



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

May 2025

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.

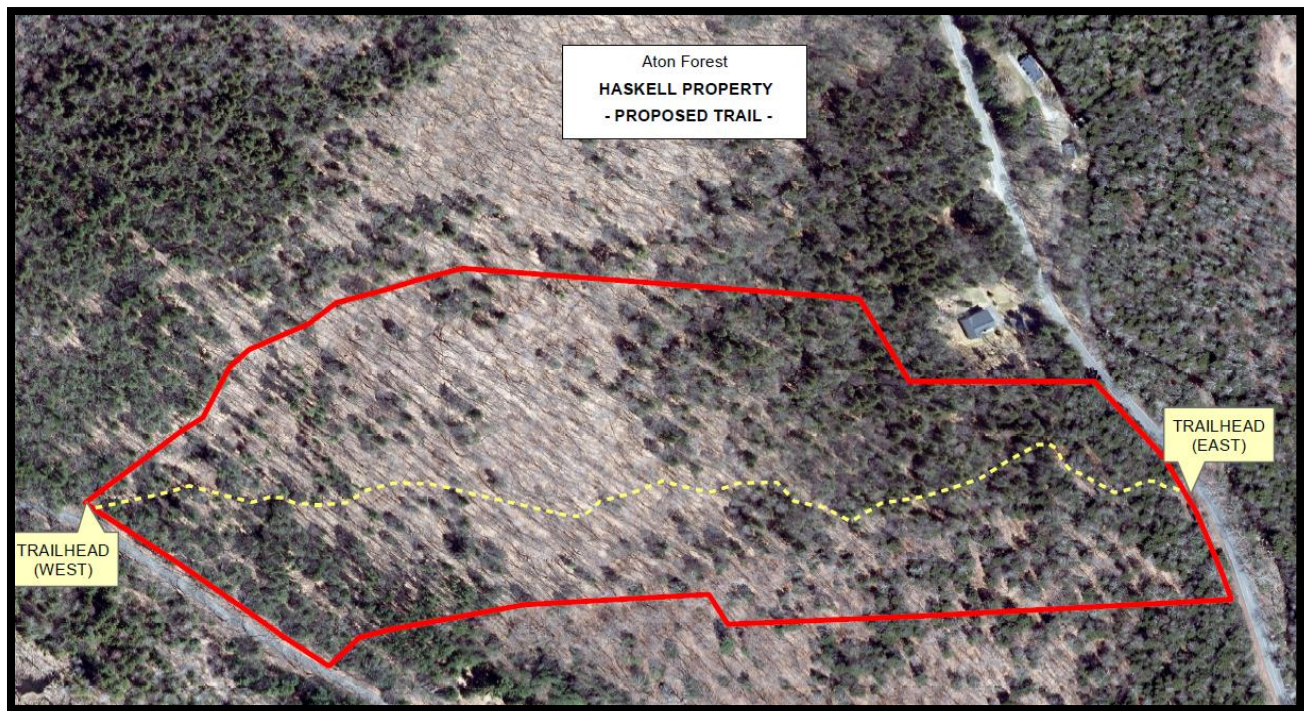
Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

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. Three Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program grants were funded in May 2025. Additional information on the projects follows.

Sponsor	Project	Town	Acres Protected
Aton Forest, Inc.	Haskell Property	Colebrook	39.951
Litchfield Land Trust, Inc.	Putnam Property	Litchfield	105.345
Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.	Meshomasic Rattlesnake Brook Preserve	Portland & East Hampton	145.08

Aton Forest, Inc. (AFI)
Haskell Property, Colebrook
39.951 Acres

The Haskell property has frontage on Church Hill Road and Sandy Brook Road (CT Route 183) in Colebrook. It borders over 1,300 acres of AFI-preserved lands and adjoins an Audubon-designated Important Bird Area. It features stone walls, glacial erratics, a range of elevations, and high-quality wildlife habitats. Consisting mostly of core forest, the property slopes towards the adjacent Sandy Brook and has seasonal streams that eventually drain into the Farmington River. Acquisition of this property will increase connectivity between protected lands, allowing for the movement of wildlife and plant species. A public access trail for passive recreational uses, will cross the property from Church Hill Road to Sandy Brook Road with a small parking area at both road frontages. Additional funding was provided by the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Conservation Investment.

