-enrollees expressed favorable attitudes toward 490. Several wished they could be in the program but believe that they do not qualify based on their total acreage or amount of woodland. In some cases, there was confusion about the exact requirements, which vary locally; a West owner said that an inaccurate count had caused his family's property to be disqualified. None of these owners cited the penalty as a reason for not enrolling. Connecticut landowner attitudes toward current use seem to be similar to those in other states with minimal requirements, and considerably more favorable than states with more stringent requirements, our other research suggests.

Interesting situation. My parents originally bought the property. It was 24 acres. When it passed on to me it was surveyed and they found out it was 26 acres, so during that time period they could have qualified for this. That was probably 30, 40 years. Now it's actually got two houses on it so it doesn't qualify again. They didn't count the house lot as part of it even if it was forest. (West)

We have just under 30 acres but it's not all forest. I'd be interested in it but I don't think our property would necessarily qualify. (West)

Sources of awareness for 490 included:

- Local/state newspapers. The program was "well publicized" when it was introduced, unlike others.

- The conservation department in its materials about farming.

  The conservation department tells you about it. It's in all that stuff, anything that had to do with farming. One time when they paid you not to plant corn; I was in that. (West)

- Town officials/assessors/clerks. Some actively suggest enrolling and believe there is a tax benefit to the community, owners said. This stands in contrast with the comments about assessors withholding information mentioned above.

  We bought the place and Maria down at town hall said "they have this designation. The old people have it. Don't you want it? It'll save you money on taxes." "Hell, yeah." "Fill out this form." That's pretty much it. They showed me the chart of how you would have to reimburse within 10 years and stuff like that. It's like if you do something in the first year you've got to pay everything and then it goes down. (West)

  Our town clerk said that the town was interested in having people save large amounts of land because it meant fewer kids in schools. (West)

3. Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

Far less well-known than the current use, WHIP received several positive comments from landowners familiar with it, along with some questions.

- Positives. A West enrollee who brought up his involvement unaided described the program as "very successful." Asked how it works by other respondents, he explained that the program promotes wildlife on his farm. Interestingly, he believes that the state's "policing" has been helpful. (This view stands in contrast with concerns about government interference expressed in several groups.)

  We're part of the WHIP program, that's the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program. That's been very successful. We have a huge population of bobolinks, sparrows – meadow birds which are threatened by loss of habitat. It's a federal program. We're under a 10-year contract with them. The first part of the contract we planted 20 acres of special warm-season grasses, perennial grass that grows in clumps. It just spreads out and it creates structure on the ground for the birds.

We have a stream corridor we planted with different species of shrubs to protect the stream corridor, also to provide insects for the brook. Lot of different things like that. I try to do things which actively promote wildlife on the farm.

They give you technical assistance in the WHIP program for certain projects that you do on the land and they reimburse you for your costs. We planted 20 acres and they reimbursed us for part of the cost of preparing the land and actually seeding the land. Then we get paid on a 10-year basis for other projects, such as I put in certain plots for the insects, butterflies. I planted wildflowers on three one-acre plots which I maintain. No one's getting rich on these programs but it helps. I also get paid in reimbursement, part of the expense of keeping all of the land open after August 1. They come, they police it. When I complete what I'm supposed to do each year and they come out and inspect it and walk over it and then certify that I've maintained my part of the deal. It's a way to interact with the land on a little different level because they did give us a lot of technical assistance in doing certain things with it. I think it's a good program. (West)

Some non-enrollees also pointed to positive effects of the program. A grant was a "great" boom in improving "a very important piece of property" that was "overgrown" in the center of her town, a East owner said. The program provides partial reimbursement owners who "want to create an open area near your house," which is good for hunters and people who care about wildlife, and it helps landowners learn more about birds.

We have a 100-acre farm that our town bought right in the center of town. Multi-flora rose, burr weed and everything was overgrown. They did get a WHIP grant. The town is able to get some finances. It has to be a 50/50 so the owner participates and the WHIP grant to go in and mow and keep that as an eventual grassland habitat. This was a great thing for this farm. Because it's right in the center of town, it's a very important piece of property, but the fields were just being invaded by all these invasives. So this is great, great. (East)

The WHIP program I've heard very good things about. If you're a hunter and you wanted to create a food plot or if you're a wildlife person and you wanted to create an open area so you can see things near your house. It cost me about $5,000 an acre to change a piece of woods into a field. That means cutting the trees, burning the brush, removing the stumps and burying the rocks. This program right here will reimburse you for a portion of that. (East)

I really like the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. That's something that would really [be interested in], and that CP-33. I have three pairs of red-tailed hawk that lives behind us. There are a few trees that [are] their sitting area. I'm just really heavily into the birds, to learn as much as I can or anything more that I can do to help these birds. (West)

- Negatives. An enrollee criticized the paperwork for reimbursement and another respondent felt that too much money has gone to the wrong projects.

