



## CREST

THE COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY SITING TOOL

JANUARY 20, 2026, SUSTAINABLE CT WEBINAR

WITH STUART DELAND AND CAMILLE FONTANELLA

## CREST ORIGINATORS



### CT DEEP STEPS Team

- Camille Fontanella (IPP)
- Emily Tully (IPP)
- Eric Hammerling (ERSI)
- Linda Brunza (ERSI)
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- Chris Stone (WPED)
- Stuart DeLand (OIM)

### UConn-CLEAR Team

- Dave Dickson
- Emily Wilson



# VISION FOR CREST AND SITING RENEWABLE ENERGY



Further Connecticut's clean energy goals – full decarbonization by 2040.



Enable a more transparent and efficient renewable energy siting and permitting process (Goal 14 of 20BY26).



Conserve Connecticut's environmental resources equitably in all communities.



Provide a tool with publicly available data that leads to the 3 goals above.

# 25+ “CREST COLLABORATIVE” ADVISING ORGANIZATIONS

<u>Electric Utilities</u>	Avangrid/United Illuminating	Eversource	<u>Equity and Environmental Justice Stakeholders</u>	Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC)	<u>Farmland, Open Space, Wildlife, and Renewable Energy Conservation NGOs</u>	Acadia Center
Audubon CT	Connecticut Energy Network	Connecticut Farm Bureau	Connecticut Farmland Trust	Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC)	Connecticut RC&D	CT Roundtable on Climate & Jobs
PACE	Sierra Club, CT Chapter	Sustainable CT	The Nature Conservancy, CT Chapter	Working Lands Alliance	<u>Municipal/Regional Representatives</u>	CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM)
Council of Small Towns (COST)	9 Councils of Government (COGs)	<u>Solar Energy Developers/Legal Advisors</u>	Pullman & Comley, LLC	Verogy	VHB	<u>State Agencies (other)</u>
DOAG	CEQ	DECD	OPM	PURA		

# HOW WE GOT HERE, PART I

2023/2024

DEEP and UConn CLEAR collaborate on early vision for CREST Collaborative and develop list of individuals and orgs to participate.

May 2024

CGA passes **P.A. 24-31** requiring DEEP to develop map to inform “potential siting of solar projects in the state.”

