

# Open Space Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) Grant Program Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION – Where can I find the supporting materials?

### Topographic Map (with site outlined)

US Geological Survey Website, <http://nationalmap.gov>; Regional Planning Agencies; computer software purchased at office supply and computer outlets.

### Town Road Map (with site outlined)

“Mail-a-Maps” are usually free at your Municipal Clerk’s Office. Additionally, they may be found at real estate offices, banks, Chamber of Commerce & tourist offices, and area businesses.

### Property Boundary Map

While an A-2 survey is not required for the submittal of the grant application, it is encouraged. The Town Hall or the existing property owners are logical sources. If no A-2 survey is available, a Class D survey or Compilation Plan is acceptable for purposes of the application. These may also be available at the Town Hall. Please note, however, that **an A-2 survey will be required before any grant funds can be released.** If no A-2 survey is located or available, it should be ordered as soon as your application is approved.

### Soils Map

This map is requested for properties that have an agricultural focus. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can map out the prime agriculture soils of the property. They can be reached at (860) 859-5218 x 3011.

### Ortho-Photo (aerial) Map

A copy of this map may be obtained from your City/Town Hall. They are also available online at <http://nationalmap.gov/>, or <http://www.bing.com/maps/?FORM=Z9LH7>

## 2. PROJECT COST ESTIMATES – What documents are required?

### ACQUISITION

Applications must contain the required number of appraisal(s). All appraisals must conform to the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (the “yellow book,” published by The Appraisal Institute). We highly recommend you **order the appraisal(s) as soon as possible** to avoid a possible penalty if the appraisal(s) are not received by the grant application deadline. It can take two months (or more) to complete an appraisal on a large scale project.

Note the number of appraisals required:

| Estimated Property Value | Appraisals Required | Number of Copies |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Less than \$100,000      | 1                   | 2                |
| Greater than \$100,000   | 2                   | 2                |

## **RESTORATION**

Distressed Municipalities and Targeted Investment Communities are eligible for restoration funding. Restoration projects require a site plan, a narrative of the project scope and a cost estimate. See eligibility (below). A separate application shall be made under the Urban Green and Community Garden Initiative.

Additional questions on community garden or restoration projects should be directed to DEEP Constituent Affairs/Land Management at (860) 424-3081 or (860) 424-3774.

### **3. ELIGIBILITY**

#### **How do we know if our Municipality is a “Distressed Municipality” or a “Targeted Investment Community”?**

**Distressed Municipalities** (sponsors must use the [2016 list](#)): Ansonia, Bridgeport, Bristol, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, Enfield, Griswold, Hartford, Killingly, Meriden, Montville, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Plainfield, Plymouth, Putnam, Sprague, Torrington, Waterbury, West Haven, and Windham.

**Targeted Investment Communities** include: Bridgeport, Bristol, East Hartford, Groton, Hamden, Hartford, Meriden, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Southington, Stamford, Waterbury and Windham.

**If the property is being purchased from a water company, how do we know if the water company has been granted permission to dispose of the property by PURA & DPH?**

The water company should have a letter from the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) granting them permission to sell the property. When in doubt, call PURA, toll free at (800) 382-4586. They can tell you if the water company has been granted permission to sell the property.

**How do I know if my municipality has received a Development Designation under the CT Housing Partnership Program?**

**Towns which have received a Development Designation or waiver include:** Ashford, Bethel, Branford, Bridgeport, Brookfield, Brooklyn, Cheshire, Chester, Danbury, Durham, Enfield, Fairfield, Glastonbury, Groton, Hamden, Hartford, Hebron, Litchfield, Madison, Mansfield, Meriden, Middletown, New Haven, New Milford, Newtown, Norwalk, Old Saybrook, Plainfield, Plainville, Pomfret, Putnam, Redding, Sharon, Simsbury, Suffield, Torrington, Wallingford, Warren, Waterbury, Waterford, Watertown, Westbrook, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Vernon, Winchester, Windham and Woodbury.