I'm in the WHIP program, near the end of a 10-year cycle. I've found that the procedures for reimbursement on it are pretty tedious and obscure. I think there are better ways that could be handled. (East)

With the WHIP program quite a bit of that money got eaten up by big projects that involved state or federal agencies. I'm not sure that's what it was intended for. That is a concern. (East)

4. COVERTS

The program came up unaided and drew some mixed comments in response to the list.

- Positives. Landowners are educated and then "obliged" to take the program back to their communities. A "cooperator" offered to have other respondents call him for information.

  One of the good things about COVERTS is that people who go and take the course are obliged to bring it back to their community. It's a three-day program that is offered usually in various different places around the state and we're invited to go. It's a free program and you are taught about sustainable forestry and all those kinds of things. (Central)

  It's really just a lot like this [focus group]. They give you more information and places to go. You get somebody that will walk your property with you and explain what you've got, what you have, what you could have, what would be wise to do, what wouldn't be. How to maintain it and make it better. It's a resource. If I was going to do something I feel like I could call that department and they would help. (Central)

  I'm a COVERTS cooperator. If you'd like to know more about that, give me a call. They do run a workshop up at Yale Camp in September, an intensive four-day workshop for woodland managers like ourselves. That's exactly for whom it is designed. It used to be funded by the Rough Grouse Society and I think that's not the case anymore. It's for increasing habitat for rough grouse, woodcock and such. We have seen some woodcock down where we are because that's a lovely swampy place where the worms are plentiful. (West)

- Negatives. The limited schedule was cited as an obstacle to participation.

  Part of the problem with the COVERTS [is] the timing of the seminars has never fit with my schedule. I'm a member of the Rough Grouse Society and the Society originally promoted the thing. I'm very interested in grouse and woodcock habitat. I'd like to do it but I just have never had the stars line up where their time and my time were the same. (West)

A West owner was put off by the foresters sent, saying "all they wanted to do was logging." However, another participant defended the program, relating a positive experience.

We went to several seminars that they had put on at other landowners and what they had done. [They] had the foresters there that you could have come and look at your property and they would make suggestions to you and stuff. It sounded good. But as far as having professional forester come in and everything, all they wanted to do was logging. That was it. That was not worth it to us. We want to leave it the way it is. (West)

That may have been the forester that advised you. When I asked the state forester who came, he was interested in how I was interested in using my land. It was primarily to increase wildlife and the diversity and such, and he advised me on that. Then, of course, there was the whole issue of the invasive species and he talked to me about what was available for that. (West)

5. Other Programs

Scattered comments were made about other programs. (Programs were probed only if they were mentioned by respondents.)

- The Reforestation Tax Credit – might be helpful financially.

  [It] seems like an interesting program. We have forestland and it's not very productive. This might be an incentive for getting some money to help make it more productive or a tax credit, one or the other. (East)

- CP-33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds – positive word of mouth.

  I know an individual who is really innovative in his approach to agriculture. He doesn't own any land, he uses land trust land up in Massachusetts. It was a wooded hillside with rocks sticking out and old walls running through the woods, typical New England scene. He said "this once was a great Guernsey farm. These were all the pastures and I'm going to convert it back and it's not going to cost me anything. I'm going to do it through CP-33." He did it and it looks great. He used CP-33 to come in and log land trust land and he converted it back to pasture. He's allowed to graze it with his cattle and it's an upland bird habitat. It worked good for him. (East)

- Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) – a few negative comments.

  I was recommended to go with one of these and run for an office. But the "assist" part was to be able to show people around your property and take them on trips through the property and blah-blah. I didn't have the energy for that. (Central)

I applied for the LIP program. I was turned down for that. I'm not sure why but apparently they have parcels with other higher priorities. (East)

- Other programs and organizations.