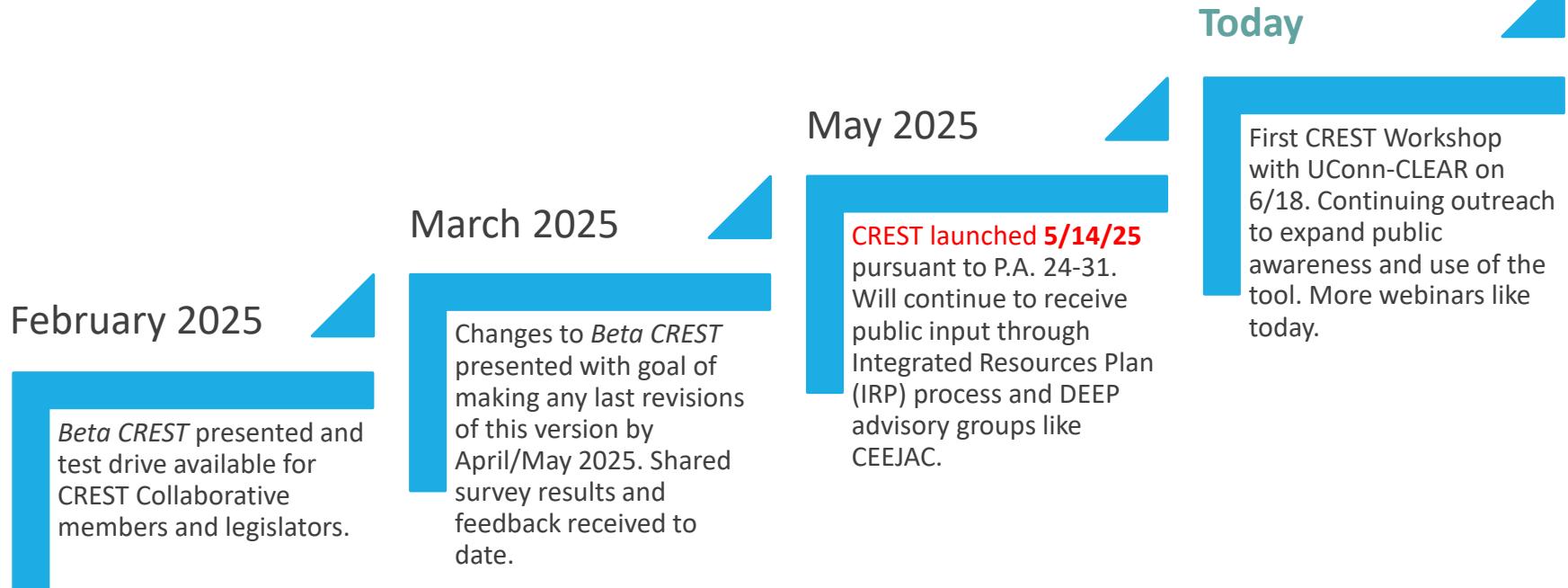
October 2024

CREST Collaborative Kickoff Meeting to introduce siting tool.

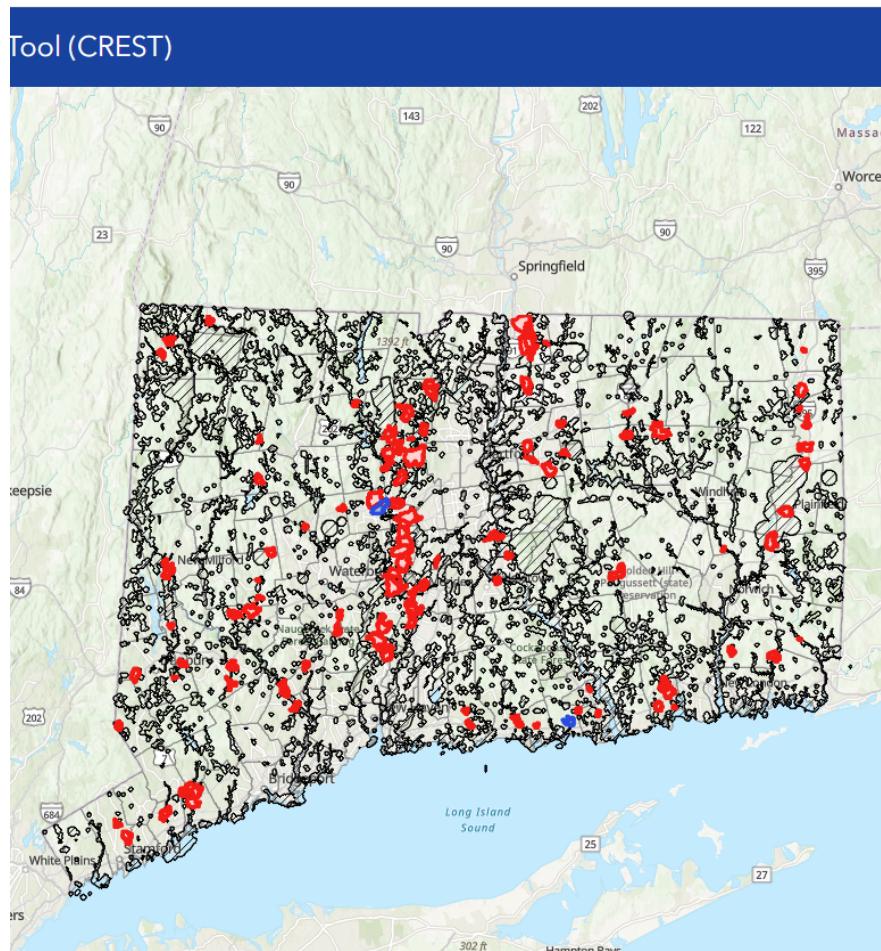
December 2024

DEEP STEPS/UConn team share early version of GIS-based CREST. CREST Collaborative members share ideas for additional GIS data sets and tool functionality.

# HOW WE GOT HERE, PART II



# CREST SUPPORTS TRANSPARENCY, PREDICTABILITY, AND EQUITY



- **Open-access data** - Gives towns, residents, developers, and regulators the same visual information.
- **Predictable siting decisions** - Helps speed up projects by steering them towards suitable / least conflict locations.
- **Easy to use** – You don't have to be an expert in Geographic Information Systems or map-making.
- **Free to all** - All you need is access to the internet.
- **Useful** – Can be used for ANY spatial research.

