**State of Connecticut

Environmental Review Checklist

*Last Updated 02/25/2020*

**Instructions for Use:**

The Environmental Review Checklist (ERC), as defined in Sec. 22a-1a-1(9) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA), is intended to assist state agencies in (1) determining whether a proposed action or category of actions requires public scoping, or (2) in recording an agency’s initial assessment of the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of a proposed action at the completion of public scoping.

For the purposes of CEPA, an Action is defined in Sec 22a-1a-1(2) of the RCSA as an individual activity or a sequence of planned activities initiated or proposed to be undertaken by an agency or agencies, or funded in whole or in part by the state.

Completion of the ERC is only *required* as part of a sponsoring agency’s post-scoping notice in which the agency has determined that it will not be preparing an EIE (Sec. 22a-1a-7(d) of the RCSA).

In all other instances, the sponsoring agency has the option to use this form or portions of it, in conjunction with the applicable Environmental Classification Document (ECD), as a tool to assist it in determining whether or not scoping is required and to document the agency’s review. This can be especially useful for an agency administering a proposed action that is not specifically represented in the ECD or which may have additional factors and/or indirect or cumulative impacts requiring further consideration.

Even if an agency ultimately determines that public scoping is not necessary, as a matter of public record OPM highly recommends that the agency internally document its decision, and its justification.

In completing this form, include descriptions that are clear, concise, and understandable to the general public.

Note that prior to reviewing a proposed action under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA), Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), Section 16a-31 requires agencies to review any proposed actions for the acquisition, development or improvement of real properties, or the acquisition of public transportation equipment or facilities, and in excess of $200,000, for consistency with the policies of the State Plan of Conservation and Development (State C&D Plan).

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**PART I – Initial Review and Determination**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date: | 2/10/2022 |
| Name of Project/Action: | Suffield Wildlife Management Area Prescribed Burn |
| Project Address(es): | 510 Babbs Rd, West Suffield CT 06093 |
| Affected Municipalities: | Suffield |
|  |  |  |
| Sponsoring Agency(ies): | CT DEEP – Wildlife Division |
| Agency Project Number, if applicable: | N/A |
| Project Funding Source(s)/Program(s), if known: | N/A |
|  |  |
| Identify the Environmental Classification Document (ECD) being used in this review:[x]  Generic, or [ ]  Agency-Specific |
|  |  |
| [ ]  An environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is being prepared pursuant to NEPA, and shall be circulated in accordance with CEPA requirements. |
|  |  |  |
| [ ]  The proposed action requires a written review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office (NATHPO). Include SHPO/NATHPO reviews as an attachment, or indicate the status of those reviews: Indicate status of SHPO and/or NATHPO review. |
|  |

[x]  Based on the analysis documented in this Environmental Review Checklist (ERC), and in consideration of public comments, this agency has determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) for the proposed action is not warranted. Publication of this document to the Environmental Monitor shall satisfy the agency’s responsibilities under [*Section 22a-1a-7 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies*](https://eregulations.ct.gov/eRegsPortal/Browse/RCSA/Title_22aSubtitle_22a-1a/) (RCSA).

Completed by: Tanner Steeves, Wildlife Biologist

*Note**that prior to commencing a CEPA review, Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Section 16a-31 requires state agencies to review certain actions for their consistency with the policies of the State Plan of Conservation and Development (State C&D Plan). Completion of this ERC assumes the agency has determined this proposed action to be consistent with the State C&D Plan.*

**PART II – Detailed Project Information**

**Description of the Purpose & Need of the Proposed Action:**

The purpose of the proposed action is to complete wildlife habitat management at a natural area that is managed for wildlife conservation. The grasslands at this site require maintenance (habitat management) to sustain or enhance their ecological integrity. The proposed action (prescribed fire management) is an ideal management practice to sustain and enhance these habitats.

**Description of the Proposed Action:**

The CTDEEP Wildlife and Forestry Divisions aim to manage vegetation using prescribed fire within a portion of Suffield Wildlife Management Area, a state-owned natural area managed for wildlife conservation and wildlife-based recreation. In 2022, CTDEEP proposes to conduct a prescribed burn during Feb 1 to April 15, 2022, when weather conditions permit. The prescribed burn will encompass 49.5 acres of grassland and will take one or two days to complete. The operation will be conducted under the direction of qualified fire professionals when weather and atmospheric conditions allow. The site will remain an undeveloped natural area. A ten-year burn plan has been developed that will permit this activity into the future.

**Alternatives Considered:**

Mowing was considered, but this management practice would not adequately mimic the natural disturbance regime (of periodic low intensity wildfire) required to meet habitat objectives.

**Public concerns or controversy associated with the proposed action:**

No public concerns or controversy are associated with the proposed action. Only positive public support was expressed at the public scoping meeting. The project will enhance the value and ecological integrity of this site, for the greater good of public trust resources.

