

Open Space Report to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee and the State Bond Commission

January 2024

Overview

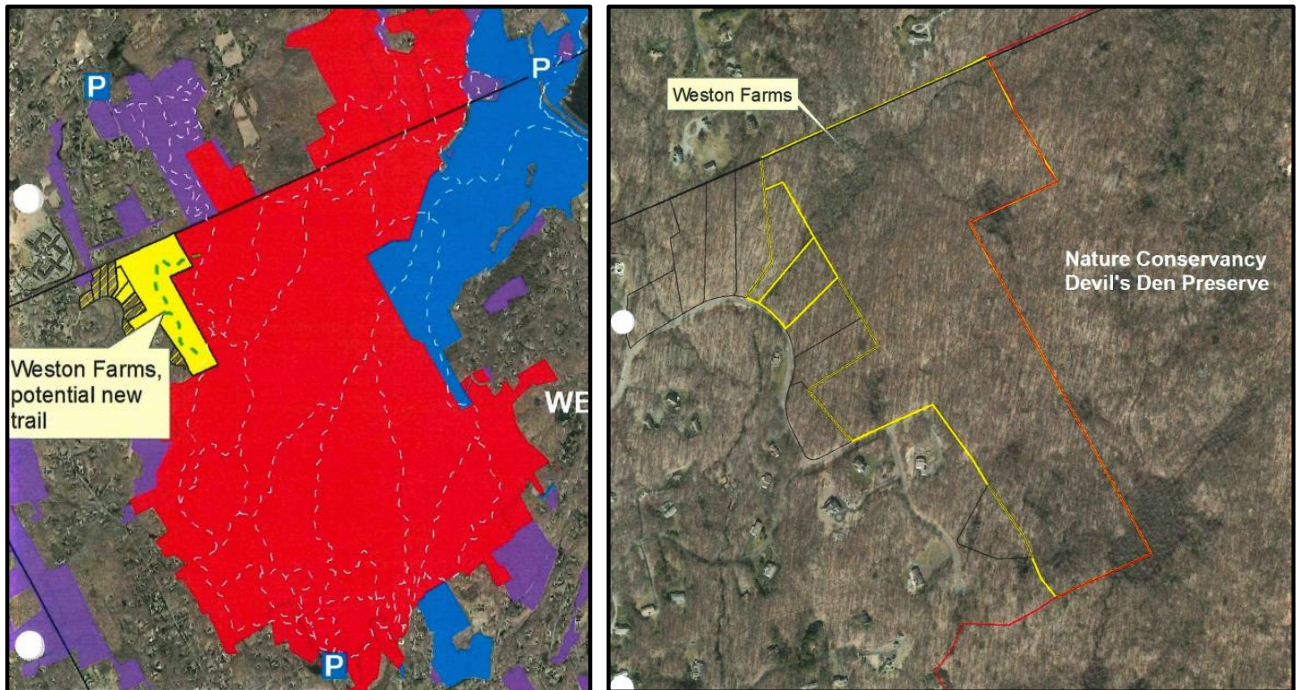
Section 22a-6v of the General Statutes of Connecticut requires the Commissioner of the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection to submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to finance, revenue and bonding and to the State Bond Commission each month. The report provides information on the acquisition of land or interests in land by the state, a municipality, water company or nonprofit organization using funds authorized for the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program established under Sections 7-131d and the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program established under Sections 23-73 to 23-79 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program provides grants to municipalities and private nonprofit land conservation organizations for the acquisition of open space land and to water companies to acquire land to be classified as Class I or Class II watershed land. The State of Connecticut receives a conservation and public access easement on property acquired to ensure that the property will be protected and available to residents of Connecticut as open space in perpetuity. Two Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program grants were funded in January 2024. Additional information about the projects follows.

