

**Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)
Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA)
Grant Application and Appraisal Deadline: November 6, 2026
Appraisal Review Deadline: December 4, 2026**



Property Title: _____ Street/Town: _____

Applicant: _____

Applicant Address: _____

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: _____ Email: _____

Name and Title of Preparer: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____

Purchase Price: \$ _____ Acquisition: In-Fee Easement Total Acres: _____

Incidental Costs Estimate (If property is in a Distressed Municipality, Environmental Justice Community or Targeted Investment Community): \$ _____

Your responses to the following questions will be used to evaluate, score and rank your application. Responses should be brief and factual. Applicants submitting proposals that include inaccurate information, facts, statements or disclosures could be penalized by having the application withdrawn from review or having the grant forfeited should one be offered. Please use extra sheets as necessary when submitting answers.

Please carefully review the OSWA Program Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions prior to completing this application. Detailed questions can be directed to Allyson Clarke (860) 595-7469.

This application is available in an alternative format upon request in fulfillment of the Department's obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

1. Required Documentation

A. Project Abstract

Provide a 250-word overview of the project that can be used in a press release or for a reviewer's synopsis. Be sure to include the main conservation values, public access plan and community impact components.

B. Eligibility Documentation (If Applicable)

- IRS 501(c)(3) Determination Letter (non-profits)
- Certificate of Legal Existence from the Secretary of State, not more than two years old (non-profits & water companies)
- Verification of Charitable Solicitation Registration with the Department of Consumer Protection or proof of exemption (non-profits)
- Link to most recent 990 Tax Form from the Internal Revenue Service (non-profits)

- Proof of submission of State Single Audit or Exemption Form for the preceding 3 years, whichever is appropriate (all applicants)
- Proof of up-to-date Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development or approval letter from OPM (Municipalities)
- Proof that land can be classified as Class I or Class II (water companies)
- Proof of permission from PURA for sale of Class III land (all applicants)
- Municipal CEO approval letter for purchase of property in targeted, distressed or EJ community by land trust, water company or municipality outside the municipality where the property is located (all applicants)
- If the project is in an environmental justice community that is outside of a targeted investment community or distressed municipality, provide a screenshot from DEEP's EJ map with location identified (all applicants)

C. Property Cost Estimate

The grant amount will be based upon the DEEP-approved fair market value. The effective date of the appraisal and/or appraisal review must be dated within one year of the application deadline.

Each OSWA grant application requires:

- One (1) property appraisal in compliance with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions ("UASFLA" a/k/a Yellow Book) with DEEP and other federal funding sources to be used listed as intended user(s) of the report.

AND

- One (1) appraisal review with DEEP and other federal funding sources to be used listed as intended users of the appraisal review, confirming that the prior appraisal is UASFLA compliant.

If applying for federal funding, the appraisal must include the fee simple and easement values.

We **highly encourage** all applicants to refer to the "APPRAISAL SELECTION NOTES" and utilize the "SELECTING A QUALIFIED APPRAISER CHECKLIST," in the appraisal information section of our Application Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions.

If purchasing property in an Environmental Justice Community, Targeted Investment Community or Distressed Municipality and you wish to be reimbursed for incidental costs associated with the acquisition of the property (survey, legal fees, appraisals, etc.), please provide cost estimates for each item. The "not to exceed" reimbursement amount will be stated in the OSWA award letter. The reimbursement invoices will be due, when the applicant submits the title work, so that the incidental cost reimbursement amount can be utilized in the grant agreement.

D. Other Considerations

- a. Is the property free from any lien, claim, encumbrance or easement that would prevent the land from being used for open space purposes? If not, how will it be resolved prior to the property purchase?
- b. Are there any environmental impacts (power lines, landfills, structures, roads, etc.) on or near the proposed site? If yes, please give details.

- c. Is the site free from environmental contamination? If not, what is your plan to address such contamination?
- d. Will agricultural use on the site impede public access in any way? If yes, how and to what degree?
- e. Will any structures (barns, sheds, etc.) be excluded from the preserved area? If yes, provide the approximate acreage of the excluded areas.

2. Scoring Factors

A. Administrative Factors & Community Support

1. Mapping & Photos: Provide the following maps (including site outline) or photos to support your project description:

- a. Map with contour lines or topographic map with USGS 1:24,000 scale
- b. Location map/town road map (showing road frontage)
- c. A2 survey (not required for application but required for grant) **OR** Ortho-photo map showing property boundary
- d. Map showing the acquisition's location relative to existing open space
- e. Map showing current and proposed recreational uses and how the public will access the proposed acquisition (signage, parking and trail locations included) (excluding water company lands eligible to be classified as Class I or Class II lands)
- f. Two or more high resolution photographs of natural resource-based features

(Note: other mapping may be required in other sections of the application)

2. Title, Funding and Feasibility of Acquisition per DEEP's Timeline (<2years): Provide the following information to support project feasibility:

- a. Copy of deed
- b. Copy of recent title search, ALTA title policy endorsement, or certificate of title (with copies of all recorded and unrecorded liens or encumbrances)
- c. Signed letter of intent by seller OR signed purchase and sales agreement
- d. Copy of statement showing purchase funds available in an open space acquisition account or from other funding sources
- e. Copy of statement showing stewardship funding and capability to operate and maintain the property
- f. Resolution authorizing the applicant to enter into a purchase and sale agreement, apply for OSWA funds and/or purchase the property (municipal or corporate)

3. Public Access Compliance at Previously Funded OSWA Acquisitions: provide proof that all previously funded OSWA acquisitions are easily and readily accessible for public access (first time applicants and water companies eligible to be classified as Class I or Class II lands score at the same percentage of points that they received in the rest of their application for this section):

- a. Provide picture(s) of each property's parking area
- b. Provide two pictures of each property's funding acknowledgement sign (a close-up photo showing the DEEP logo and another photo showing the sign's proximity to the roadway, parking lot and/or trailhead)
- c. Provide a trail map and/or pictures of each property's public access components
- d. Provide links to the applicant's website, the municipality's website or CT Trail Finder, etc. showing how applicant's previously funded sites are publicized for public access
- e. Provide proof that prior acquisitions conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other disability-related standards and codes (excluding water company lands eligible to be classified as Class I or Class II lands). For example, did the previously funded project(s) provide trails accessible to persons with disabilities, wheelchair accessible boardwalks, auditory aids, interpretive signage in braille, etc.?

4. Local, State & Regional Conservation Goals: Describe how the acquisition aligns with local, State, Regional or Federal conservation goals or plans:

- a. Acquisition is consistent with Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development
- b. Acquisition is consistent with State's Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy Plan (Green Plan) and the CT Climate Preparedness Plan
- c. Acquisition is consistent with the CT OPM 2025-2030 Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan
- d. Acquisition aligns with applicable Regional Councils of Government plans of conservation and development
- e. Acquisition is consistent with State's Wildlife Action Plan, Forest Action Plan, State's Hazard Mitigation Plan, Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Plan (CELCP), Connecticut Environmental Literacy Plan (CT-ELP) and/or Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- f. Acquisition supports the Governor's Council on Climate Change GC3 Phase 1 Report Near Term Actions (January 2021)

Please attach relevant excerpts of the plan(s), not entire plans.

5. Community Support

- a. Describe how meaningful community input/community support was solicited for the acquisition
- b. Provide at least 5 letters of support
 - 1. At least 2 of the letters of support should be from local community organizations
 - 2. At least 1 of the letters of support should be from local, regional or State government leaders

Please submit only one letter of support per organization.

B. Public Access and Outdoor Recreation

Pursuant to CGS section 7-131d(e), water companies requesting funds to purchase drinking water watershed land classified as Class I or II land are exempt from the requirement to provide public access. It

is noted that responses in this section may also be taken into consideration, for Environmental Justice and Equity scoring purposes.

1. Public Access:

- a. Describe the existing or planned passive recreational uses for the site and how the public will access the proposed acquisition, including both specific site access points (e.g. trailheads) and general site access (e.g. public transit availability, ease of bicycle access, etc.).
- b. Describe the ownership of the access location. If not owned by the applicant, identify how the access point will be permanently protected.
- c. Describe where the funding acknowledgement sign will be located and how you will ensure it will be clearly visible from the roadway and/or parking area.
- d. Describe the plan for an on-site and off-street parking area.
- e. Describe how ADA and other disability-related standards and codes will be integrated into the design, physical landscape and structural components of the project (i.e. parking, gates, wheelchair accessible boardwalks, auditory aids, interpretive signage in braille, ADA trails, benches and/or viewing platforms, etc.)

2. Public Access Outreach: Describe:

- a. How information and maps showing public access and parking will be permanently posted online (applicant’s website, municipality website and/or CT Trail Finder).
- b. The public outreach plan for communicating the open space grant award and the public access opportunity, including press, social media, and other community engagement.
- c. How the proposed acquisition property will be incorporated into your programming/education initiatives.
- d. How multi-modal communication and communication with Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals will be incorporated into your outreach and signage plan.

3. Trail or Greenway Connectivity:

- a. Does the project provide a linkage or contribute to a potential or developing greenway? If yes, describe.
- b. Does the project provide a linkage to an existing greenway including a trail system of statewide importance such as: CT Blue Blazed Hiking Trail System, a CT Designated Greenway, National or Scenic Trail or waterway? If yes, describe.
- c. Does the project provide a connection that expands opportunities for passive and active recreational uses or non-motorized transportation (motorized mobility equipment not to be considered motorized transportation)? If yes, describe.
- d. Is the property adjacent to other protected open space? If yes, describe the connection.