# CREST BENEFITS THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

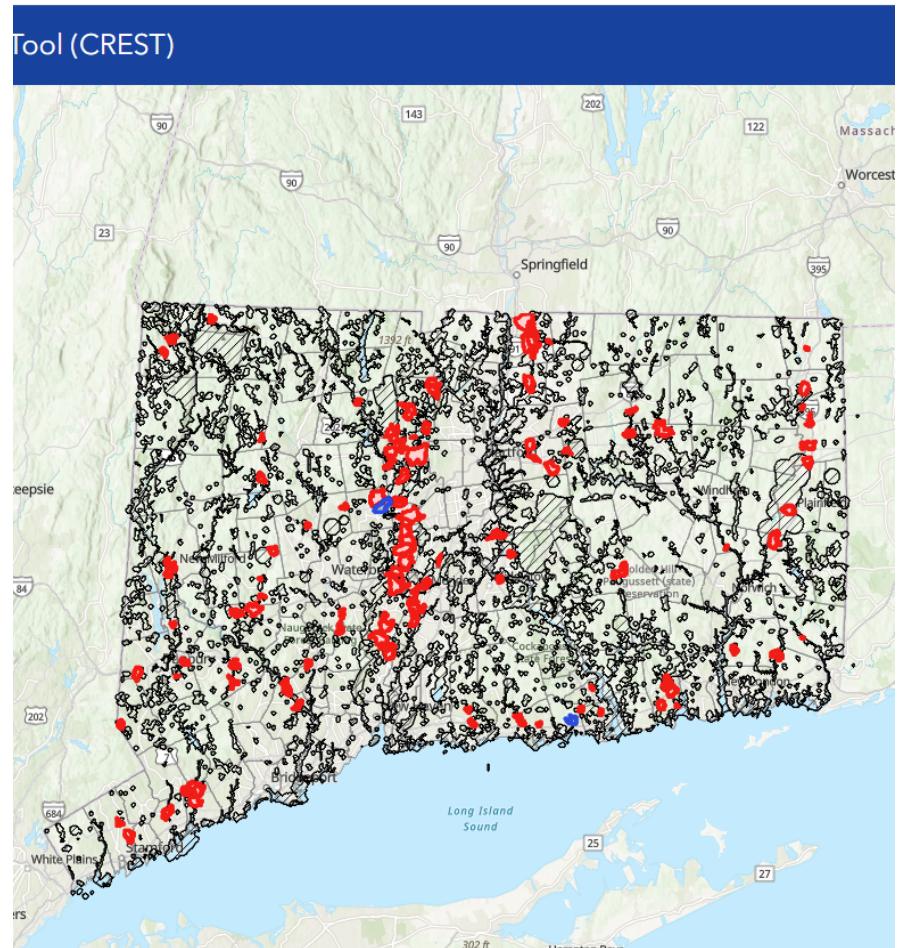
**Health** - Clean energy reduces pollution, improves air quality and public health.

**Affordability and Speed** - Better siting tools lower long-term cost of energy by reducing permitting delays and disputes.

**Prosperity** - CREST supports investment in renewables, local jobs, and grid resilience.

**Quality of Life** - Informed siting decisions protect forests, farmland, water resources, and the character of communities in balance with a greater supply of renewable energy.

**All in One Place** - CREST brings 35 individual map layers together so that you can explore how information is spatially interrelated.