  Connecticut Forest and Park Association – it's just a terrific organization. [It] has been around for 115 years; they're the oldest conservation organization in the state of Connecticut. They are responsible for the Blue-Blazed hiking trails – 825 miles of hiking trails all over Connecticut which they manage with their volunteer group. They do advocacy in the legislature, they have publications, they have a wonderful education program. And of course they have a land conservation program. They're very, very active in the state of Connecticut. (Central)

  I don't know what the acronym is but I've gotten a grant through the Soil Conservation Service for managing my pastures. Putting up permanent fence around it and then doing rotational grazing in it; that's basically to protect the wetlands from the sheep. (East)

  Yale Forestry School's doing a statewide study that some people may be aware of. They've been going in certain sections. They're just looking in this part of Litchfield County. They've taken 45 one-acre plots and they've very carefully chosen them and designated them and then they're monitoring those plots. It's really quite fascinating. They did one on our farm. They grid it out very carefully; they count all the trees and they figure out all the species and all the ages of the trees and all of the plants. They put monitoring devices out there to listen for all of the birds so they identify what species are there. They're trying to create a composite of what is happening to the Connecticut forest. They count the deer droppings to see the concentration of deer you have there. It will be fascinating to see what evolves from that. They're really taking a census on what's happening in Connecticut with our forests and our plant life and our bird life and our animal life. I think it's going to lead to some pretty important baseline information. I hope they include a lot of plots on state-owned land. We're blessed with a lot of state-owned county in Litchfield County; however, state-owned land is generally not managed in the sense of having any active forest practices on it. That's something I am interested in and I think leads to a certain wildlife population that could be considered unhealthy because we don't provide the habitat that would encourage a lot of things. (West)

6. Getting Information to Landowners

The state needs to be a better job of getting the information out, respondents strongly agreed. Most owners, busy with other priorities, will not take the time and effort to seek out the information.

> *If it became my life project to manage the forest – besides my full-time job, besides raising my family, besides all this – then yes, I would go out and do the research and make it a top priority. But it is not the top priority. It is one of the priorities but it's down the list. So to put in the extra effort, the many hours, plus getting the work done on the property, most of us can't do that.* (Central)

The Department of Extension Service already puts out mailings and I get them all the time. Let's take the onus of doing all the research off the landowner. The state has an interest in maintaining forest. (Central)

Ways owners currently get or would like to get information related to their land are varied. A number of these ideas entail making the information visible and available where landowners already are, rather than relying on them to make the effort.

- Internet search. A frequent answer on sources landowners would use was the Internet. Most were quite vague, however, about what they would do beyond "general Googling." Only a few mentioned a specific website, such as the Department of Environmental Protection or the Agriculture Department. (Some owners, of course, do not have a computer or get online.)

- Connecticut landowners' guide. Suggested unaided in both West sessions, this would be a relatively short booklet explaining the key federal and state programs available to landowners. It should be online, "available in all public spaces" like the town hall, and sent to all deed owners, at least those with a minimum number of acres. The idea drew animated support and sparked further suggestions in these groups and the subsequent Central sessions.

  One thing I've never understood is why the state of Connecticut doesn't have a Connecticut landowners' guide. A Connecticut landowners guide cannot be that expensive to produce. The information is available; probably could do it in under ten pages. It could be a wonderful glossary of all the programs that are available in Connecticut, both state and federal; there's a lot of federal programs. Call it the Connecticut Landowners Guide and it's available in all public places. It could even be sent to people who have five acres or more. The point of it is that people would then have more knowledge and these access points to programs could be available. If you don't read it in the paper or you don't go to a seminar or you don't pursue it yourself, a lot of people don't know what's available out there. I think that's a shame really. (West)

  You could do it all. You could put the 490 and the taxes. You could put a section in about the federal tax code as it helps people related to conservation easements. It wouldn't be hard to develop that. (West)

  I like that idea. I don't know about a lot of these programs and that would be great for me. (West)

  Every deed in Connecticut has to get reported, and every deed that gets reported has to have a State of Connecticut Department of Revenue Services form attached to it and signed either by the landowner or their attorney. When that file gets formed, how difficult could it be to check off on the form that you have X acres? These are public documents. They all go to the state of Connecticut.

How difficult would it be, because this is all kept on a database, that if you punch the key that says this person has more than three acres or two acres, whatever the threshold is, and they get a Connecticut Landowners' Guide? (West)

What you do is you cross-reference the Connecticut Landowners' Guide. Any time you look up something on the Internet that thing pops up; it pops up on the extension service. (West)

Have the Landowners' Guide at the town hall. That's where people are going to start. (West)

Have the DEP do those booklets. They do so many other booklets through the Conservation Commission, so that they can post those in the town hall, which is what we do with the material we get from DEP. The hunting and fishing booklets go like crazy. (West)

- With other materials given/sent to landowners – such as information in their tax bill, which "everyone looks at," or a pamphlet for owners enrolling in 490.

