

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

June 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

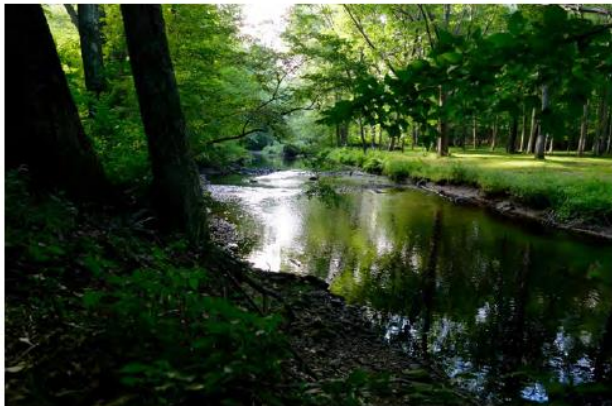
The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program provides grants to municipalities and private nonprofit land conservation organizations for the acquisition of open space land and to water companies to acquire land to be classified as Class I or Class II watershed land. The State of Connecticut 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. There were two Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program grants funded in June 2024. Additional information on the projects follows.

Sponsor	Project	Town	Acres Protected
Madison Land Conservation Trust, Inc.	Birch Branch Meadow	Madison	29.388
Salem Land Trust, Inc.	Stahlschmidt Preserve Project	Salem	47.523

Madison Land Conservation Trust, Inc. (MLCT)
Birch Branch Meadow Property, Madison
29.388 Acres

This acquisition located at 836 Green Hill Road, is a critical link between two MLCT parcels, a 61-acre parcel to the north and a 20-acre parcel to the south, creating a contiguous 111-acre preserve on the Hammonasset River, and adds nearly 4,000 linear feet of river frontage. This linkage will significantly enhance wildlife migration for the numerous rare and listed species found here. It provides protection to three Hammonasset River watershed resources threatened by climate change: headwater wetlands, riparian areas and floodplain forests, all found on this parcel. The Hammonasset River is one of CT's premier cold water fish habitats, feeding into LIS through one of CT's larger salt marsh complexes. There is a burgeoning shellfish aquaculture industry at the mouth of the river which is dependent on high water quality. This acquisition protects a diversity of high quality, contiguous habitats: grassland, forest, wetlands and river flora and fauna, and an endangered species population. Due to the endangered species population, this property will have limited public access, however, MLCT will host guided tours each year, at a time when it will not endanger the species, following a route approved by subject matter experts.