C. Environmental Justice and Equity

The Environmental Equity Policy (1993) of this Department is that no segment of the population should, because of its racial or economic makeup, bear a disproportionate share of the risks and consequences of

environmental pollution or be denied equal access to environmental benefits. DEEP's mission is to protect the public health and welfare and to conserve, improve and protect natural resources. The Governor's Council on Climate Change Executive Order #3 (GC3) specifically addresses equitable distribution of costs and benefits of implementing the recommended greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies, specifically addressing any disproportionate impact on environmental justice communities. [Click here to learn More About Environmental Justice Communities.](#)

1. Alignment with Environmental Equity Policy and GC3 EJ recommendations: Describe how the proposed acquisition will:

- a. Improve or support access to green space in a densely populated area. This could include urban forestry and tree planting projects and/or community gardens.
- b. Create and/or expand an urban green space for community gardens, shade trees, recreation or other public use.
- c. Help reduce environmental challenges like localized flooding, erosion, access to fresh grown food or urban heat island effects.
- d. Protect agriculture in more urban and suburban communities that will support socially disadvantaged producers, including people with disabilities and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).
- e. How will the proposed project be incorporated into your programming/education initiatives? Will it benefit urban areas?

2. Community Impact:

- a. Is the property located in or within a 10-minute walk to an environmental justice community, distressed municipality or target investment community? If yes, describe the area and provide a map
- b. Is the property located next to or within a 10-minute walk to an area with mixed income housing? If yes, describe the area and provide a map
- c. Describe how this property will help reduce open space deficiencies in an urban area
- d. Describe how your planned programming for this property will benefit local community residents within cities/urban centers
- e. Is the property accessible every day via public transportation? If yes, what public transportation system and how will the public get from the stop to the site?
- f. Is the property within an exempt municipality designated by the Commissioner of Housing that has at least 10% mixed income housing?
- g. Describe how you partnered/will partner with environmental justice and/or equity organizations (including groups representing people with disabilities) in the planning for the future use of the site

D. Climate Change and Natural Resources

1. Forests:

- a. What soils exist on the property and do they have good potential for timber growth?
- b. Does the site demonstrate the capability to sequester and store carbon? If yes, how?
- c. What diverse forest types or unique forest habitats does it contain?
- d. Do you have (or will you have) a long-term management plan developed for the property that identifies landowner goals and objectives and includes various aspects of forest resource stewardship? If you have a long-term forest management plan now, please provide a copy.
- e. Is the site adjacent to a small, medium or large core forest area? If so, please provide a copy of a map showing the location relative to the core forest.

2. Wetlands & Drinking Water:

- a. Is the property adjacent to freshwater and/or tidal wetlands. If yes, what waterbodies?
- b. Does the site contain riparian lands adjacent to cold water streams, beaches and dunes or vernal pool habitats. If yes, describe.
- c. Does the property conserve upland for tidal marsh migration or inland advancement zones for future protective storm buffers for coastal communities. If yes, describe.
- d. Will the site reduce flooding and contribute to State or local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans (NHMP)? If yes, describe.
- e. Will the property protect lands that preserve high-quality natural waters and drinking water resources? If yes, describe.
- f. Does the site protect a resilient river network that will likely maintain diversity and functional integrity? If yes, describe.
- g. Will the property protect land valuable for preserving and/or enhancing water quality because it either 1) is within a watershed which is already >25% but <75% protected, 2) is near wellheads, aquifers or drawdown areas, or 3) has potential for Class I and/or Class II watershed land protection? If yes, describe.
- h. Does the site protect the headwaters of a stream or river? If yes, which one/s?

Agriculture and Soils:

- a. Does the site have Prime or Statewide Important Farmland Soils covering more than 30% of the property? If yes, include the USDA-NRCS Web Soil Survey farmland classification map & table (showing prime & statewide important soils) and show/describe any areas with active cropland.
- b. Will the site protection reduce conversion of agricultural land, forest land and other productive landscapes? If yes, describe
- c. Is the site valuable for preserving local agricultural heritage because, for example, it is currently a food-producing farm? If yes, describe
- d. Does the site meet criteria established for the Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program? If yes, what criteria?

3. Wildlife and Fisheries:

- a. Does the site contain a diversity of habitat types? If yes, what types?
- b. Does the site contain a special feature that is important to wildlife (upland area, vernal pool, grassland/scrubland, cold water stream, coastal habitat, wildlife corridor, ridgeline). If yes, describe.
- c. Does the property include an area identified as important for State or Federally threatened, endangered or special concern species? If yes, describe. (Note: Only species that are represented by the Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) should be reported, unless a qualified specialist has identified such species and a copy of the specialist's report is provided).
- d. Does the property represent an important roosting area for birds of concern or a breeding area for species of concern? If yes, describe.
- e. Does the site include a habitat type that is rare, infrequent, or otherwise critical? If yes, describe.
- f. Does the property support conservation of wildlife in an area that is already highly developed. If yes, describe.
- g. Does the site protect unique fish habitat or areas important for anadromous or catadromous fish restoration? If yes, describe.
- h. Does the site protect access to fishing opportunities? If yes, describe.

How to Submit Your Application

Please email your complete application and appraisals electronically including this questionnaire with your corresponding responses and supporting documentation to:

Allyson.clarke@ct.gov