  Through the mail. Send whoever has a certain amount of property, send them things they could do with their property. (Central)

  I'm actually surprised that if somebody does own a significant amount of property, enough to go to their town hall and put it into Open Space or forestry, that the minute the homeowner does that they're not given some sort of pamphlet, a booklet, anything that "now that you're doing this, here's information, do your research, what avenues that you might want to go to." Because people, they just blank; this is the way the world is. You have the land and you put it in Open Space to get a tax break. Then people have these beautiful pieces of property that they intend to preserve and often just have no idea how they're going to do it. They don't have a plan. Have something at every town hall – that's where I know I had to go to go to Open Space. The minute that homeowner does that they're handed a pamphlet that [says] "here are avenues, there are numbers for people to answer questions." You can go home with that and read and maybe something pops off the paper and you do decide you want a plan. (East)

- State and local government. Some owners reported mixed results when they contacted state agencies by phone or in person. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office is "a good resource for certain things," a East owner said. The extension service (where the focus groups were held) provides some useful booklets and classes. The Department of Environmental Protection has a lot of information but it is "like getting water out of a rock" to obtain it, a Central owner said; the University of Connecticut, which some said used to be a good resource, drew similar criticism. Landowners' frustrations with the agencies' lack of helpfulness were clearly evident.

I got a tremendous amount of information from DEP, but it was like getting water out of a rock. I found out just moments before I bought [my land] that they had a state map that was drawn up in 1920-something that everything around my neighbors and everything else had all the deeds and other stuff that I needed. I said "I told you I've been trying to find this information for four months. I didn't know where to look. Why didn't you tell me this existed?" They go "well, you didn't really ask." That was their answer. I remember that. It echoes in my head forever. I said "how long would it take you to put the information together?" He said "about 10 minutes." There was a table as big as this loaded with deeds and maps and everything else. Then I found out I just bought a 1,700-foot town road and I didn't know that. It was actually a town road in all the deeds and the stagecoach run. They had everything on this map from the '20s and they wouldn't tell me about it. I'm paying these people's salary and they weren't any help at all. (Central)

I'll tell you one thing, you can't call the state. They'll tell you "press 1, press 2." (Central)

It bothers me that in 1947 when we bought the orchards here I knew nothing about growing apples. Nothing at all. All I knew is you pick an apple off a tree and you eat it. I went to the Farm Bureau in Middletown. They had an office on the corner of Washington and Main Street. Said "who do I call?" "Call U Conn." I called U Conn and they said "we'll send and entomologist out to you." So a gentleman came out. He took a walk out into the orchard and he said "oh, you've got red mites over here, you've got this over there. Boy, you've got an orchard full of bugs here. You've got to do something about it." He died and from the day he died I can't get any information. I have a rhododendron bush home that is 15, 16 feet tall and goes 43 feet in circumference. The bugs are killing it. And I've been down to this office every single month trying to find out what I can do to save that rhododendron. Nobody can answer me, nobody. What the heck have we got U Conn for? (Central)

- Other landowners/farmers. Word of mouth is an important source, as would be expected. Community places enable owners to interact informally – for example, the farmer's market, the town dump (mentioned in our other research as well).

  I just went to the farmer's market a couple Fridays ago here in town. It might have been U. Conn [that] had a booth that had a brochure on that beetle you were talking about, they had a brochure on the coyotes, they had a brochure on the fisher cat. (Central)

  Successful farmers. There's a farmer's market – a husband-wife team, certified organic, just beautiful things, great family. Been around for a long time. Like if you've got a problem with sheep don't go to the town hall, go to the sheep people. Every individual thing has somebody that already deals with those problems and that's where you go. (East)

  The town dump. Honest to God, that's where the most information comes from in the community. (East)

- Media. The Hartford Courant and smaller town newspapers have been or could be useful. A landowner said her friend called to tell her about a program she learned of in the newspaper. The Connecticut Wildlife Magazine was mentioned by a East owner.

  There's a town bulletin that always has what's going on at the center here. They have a lot of land trust activities here. (Central)

  Chester and Deep River both have little news-like booklets that they send out about four times a year. I'm sure the other towns do something similar. It's just a town report, something like that. If it was published repeatedly in there as a resource, I would definitely be seeing it. (Central)

  The grant that I just got, it was written up in the Hartford Courant. I only subscribe to the Chronicle but one of my girlfriends called me up and she said "have to save this article for you, it looks perfect!" (East)

- Organizations – landowner associations, which a few respondents belong to; the Audubon Society, which does "children's education." A COVERTS participant urged other landowners to "get involved" with local programs.