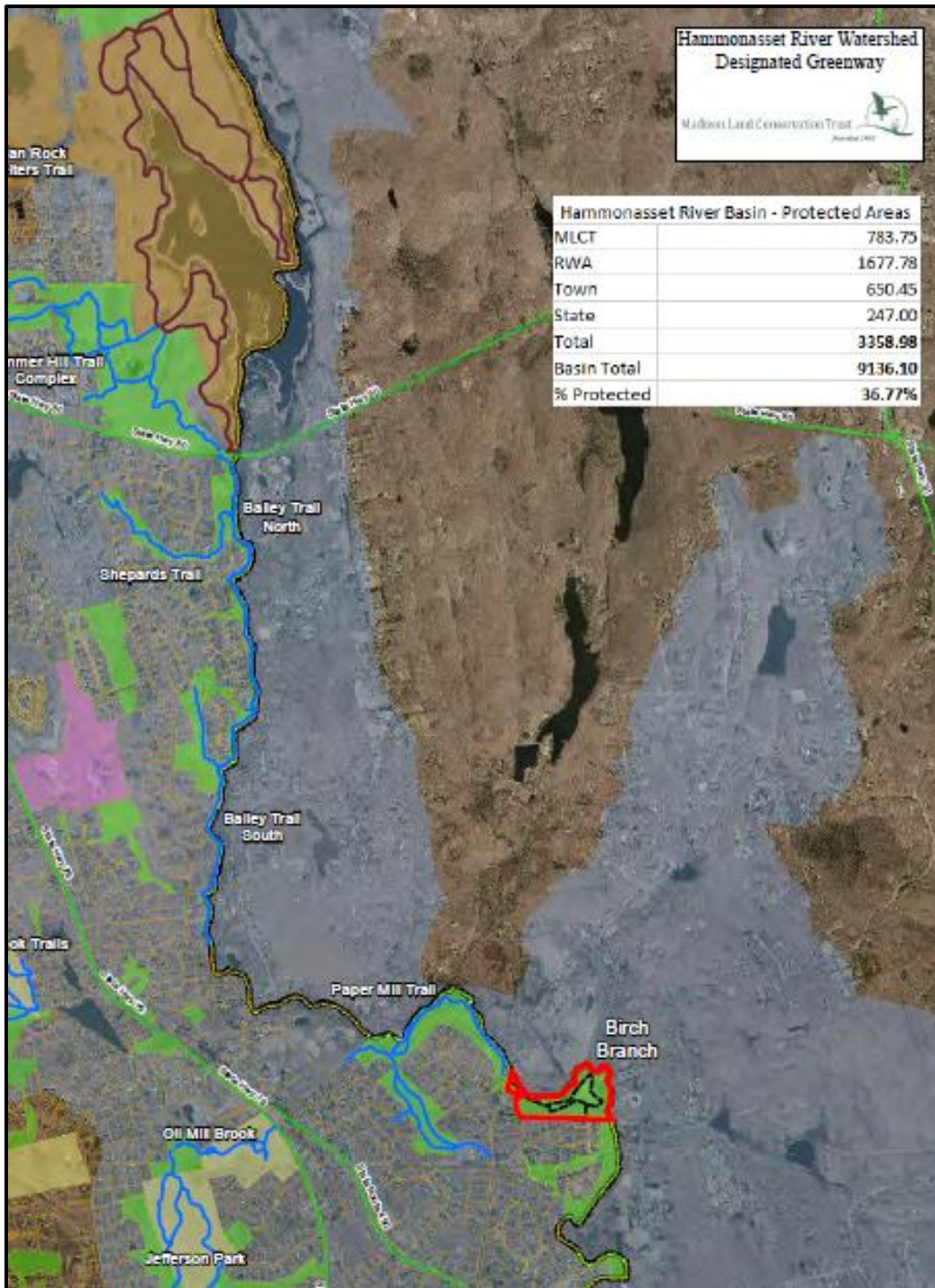
Hammonasset River Frontage



Permanent Pond



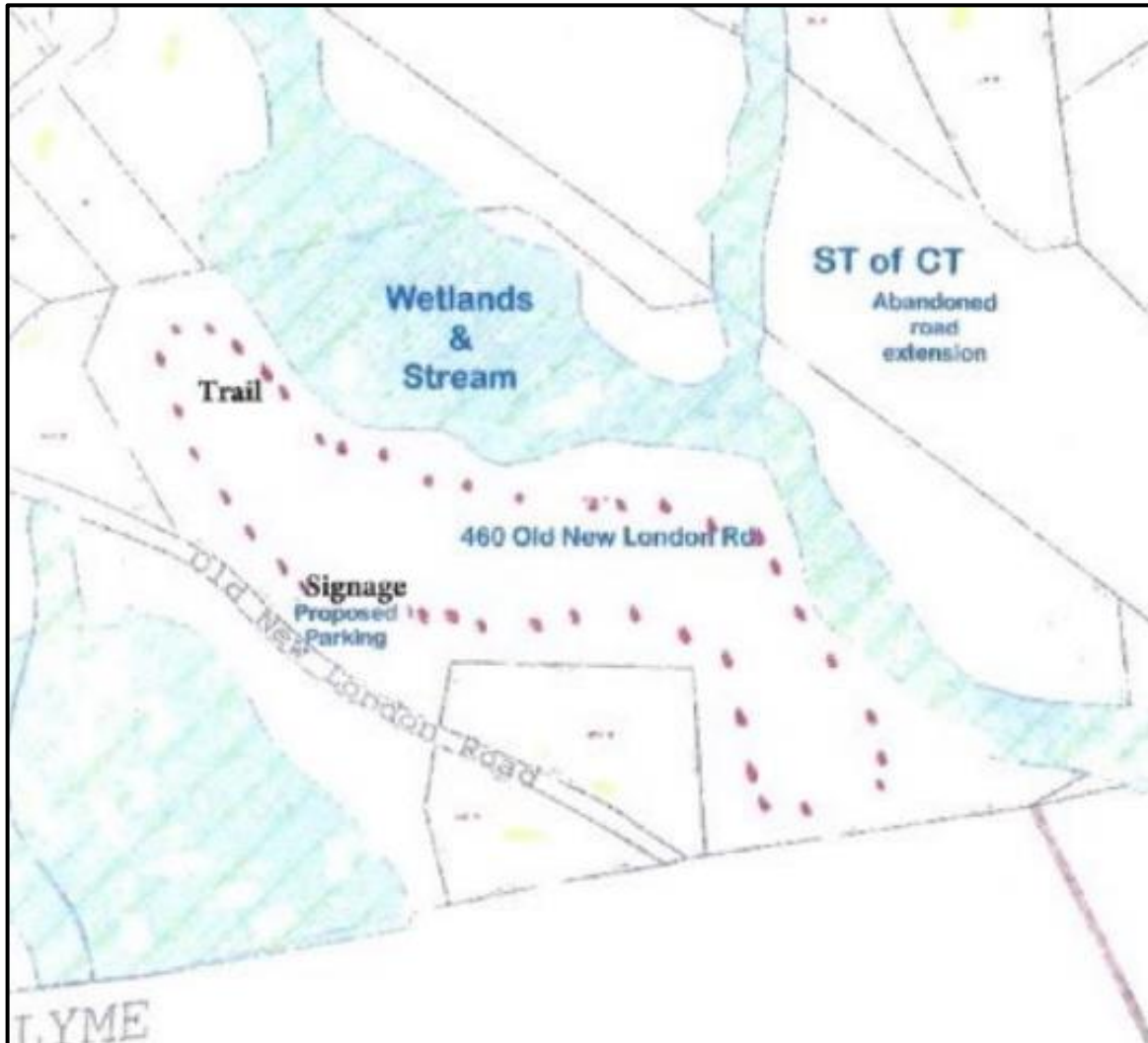
Oxbow



Salem Land Trust, Inc. (SLT)
Stahlschmidt Preserve Project, Salem
47.523 Acres

This entirely forested property features a stream and 15+/- acres of inland wetlands. Its wetlands and watercourse drain into a stream which feeds Latimer Brook, headwaters of the Niantic River watershed. The forest includes a mix of tree species such as oak, birch and maple, and shrubs such as highbush blueberry, winterberry and mountain laurel. The forested inland wetlands host flora and fauna such as wood frogs, salamanders, marsh marigold, jack-in-the-pulpit, and wood anemone. SLT will create a public parking area along Old New London Road and a single loop trail for passive recreational and environmental educational use. If timber foot bridges are deemed needed, SLT will seek local inland wetland permits to install bridges to minimize erosion, maintain surface water flows, and protect wetland resources from pedestrian use and travel. A Management Plan including public use, environmental education, and natural resource stewardship needs will be developed for the Property.





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 closing in June 2024.