**PART III – Site Characteristics (Check all that apply)**

|  |
| --- |
| The proposed action is non-site specific, or encompasses multiple sites; |[ ]
|  |
| Current site ownership: | [ ]  N/A, [x]  State; [ ] Municipal, [ ]  Private,[ ]  Other: Please Explain. |
| Anticipated ownership upon project completion: | [ ]  N/A, [x]  State; [ ] Municipal, [ ]  Private,[ ]  Other: Please Explain. |

**Locational Guide Map Criteria:**

<http://ctmaps.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ba47efccdb304e02893b7b8e8cff556a>

Priority Funding Area factors:

[ ]  Designated as a Priority Funding Area, including [ ]  Balanced, or [ ]  Village PFA;

[ ]  Urban Area or Urban Cluster, as designated by the most recent US Census Data;

[ ]  Public Transit, defined as being within a ½ mile buffer surrounding existing or planned mass transit;

[ ]  Existing or planned sewer service from an adopted Wastewater Facility Plan;

[ ]  Existing or planned water service from an adopted Public Drinking Water Supply Plan;

[ ]  Existing local bus service provided 7 days a week.

Conservation Area factors:

[ ]  Core Forest Area(s), defined as greater than 250 acres based on the 2006 Land Cover Dataset;

[ ]  Existing or potential drinking water supply watershed(s);

[ ]  Aquifer Protection Area(s);

[ ]  Wetland Soils greater than 25 acres;

[x]  Undeveloped Prime, Statewide Important and/or locally important agricultural soils greater than 25 acres;

[ ]  Category 1, 2, or 3 Hurricane Inundation Zone(s);

[ ]  100 year Flood Zone(s);

[ ]  Critical Habitat;

[x]  Locally Important Conservation Area(s),

[x]  Protected Land (list type): A State-owned, DEEP managed - Wildlife Management Area

[ ]  Local, State, or National Historic District(s).

**PART IV - Assessment of Environmental Significance – Direct, Indirect, And Cumulative Effects**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Required Factors for Consideration (Section 22a-1a-3 of the RCSA)** | **Agency’s Assessment and Explanation** |
| Effect on water quality, including surface water and groundwater; | None. Any surface water run-off will be minor and temporary. |
| Effect on a public water supply system; | None |
| Effect on flooding, in-stream flows, erosion or sedimentation; | None |
| Disruption or alteration of an historic, archeological, cultural, or recreational building, object, district, site or its surroundings; A. Alteration of an historic building, district, structure, object, or its setting; OR B. Disruption of an archeological or sacred site; | None.  |
| Effect on natural communities and upon critical plant and animal species and their habitat; interference with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species; | The proposed action will have a positive long-term effect on wildlife habitat. Prescribed fire will consume dead vegetative material and quickly stimulate new growth of native warm season grasses and forbs. Wildlife, particularly grassland obligate nesting birds, and expected to benefit from the proposed action. |
| Use of pesticides, toxic or hazardous materials or any other substance in such quantities as to cause unreasonable adverse effects on the environment; | None |
| Substantial aesthetic or visual effects; | No permanent effects. |
| Inconsistency with: (A) the policies of the State C&D Plan, developed in accordance with section 16a-30 of the CGS; (B) other relevant state agency plans; and (C) applicable regional or municipal land use plans; | None |
| Disruption or division of an established community or inconsistency with adopted municipal and regional plans, including impacts on existing housing where sections 22a- 1b(c) and 8-37t of the CGS require additional analysis; | None |
| Displacement or addition of substantial numbers of people; | None |
| Substantial increase in congestion (traffic, recreational, other); | None |
| A substantial increase in the type or rate of energy use as a direct or indirect result of the action; | None |
| The creation of a hazard to human health or safety; | The proposed action does not create a permanent hazard to human health or safety. |
| Effect on air quality; | No permanent effects. |
| Effect on ambient noise levels; | None |
| Effect on existing land resources and landscapes, including coastal and inland wetlands; | Positive effect on existing land resources and landscapes.  |
| Effect on agricultural resources; | None |
| Adequacy of existing or proposed utilities and infrastructure; | None |
| Effect on greenhouse gas emissions as a direct or indirect result of the action; | No net effect, herbaceous system. |
| Effect of a changing climate on the action, including any resiliency measures incorporated into the action; | The proposed action will increase local biodiversity and proliferate native plants, increasing the site’s resiliency to climate change. |
| Any other substantial effects on natural, cultural, recreational, or scenic resources. | None |
| Cumulative effects.  | Positive. The proposed action will enhance the value and ecological integrity of this site, for the greater good of public trust resources. |

**PART V - List of Required Permits, Approvals and/or Certifications Identified at the Time of this Review**

Internal CT DEEP policy dictates that a “Burn Plan” document be completed and approved before this project occurs. An Air Quality Permit from the DEEP Bureau of Air Resources, to allow for ‘open burning’ is also required and will be approved prior to the project occurring.

**PART VI – Sponsoring Agency Comments and Recommendations**

The proposed project will help sustain and enhance natural resources of Connecticut.

**PART VII - Public Comments and Sponsoring Agency Responses:**

One verbal comment in support of the project was received during January 24, 2022 public scoping meeting.

One written inquiry was received during the public comment period concerning the naming of a road on the project map; the original project map mislabeled Babbs Rd as “Point Grove Rd”. The agency responded by correcting the labeling error and posting the corrected map on the DEEP website address listed in the Scoping Notice.