  Organizations like the Connecticut Forest and Park Association are great pals to have. They're a great resource and being a member gives you the ability to access their staff, ask questions. (Central)

  I've been involved in the COVERTS project. I have gleaned a lot of information from that and actually acted on some of that. Part of that particular program puts me in a position to educate other landowners. If you have 5, 10, 20 acres and you don't have a clue, I can give you the contact, I can give you the information, get you started on whatever your desire might be. I'm involved in the community. I will eventually, probably within the next year or two, have an open house on my property. People will come through, they'll see different types of harvests. They will see a harvest in progress, they'll see one that's 5 years old, they'll see early successional habitat creation, they'll see wildlife ponds. There'll be people there to help educate them. So if you see a program in your community that looks like it might be good educationally, get involved, listen, pick out what you think you can use and get more information. (East)

  There's an Eastern Connecticut Landowners Association. Why can't there be a Western Connecticut Landowners Association, whatever the minimum acreage would be to become a member? All this information could be disseminated through that group. (West)

APPENDIX A
Connecticut Landowner Programs List

Tax Programs

1. Farms, Forest and Open Space, Connecticut Public Act 490
Use-value instead of a fair market value is the basis for assessing farm, forest, and open space land. A 90% reduction in property taxes is possible under the program. Landowners must have forest land of 25+ in parcels of 10+ acres. The land must be designated as "forest land" by the state forester.

2. Forest Legacy Program
A conservation easement program providing landowners up to 75% funding in support of a resource preservation project. The landowners will qualify for tax benefits if their project is approved.

3. Federal Reforestation Tax Credit and Amortization
Qualified landowners can claim a 10% tax credit of up to $10,000 for reforestation expenses. Reforestation refers to the re-establishment of a forest or the creation of a forest where there was none prior. A similar expense can be deducted annually over a 7-year period.

Cost Assistance Programs

1. CP33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds
Pays landowners per acre over the life of a 10-15 yr contract to convert their farmland into an upland bird habitat. Upland birds or landbirds occupy habitats such as grasslands or woodlands. A red-tailed hawk is an example of a CT upland bird.

2. The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)
Offers technical advice and cost assistance to landowners willing to protect and conserve endangered plants and wildlife through approved habitat management practices. LIP may fund up to 75% of a project.

3. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
EQIP provides agricultural landowners with financial, educational and technical assistance towards unifying environmental quality with agricultural production.

4. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers annual payments for five years to any working land owner who promotes, maintains, and manages their land for conservation.

5. Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
A NRCS program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who create high quality wildlife habitats.

6. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
USDA Farm Service Agency's CRP provides annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to farmers who conserve their marginal croplands rather than continue to use them in crop production.

Landowner Associations

1. CT Forest & Park Association
A volunteer group dedicated to protecting forests, parks, walking trails and open spaces in CT.

2. Eastern Connecticut Forest Landowners Association A non-profit organization whose mission is to provide information to any forest owner interested in learning best management practices.
Volunteer Opportunities
1. Master Wildlife Conservation (MWCP) An adult education program, based in Burlington, CT, focusing on wildlife management.
2. Forest Interior Bird Survey Volunteers help foresters track reclusive forest bird species by participating in 3 surveys a season. Each survey takes 1-2 hours and is conducted between the hours of 6AM-10AM.
3. Connecticut Land Conservation Council (COVERTS) A volunteer training program in forest and wildlife management.

APPENDIX B
Respondents' Program Awareness and Enrollment In Major Programs

Program Rank		Aware (61)	Enrolled (61)
	Total Respondents		
1	Farms, Forest, and Open Space	58	42
2	Forest Legacy Program	24	0
3	CT Forest and Park Association	23	2
4	COVERTS	16	4
5	Eastern CT Forest Landowners Association	13	1
6	Conservation Reserve	12	0
7	Farm and Ranch Land Protection	14	3
8	Wildlife Habitat Incentive	12	3
9	Federal Conservation Tax Incentive	10	1
10	Environmental Quality Incentive	10	2
11	Federal Reforestation Tax Credit	7	0
12	CP33 Habitat Buffers	6	0
13	The Landowner Incentive Program	7	1
14	Partners for Fish and Wildlife	5	0
15	Private Stewardship Grants	5	0
16	Master Wildlife Conservationist	5	0
17	Forest Interior Bird Survey	5	0
18	States Acres through Wildlife Enhancement	3	0
19	Healthy Forests Reserve	0	0

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