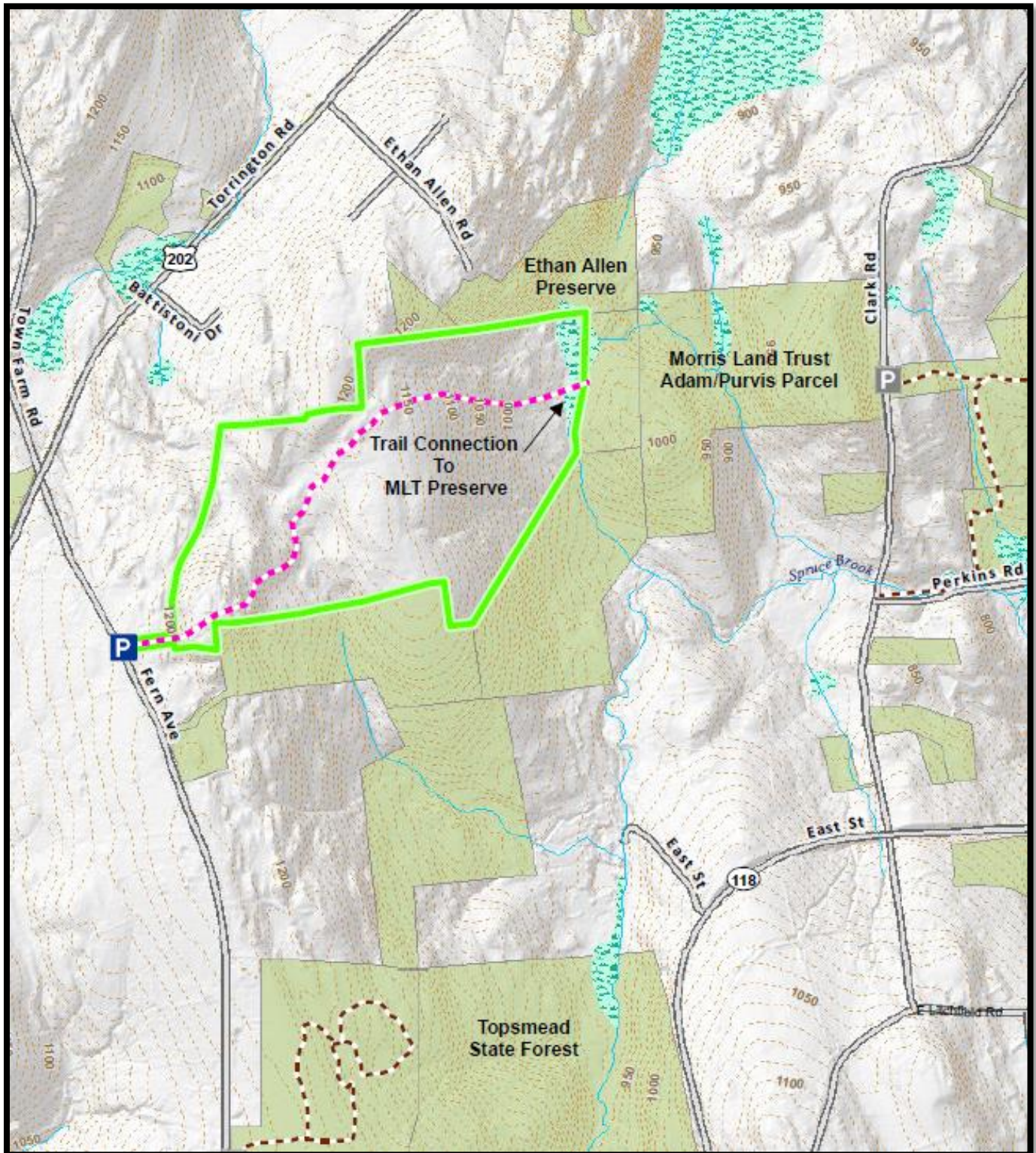


Litchfield Land Trust, Inc. (LLT)
Putnam Property, Litchfield
105.345 Acres

The Putnam Property has frontage on Fern Avenue in Litchfield, CT. It is bordered to the north by a 21.5-acre LLT preserve, to the east by 213 acres preserved by LLT and Morris Land Trust, and to the south by a LLT preserve, a Weantinogue Heritage Trust (now Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy, Inc.) preserve, and Topsmead State Forest. The resulting 1,000-acre mosaic of protected property provides immense connectivity of core forest corridors across Eastern Litchfield. This keystone parcel will feature hiking trails that connect to Morris Land Trust