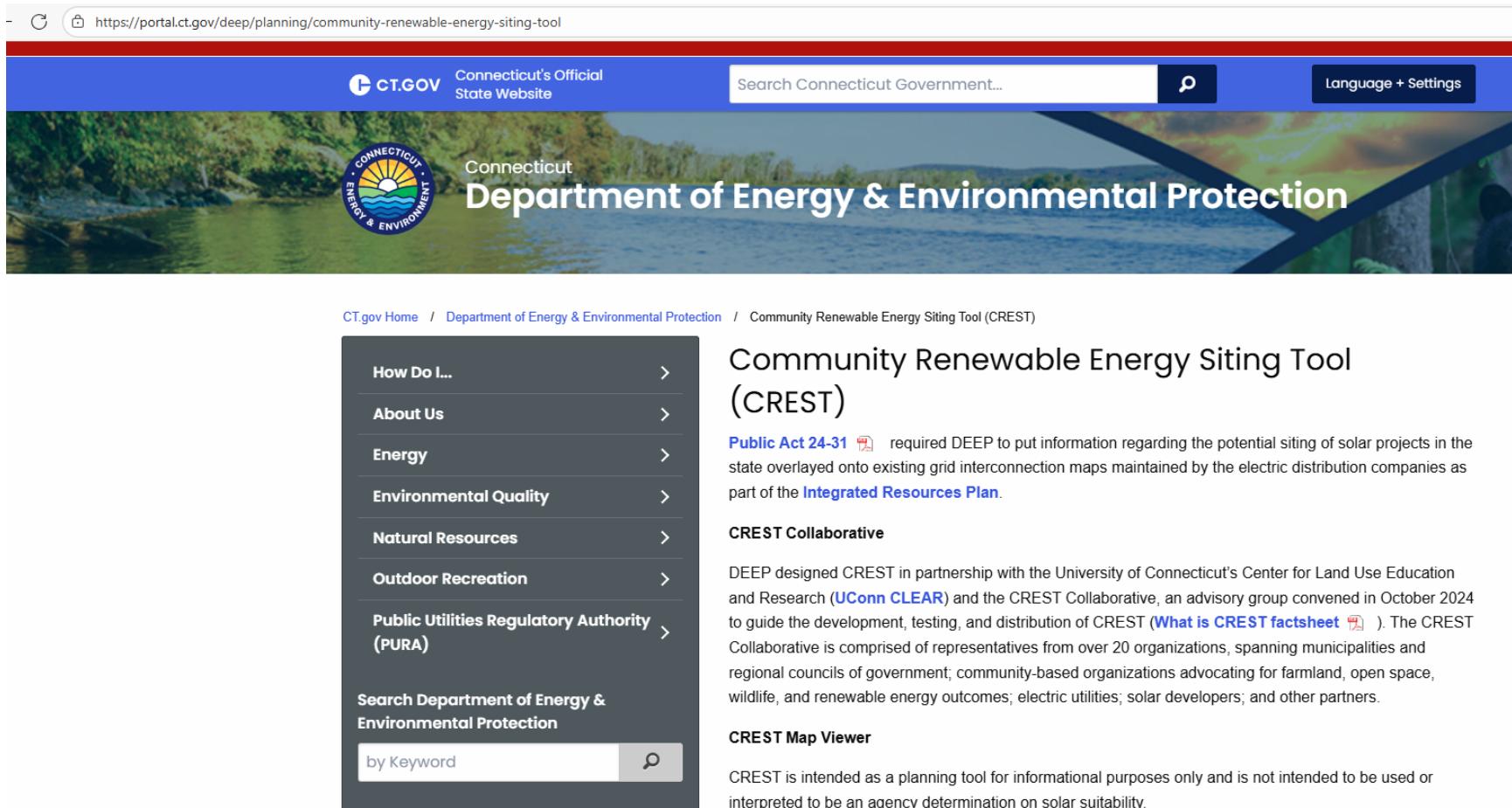


## HOW MIGHT CREST BE A USEFUL TOOL FOR PLANNING A MUNICIPAL PROJECT FOR SUSTAINABLE CT ACTION?

- Understand how a property may be connected to surrounding properties
  - **CT Parcel Layer, brownfields**
- See how natural/geographic/other resources on a site may interrelate
  - **Farmland, forestland, NDDB, habitats, water supply**
- Review data before and after field visits
  - **Soils, slope, flood zones**
- Get ideas on ways to avoid or mitigate environmental impacts
- View a local data set as a layer with CREST resources as the background
  - **Add your own layer! P&Z, wetlands, etc.**
- Spur questions that you may wish to ask about your project

# FINDING CREST ON DEEP'S WEBSITE

https://portal.ct.gov/deep/planning/community-renewable-energy-siting-tool



The screenshot shows the Connecticut DEEP website with a banner for the CREST tool. The left sidebar includes links for 'How Do I...', 'About Us', 'Energy', 'Environmental Quality', 'Natural Resources', 'Outdoor Recreation', and 'Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA)'. It also features a search bar for 'by Keyword' and a 'CREST Map Viewer' button. The main content area discusses the Public Act 24-31 requirement and the CREST Collaborative's role in developing the tool.