#### **4. EXISTING OWNERSHIP**

##### **Where can I get a copy of current deed?**

Go to your Municipal Assessor's Office. Ask for the relevant street card(s). Note the volume(s) and page(s) of the current deed(s). Then go to the Town/City Clerk's Office. Locate and copy the deed(s). Please note that if/once you purchase the property, a copy of the new deed is required.

#### **5. SITE CONVENIENCE & PUBLIC ACCESS**

##### **Where can I find population statistics?**

##### **What is meant by Site Convenience? Public Access, what is this?**

##### Population Statistics

Go to The State of Connecticut website, [www.ct.gov/](http://www.ct.gov/). In the "CT.gov" search box, (upper right portion of page) enter "DECD population" and it should provide a link to the relevant information.

Site convenience relates to the ability of the public to find and access the property by public transportation routes, roads and publicly owned (granted rights-of-ways and access easements are not acceptable) land and/or access ways.

Accessibility for people with disabilities is a civil right defined, for these purposes, as equal opportunity for the use and enjoyment of open space and restoration (Urban Green and Community Garden) projects. Such consideration is especially relevant to newly constructed and altered elements, such as garden beds, fishing wharves, trails and nature viewing platforms. Degree of required accessibility often involves a balancing of civil rights and conservation needs. For example, terrain or habitat conditions may influence the kind and degree of accessibility created on a new or altered trail.

Public access to the proposed property shall be open to the general public for passive recreational uses. DEEP's conservation easement defines passive recreation as:

**"recreational trail usage (non-motorized), recreational activities which do not require a formalized delineated playing field or area, picnicking, fishing, hunting, non-motorized boating and environmental education."**

Where less than fee acquisition has been negotiated (Conservation Easement), public access to the property must be a part of the transfer of interest. Projects where "life use," "quiet enjoyment," "exclusive use" or "with permission of the grantor" or similar restrictions that are designed to prevent/prohibit/hinder/or control public access to the property will not be eligible to receive a grant under this program.

Additional questions on public access should be directed to DEEP Land Acquisition and Management at (860) 424-3081 or (860) 424-3774.

## **6. STATEMENT OF NEED**

### **Where can I find the supporting materials?**

The **State's Plan of Conservation and Development** is available at any public library or by contacting your local Regional Planning Organizations (RPO's) or Council of Governments.

**Municipal Plan of Conservation & Development and/or Recreation Plans** are available at your Town/City Hall. (Note: these plans now will need to be no older than ten years, they need to be current. If a municipality submits a proposal and their C&D plan is not updated/current, that project will not be evaluated.)

**Regional Conservation Plans** are available online:

<http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?A=2990&Q=385378>

**The Green Plan 2007-2012, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection**

Is available online: (note, there is a new version, set to be released by the end of the year)

[http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/open\\_space/green\\_plan.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/open_space/green_plan.pdf)

**Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy**

Is available online:

[http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=325886&deepNav\\_GID=1719](http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=325886&deepNav_GID=1719)

**Connecticut Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**

Is available online:

[http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2707&q=323864&deepNav\\_GID=1642](http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2707&q=323864&deepNav_GID=1642)

### **SUPPORT LETTERS:**

For municipal letters, contact your local boards and commissions.

Inland Wetlands, Conservation Commission, Open Space Commission  
Planning Commission

For regional (RPO/COG) letters, contact your Regional Planning Organization. The agencies and contact names are available online:

<http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2986&q=383046>.

## 7. GRANT FUNDING AMOUNTS

Any grants approved by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection will be based on the fair market value, as determined by DEEP, and will not exceed the following grant funding amounts:

| TO A  | FOR                                      | IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED* |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Municipality  | Open space                               | 65% of fair market value    |
| Municipality  | Class I & Class II Water supply property | 65% of fair market value    |
| Distressed municipality or targeted investment community **   | Open space                               | 75% of fair market value    |
| Distressed municipality or targeted investment community **   | Resource enhancement or protection       | 50% of cost of such work    |
| Nonprofit land conservation organization  | Open space or watershed protection       | 65% of fair market value    |
| Nonprofit land conservation organization and water company (If land is located within a distressed or targeted community) | Open space or watershed protection       | 75% of fair market value    |
| Water Company   | Class I & Class II water supply          | 65% of fair market value    |

\* Please note that the percentages shown represent the maximum grant award and that grant awards may be reduced to a lesser percentage or may be reduced to not exceed an administrative cap.