Sponsor	Project	Town	Acres Protected
The Nature Conservancy, Inc.	Weston Farms Property	Weston	77.163
Norfolk Land Trust, Inc.	Lovers Lane (Borden) Property	Norfolk	83.742

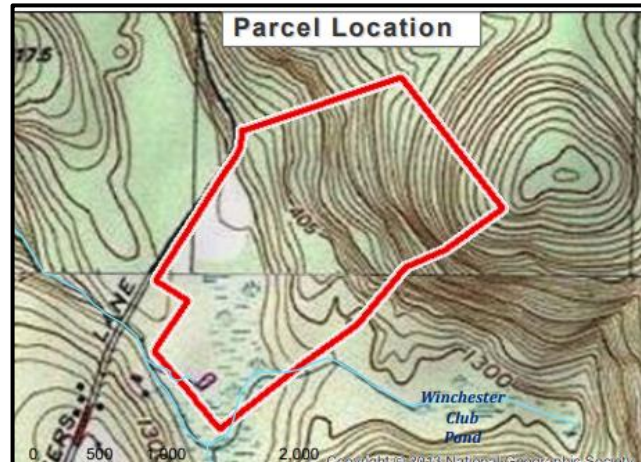
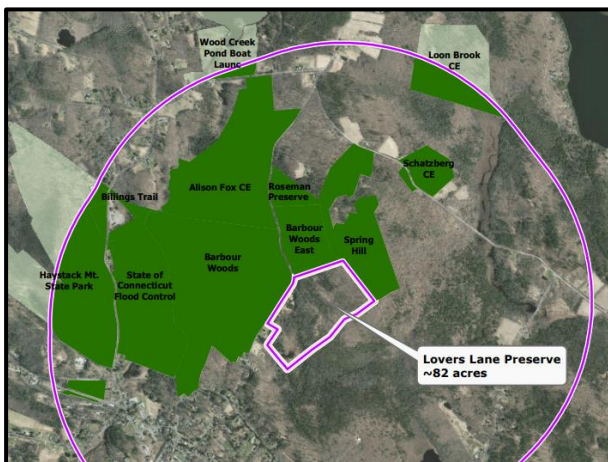
**The Nature Conservancy, Inc.
Weston Farms Property, Weston
77.163 Acres**



This 77-plus acre forest is adjacent to TNC's Devil's Den Preserve, TNC's largest preserve in Connecticut, which is part of 15,300 acres of contiguous forestland with high conservation value. Weston Farms is a mature, mixed hardwood forest that lies within the Saugatuck Central Greenbelt. The parcel lies entirely within the West Branch sub watershed of the Saugatuck River, a Class A stream. A hiking trail will connect to the 20-mile loop trail at Devil's Den.

Norfolk Land Trust, Inc. Lovers Lane (Borden) Property, Norfolk 83.742 Acres

The Borden Property, with frontage on Lovers Lane, features core forest and a wetland complex capable of supporting at least 15 state-listed plant, animal, and invertebrate species such as yellow-banded bumble bees, bog rosemary, and New England cottontail rabbits. It is an e-bird hotspot with reportedly over 67 species of birds, included vireos, warblers, and flycatchers. Being adjacent to and within 1 mile from other protected open spaces, such as Barbour Woods (Norfolk Land Trust), Haystack Mountain State Park, and Wood Creek Pond State Boat Launch, it contributes to more than 1,100 acres of contiguous open space in the local area. It's within walking distance of Norfolk's town center along Lovers Lane or via existing Norfolk Land Trust trails. It offers a generous sized public parking area with access to onsite trails. The property will be made available for hiking, cross-country skiing, picnicking, scenic viewing, and other enjoyable passive recreational activities. This acquisition was a cooperative effort between DEEP and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to a Highlands Conservation Act Grant.



Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program

The Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program is the State of Connecticut's primary program for the acquisition of lands for the beneficial use and enjoyment of the public as additions to the State's system of parks, forests, wildlife, fisheries and natural resource management areas. The program acquires land that represents the ecological diversity of Connecticut, including natural features such as rivers, mountainous areas, coastal systems and their natural areas, in order to ensure the conservation of such land for recreational, scientific, educational, cultural and aesthetic purposes. There were no Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program closings in January 2024.