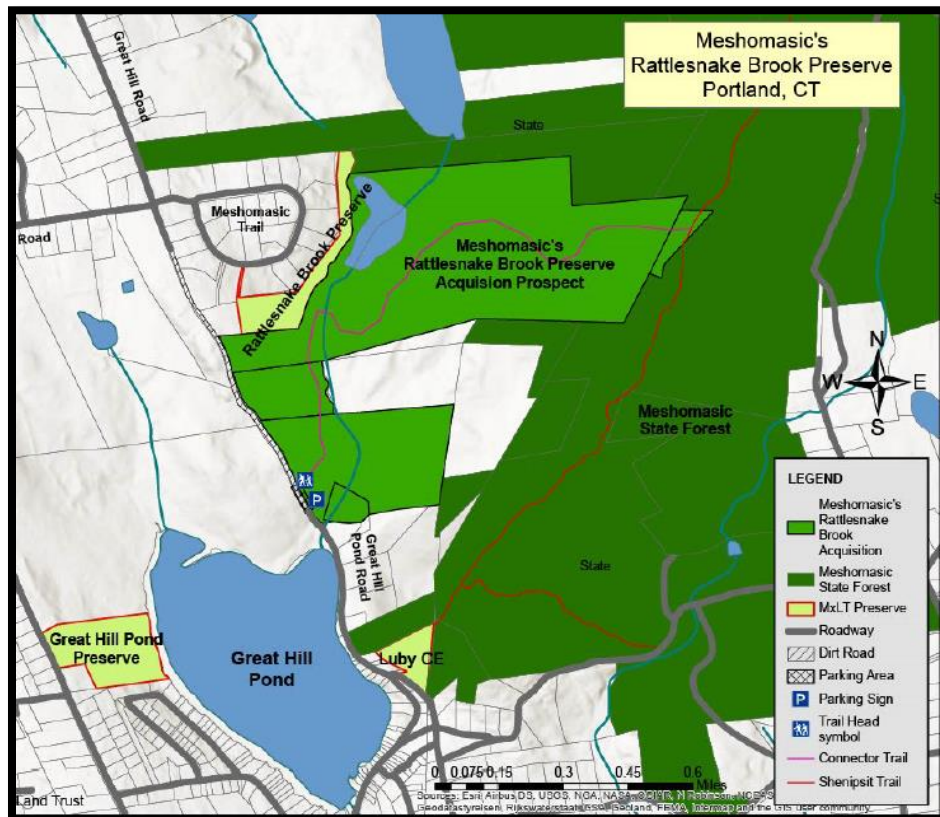


trails on Clark Road and to the Stillman-Danaher Trail System, resulting in more than five miles of connected trails with access from three different roads. The parcel contains a mix of forest types that vary in age and size. This variation increases the resilience of the forest, as well as its potential for carbon sequestration. The parcel is of a sufficient size to support appropriate forest management and stewardship. The parcel includes 8 acres of forested wetlands interspersed within upland habitat, supporting a wide variety of wildlife. The property protects water resources and partially drains to the Naugatuck River. Additional funding was provided by the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Conservation Investment.



Middlesex Land Trust, Inc. (MLT)
Meshomasic Rattlesnake Brook Preserve, Portland & East Hampton
145.08 Acres

This property, on the discontinued portion of Great Hill Pond Road, Portland, will buffer and expand upon MLT's existing Rattlesnake Brook Preserve and the 15,000+ acre Meshomasic State Forest greenway. The acquisition protects the area's water quality and habitats, expands upon existing passive recreation with additional hiking trails, bird watching, fishing and improved access to hunting opportunities on State lands. MLT will add a public access trail that connects to the Shenipsit Blue-blazed Trail, securing a key ridgeline section of the trail. The purchase will protect an existing wildlife migration corridor, a ridgeline forest, a large wetland and a stream corridor. Many habitats at risk from climate change will be better protected: forested swamps, core forests and riparian lands adjacent to cold water streams (Rattlesnake Brook). Threatened and rare species will be protected.



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 May 2025.