\*\* A listing of Distressed and Targeted Communities are above in Question #3.

The amount of funding provided to a project will be based on numerous factors related to the quality of the project (conservation, recreational, and water resources protected), amount of private, or other governmental funds leveraged, number and quality of other grant applications, and availability of DEEP resources. Not all grant recipients will receive the same percentage of funds, and certain grants may be subject to a grant cap.

## 8. OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING

Each project sponsor is required to secure funds to match DEEP's grant from other sources. These match funds can come from private entities or other governmental funding programs.

**PRIVATE:** includes matching funds from private individuals, foundations, corporations, businesses, contributions by other organizations, or governmental programs not managed or funded by the State or federal government.

- Funding from these sources count toward the sponsor's match requirement without restriction. However, caution should be exercised to ensure that

acceptance of such funds would not place a restriction on the property that could be in conflict with the State's Conservation Easement.

### **OTHER GOVERNMENTAL FUNDING**

Many other governmental programs exist to assist with land conservation. There are some considerations when using other governmental funding under this program, as discussed below. Caution should be exercised to ensure that acceptance of other funds will not place a restriction on the property that could be in conflict with the terms of the State's Conservation Easement.

*If you have any questions about compatibility of other governmental funding programs with this grant program, please contact DEEP.*

**MUNICIPAL:** Municipalities (as the project sponsor or host community) often contribute match funding for land conservation projects funded through this program. Municipal funds include all funds contributed by the Town or City through bond, tax, or other measures, but does not include other State funding provided to the Town or City for the proposed project.

- Funding from municipal sources count toward the project sponsor's match requirement without restriction, as long as the funds did not originate from the State. However, caution should be exercised to ensure that acceptance of such funds would not place a restriction on the property that could be in conflict with the terms of the State's Conservation Easement

**STATE:** Other State funds can be used to assist with the project costs. (This occurs very infrequently and DEEP is not aware of other currently available State funding sources.)

- Generally, State grant funds may not be used to match State grant funds. However, if other State funds may be part of your project, it is important to discuss this with DEEP before submitting your application or as soon as other State grant funding is being considered, if that occurs after the application is submitted.

**FEDERAL:** There is the potential for a sponsor to receive funding from several federal grant programs administered by the State or a federal agency. For example, agencies such as the US Department of Agriculture (farmland protection, prime agricultural soils preservation, river restoration, forest preservation, etc.), Department of the Interior (wild & scenic, wetland preservation, river protection, wildlife habitat restoration/protection, etc.), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (shore preservation, natural area preservation, wetland protection), and the Department of Defense all have programs that may be used as an additional source of funding for the subject project.

- If federal funds are proposed to be used for the subject project, the sponsor must inform DEEP in their application of such intention and the corresponding amount of funding requested, received, or anticipated or the sponsor must inform DEEP of such

information as soon as federal funding is being considered, if that occurs after the application is submitted.

- **If a federal grant is accepted by the sponsor, the OSWA grant award will be adjusted so that the combined OSWA and federal grant awards do not exceed ninety percent (90%) of the fair market value of the property, as determined by DEEP under the OSWA grant program.**
- DEEP may authorize the use of State and federal funds to fund one hundred percent (100%) of the fair market value of the property, as determined by DEEP under the OSWA grant program, in limited circumstances. If you are seeking this authorization, please refer to [Public Act No. 15-23](#) for more information and contact DEEP as soon as possible but prior to accepting such federal funds.
- **It is important to remember that DEEP expects public access to be provided on the subject property, irrespective of federal funding program requirements or policies to the contrary.**
- Caution should be exercised to ensure that acceptance of federal funds would not place a restriction on the property that could be in conflict with the terms of the State's Conservation Easement.
- Please contact DEEP with any questions you may have about the use of federal funding prior to submitting your application or as soon as federal funding is being considered, if that occurs after the application is submitted.