



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

February 2026

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 February 2026.

Sponsor	Project	Town	Acres Protected
Cornwall Conservation Trust, Inc.	Furnace Brook Forest	Cornwall	89.985
Old Lyme Land Trust, Inc.	188 Four Mile River Road	Old Lyme	41.5086

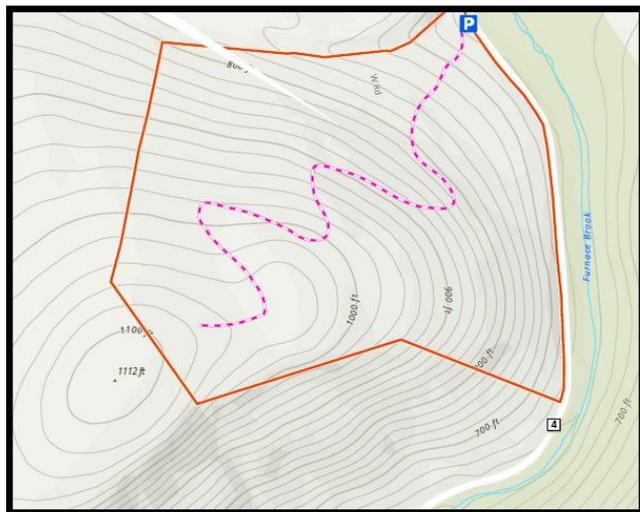
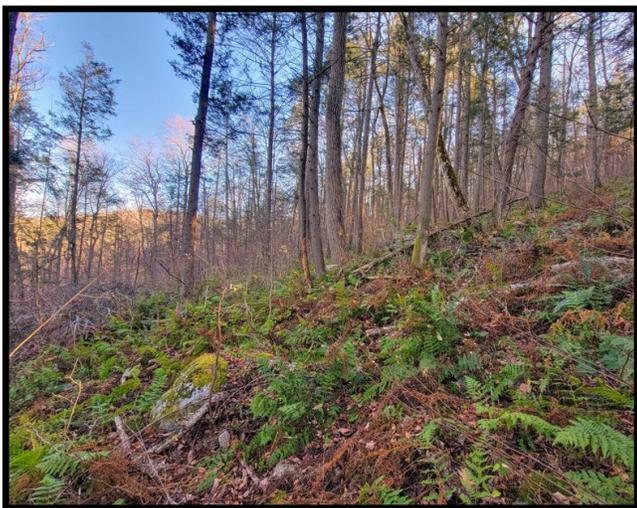
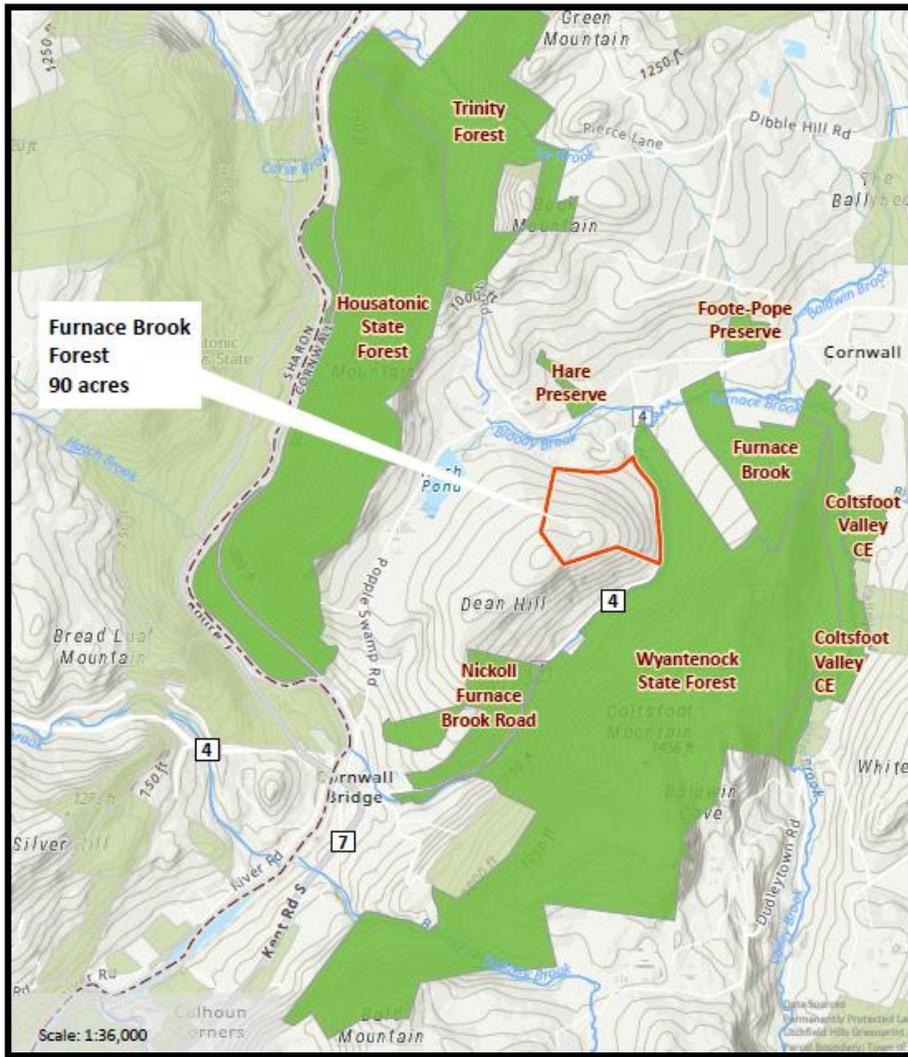