CT.GOV Connecticut's Official State Website

Search Connecticut Government... Language + Settings

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

CT.gov Home / Department of Energy & Environmental Protection / Community Renewable Energy Siting Tool (CREST)

How Do I... >

About Us >

Energy >

Environmental Quality >

Natural Resources >

Outdoor Recreation >

Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) >

Search Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

by Keyword

**Community Renewable Energy Siting Tool (CREST)**

**Public Act 24-31** required DEEP to put information regarding the potential siting of solar projects in the state overlayed onto existing grid interconnection maps maintained by the electric distribution companies as part of the [Integrated Resources Plan](#).

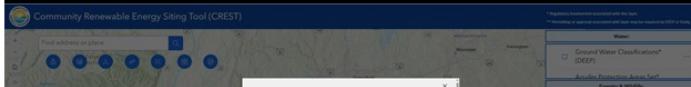
**CREST Collaborative**

DEEP designed CREST in partnership with the University of Connecticut's Center for Land Use Education and Research ([UConn CLEAR](#)) and the CREST Collaborative, an advisory group convened in October 2024 to guide the development, testing, and distribution of CREST ([What is CREST factsheet](#)). The CREST Collaborative is comprised of representatives from over 20 organizations, spanning municipalities and regional councils of government; community-based organizations advocating for farmland, open space, wildlife, and renewable energy outcomes; electric utilities; solar developers; and other partners.

**CREST Map Viewer**

CREST is intended as a planning tool for informational purposes only and is not intended to be used or interpreted to be an agency determination on solar suitability.

**CREST Map Viewer**



<https://portal.ct.gov/deep/planning/community-renewable-energy-siting-tool>

# IF YOU HAVE A PROJECT AND NEED HELP WITH PERMITTING:

[Municipal Composting Factsheet](#)

[Solar Permitting Factsheet](#)

[Early Municipal Assistance Meetings](#)



Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
**THE OFFICE OF INNOVATIVE  
PARTNERSHIPS & PLANNING**



***No town too small, no project too large.***

[DEEP.Concierge@CT.gov](mailto:DEEP.Concierge@CT.gov)

# NEXT STEPS FOR CREST

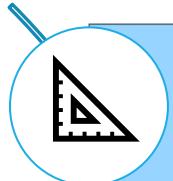
- CREST is part of the Integrated Resources Plan (IRP) for Connecticut that DEEP is leading. The IRP identifies strategies to affordably and reliably meet our state's growing electricity needs. Look for white papers generated through the IRP.
- DEEP will continue to offer webinars on how to use CREST
  - **Scheduled Webinars/Demonstration Sessions**
    - ~~UConn CLEAR June 18~~
    - ~~CT Chapter American Planning Association – September 10~~
    - ~~Connecticut Sun Day at CCSU – September 21~~
    - ~~DEEP Lunch and Learn – September 30 (internal)~~
    - ~~ECOS / NASEO Workshop for New England, NY, & NJ State Enviro and Energy Staff – October 9 (internal)~~
    - ~~Council Of Small Towns Webinar – November 13~~
    - ~~CACIWC Annual Conference – November 15~~
    - Sustainable CT – TODAY!
    - CLCC Land Conservation Conference – March 2026
  - DEEP's STEPS team will continue working on guidance associated with siting of solar
  - Data layers available in CREST will be maintained/updated/refined regularly through time to ensure the application remains useful
  - Feedback on CREST is always welcome via [DEEP.STEPS@ct.gov](mailto:DEEP.STEPS@ct.gov)

## **IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER ABOUT CREST**

\*\*CREST combines natural resource, utility, and other information for free public use. It is a planning tool developed for informational purposes only and is not intended to be used or interpreted as an agency determination or regulatory decision related to solar suitability.

# RESOURCES

## CREST Map Viewer



### CREST webpage

- What is CREST factsheet
- CREST GIS Data Layer Information Factsheet



### Integrated Resources Plan



### STEPS for Solar Development



### UConn-CLEAR

- CT ECO



Contact us! [DEEP.STEPS@ct.gov](mailto:DEEP.STEPS@ct.gov)