

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

April 2017

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. The following grants were closed in April 2017. Additional information on these projects follow.

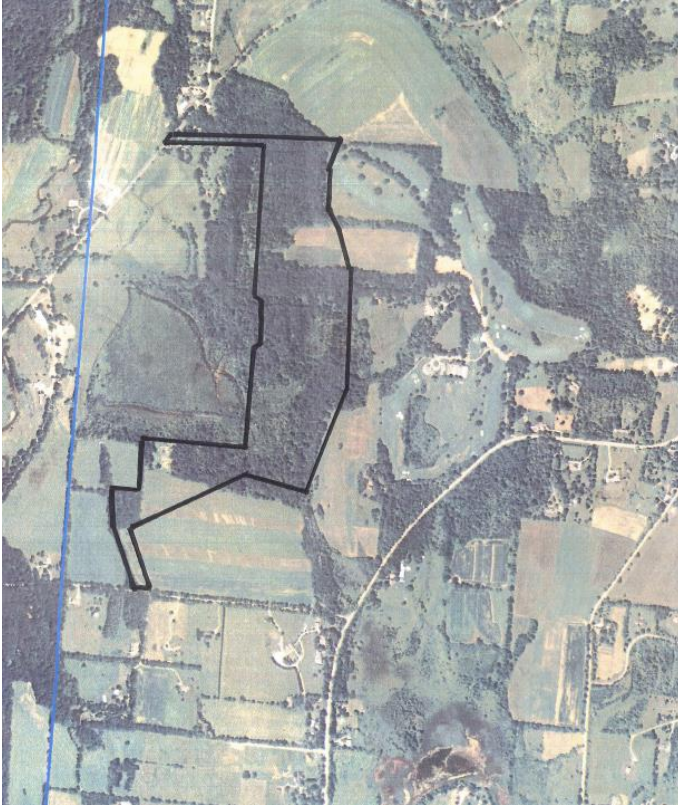
Sponsor	Project	Acres
New Canaan Land Conservation Trust, Inc.	Silvermine – Fowler Preserve	6.353
Sharon Land Trust, Inc.	Benton Hill Preserve	72.171

New Canaan Land Conservation Trust, Inc.
Silvermine – Fowler Preserve, New Canaan
Fee Acquisition 6.353 Acres



This parcel sits between the historic Silvermine neighborhood and the existing 41-acre Kelley Upland Sanctuary, owned by the New Canaan Land Trust, Inc. This is an ideal site for a greenway for people and wildlife, expanding and enhancing public access from a busy thoroughfare, to an existing trail system. Adding the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve will create 47 acres of contiguous preserved open space. It is home to three species of bat listed as Species of Special Concern by the Natural Diversity Data Base of State-Listed Species. There is a valuable range of wildlife habitat, meadows, woodlands, wetlands and a small pond, crucial to resident wildlife and migratory bird species. Recreational catch and release fishing will also be permitted at the pond. The Trust for Public Land assisted the New Canaan Land Trust, Inc. with this acquisition.

Sharon Land Trust, Inc.
Benton Hill Preserve, Sharon
Fee Acquisition 72.171 Acres



The Benton Hill Preserve contains the first vista, seen by motorists entering Connecticut from New York, visible from Route 343. This ridgeline parcel contains a large wetland complex and important natural communities. It protects a large forest corridor, affording seclusion, food sources and a unique and varied, high-quality habitat for many wildlife species. It is within one mile of several other protected parcels including the 67 acre Talbot Farm. The Sharon Land Trust, Inc. will create a small, gravel off-road parking area along Benton Hill Road and develop a trail system with guidance from the DEEP Wildlife Division.

Supplemental funding was received from the U.S. Department of the Interior Fish & Wildlife Service under the Highlands Conservation Act.



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 acquisitions closed in April 2017.