Cornwall Conservation Trust, Inc. (CCT)
Furnace Brook Forest, Cornwall
89.985 Acres



View of Furnace Brook Forest from Popple Swamp Road

This forest and ridgeline parcel is on Furnace Brook Road (CT Route 4) on the forested slopes of Dean Hill, across the road from the Wyantenock State Forest, which links to CCT's Furnace Brook Preserve (2018 OSWA grant). The wetlands and steep slopes drain to Furnace Brook and then to the Housatonic River. The property supports a mixed northern traditional forest of hardwoods, eastern white pine and hemlock and the ridgeline has chestnut oak, white oak, red oak and hickory. The complex terrain includes a 400-foot elevation gain and long ridgeline with rock outcrops and coarse woody debris. The NDDDB database documents 4 State-listed species at or near this property: the Endangered Tri-colored Bat, the Endangered Dwarf Scouring Rush, the Special Concern Slimy Sculpin and Great St. John's-Wort. The forested slopes provide excellent habitat for interior forest nesting birds and forest dwelling wildlife. The Housatonic Heritage Area's Hou-Bike trail – the Housatonic Covered Bridge Trail – passes along the entire road frontage. The blue-blazed Mohawk Trail, Appalachian Trail and Housatonic River are nearby. CCT will create an off-street parking area that will take hikers to a scenic overlook at the Dean Hill summit, with views of Wyantenock State Forest and the Coltsfoot Mountains. Additional funding for this acquisition was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Highlands Conservation Grant Program.



Old Lyme Land Trust, Inc. (OLLT)
188 Four Mile River Road, Old Lyme
41.5086 Acres



This was a priority acquisition of the OLLT as it is strategically located in a developing town-wide greenway and hiking trail system, near other significant protected properties including the Lay-Allen Preserve (215 acres), the McCulloch Family Open Space (312 acres) and the Upper Three Mile River Preserve (157 acres). The property will be publicly accessible with a trailhead and parking area on Four Mile River Road.

The property contains core forest, inland wetlands, and riparian buffers, protecting core forest and three important watersheds that ultimately flow into Long Island Sound. It supports native habitat and is largely free of invasive species. There are rocky ledges with spring-fed wetlands and four stream tributaries weaving together, and the headwaters of the Three Mile River. According to UConn's Center for Land Use Education and Research mapping, approximately 50% of the property is recognized as having Terrestrial and Imperiled Species Overlap areas. 90% of the parcel is Important Habitat for Imperiled Species. According to DEEP's NDDDB, this parcel is of high value for wildlife and biodiversity preservation, providing numerous ecosystem benefits including climate change mitigation, clean water, clean air, temperature modification, core terrestrial/imperiled species habitat, watershed protection, headwater/coldwater streams, and core forest protection, all while providing passive recreation opportunities and public access to open space.



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 February 2026.