



Windham County 4-H Foundation, Inc.

326 Taft Pond Road • Pomfret Center, CT 06259

August 16, 2021

Ms. Elaine Sistare, Town Manager
Mayor Barney Seney
136 Church Street
Putnam, CT 06374

Dear Ms. Sistare and Mayor Seney:

We are writing to request your consideration for awarding a grant from Putnam's American Rescue Plan funds to the Windham County 4-H Foundation for the purpose of rebuilding our dam at the Windham-Tolland 4-H camp property located on Taft Pond Rd in Pomfret. American Rescue Plan Funds were granted specifically to assist economic recovery from COVID 19, including assistance to non-profits. We were encouraged to write to local towns requesting this support by staff from Joe Courtney's office who we have been working with to identify available funds for dam repairs.

As noted on page 9 in the CCM Toolkit, the loss of revenue has drained non-profits of resources, impacting their ability to pay for capital project investments. ARP funding for these one-time capital investments frees up available nonprofit dollars to be used for services and improve the community in which they work. **Our stewardship of this beautiful 270 acre property contributes to the regional commitment to open space at no cost to its taxpayers.** In 2020, we lost \$55,000 in rental and fund-raising income and cashed in \$135,000 in cash reserves to refund registrations and pay for ongoing expenses, including those for the dam. We carried over \$81,000 in registrations paid in 2020 to 2021, which reduces our 2021 income by that amount. Due to COVID protocols and difficulty in recruiting staff, partially because of the lack of international staff, we ran our camp program at reduced capacity this year. We expect to just break even in 2021 as opposed to our usual budgeted surplus of \$50,000 to invest in capital expenses to keep improving our camp facilities or add to our reserve funds which took us many years to build and are now totally exhausted.

In 2018, seepage was observed on the downstream face of the dam embankment in close proximity to the low level drain and several sink holes were identified. This was reported to DEEP and since then the camp has been working with engineers from the firm of Wright Pierce to diagnose the issues and come up with possible solutions. DEEP has given us approval to keep the pond full this summer with daily monitoring of the seepage area to ensure that the stability of the embankment is not degrading. It is holding firm thus far even under the recent onslaught of heavy rains.

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We have recently submitted a three year plan to DEEP with monitoring for the next two summers to give us time to raise the approximate 1 – 1.2 million dollars expected to do all the design, permitting and construction costs to replace the current dam. They have not yet approved this plan and have indicated that they are not very comfortable continuing the monitoring program in place this year.

Having the finances in place is crucial in our efforts to lobby for approval of this three year plan with DEEP. We have officially begun a W-T 4-H Camp Dam Aid Fundraising Program with a kickoff event scheduled for September 10 and 11. We will be doing grass roots fundraising mailings, plus a number of other events dedicated to this effort ***but are reaching out to you and other sending towns in the area for grants at a substantial level to help us achieve our fundraising goal for this project.***

Our ACA accredited camp is a regional asset enjoyed by over 1500 campers over the course of the summer when fully operational. In the past five years alone, our Foundation has raised and distributed \$366,890 in campership grants to ensure that kids of all economic backgrounds can enjoy the life changing benefits of a week of camp. We have invested in thousands of kids from Northeast Connecticut by providing an affordable camp program since 1954. ***From 2012 – 2019 alone, just 8 of our 67 years in operation, 243 Putnam children attended Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp. During that same time period, Putnam families applied for and received \$8,645.00 in camperships for their children. Imagine how many other children have had a fun & learning experience here from Putnam since 1954 because of our campership support.***

The pond is the jewel in the center of our camp and is the site of both a beautiful natural setting for fish and wildlife and for all of our water-sports programs. It is inconceivable to think of camp without it shining in the sun, or watching the fire-bringer coming across it by canoe on closing ceremony nights. If we are forced to drain it forever, it will be a financial and programmatic disaster for this program which provides an affordable outdoor education and recreation program for local youth and others from throughout the state and beyond its borders.

Support from the town of Putnam would be a huge help in getting us to reach our fundraising goals for this project. We very much appreciate your consideration of our request and would be happy to meet with you at any time to discuss it or provide you with any additional information you may require.

Sincerely,



Jane Rider, President

Additional Notes:

- Our 501 (c)(3) Foundation has already expended over \$75,000 since 2018 to pay engineering and environmental surveys and tests required to diagnose the problem. \$10,000 of this amount was provided by a Community Enrichment Grant from the Last Green Valley which we received in 2019, the maximum amount possible from that program.
- We have been in search of other federal, state and local grant funding programs for this project since 2018 and have found nothing available.
- We have been consulting with the local USDA Natural Resources Division Office staff to determine if they will be able to help us with partial funding for the dam rebuild. They are currently not able to help with design services. It is not clear at this point if the final dam design will fit into the practice scenarios they have available to pay for very specific construction prerequisites. Our discussions with them are ongoing.
- Our foundation maintains very clear accounting trails as to the receipt and expenditure of funds for our dam restoration fund. Our funds are audited yearly which will further ensure that your contribution will be used for the intended purpose – to rebuild the dam and save our pond.



Summer 2020 The earthen dam looks solid from the water side and on the top surface. The outer bank is where shallow sink holes have appeared indicating the internal erosion. A video camera inserted through the valve pipe and sample core borings from the top down have disclosed the sand and gravel content of the interior structure is not the correct material, it does not contain the necessary amount of clay for sustainability.

What is your favorite activities to do in or around the pond? How would you feel if the pond were no longer here? What does coming to camp mean to you?

Dear Gov. Lamont

I would be so sad if the pond is gone because when we are very very hot we will have no water to cool down in. When we want to fish we can't and a lot of fish and frogs will die which is sad. The pond is very beautiful and it means a lot to us so please save the pond!
Emma 10 Connecticut Putnam

What is your favorite activities to do in or around the pond? How would you feel if the pond where no longer here? What does coming to camp mean to you?

Dear Governor LaMont

Will: My favorite thing to do in the pond is swimming.

Lucas: I like the diving board. I like learning new stuff in the pond.

Will: We also go fishing in the pond. I like fishing, I have my own pole.

Lucas: Me too.

Best friends
Will + Lucas
(7) (7)
Putnam, CT

What is your favorite activities to do in or around the pond? How would you feel if the pond were no longer here? What does coming to camp mean to you?

Dear Potential Donor

I'm a first year counselor this year at WFF 4-H camp. We always joke around saying that I'm the "International Staff" because I'm from the mid-west. The thing about living in Wyoming is that there isn't a lot of water. I haven't spent a lot of time here, but I can tell that the spirit of this camp revolves around the pond. We spend a lot of time here fishing, boating, and swimming, and no matter what age range I have, those activities are always a fun favorite. My personal favorite part of camp happens everyday. It's called Time for Thought. The entire camp collects in a clearing; we have some silent reflection time, with some opportunities for sharing. During this time, I watch the sunset over the lake; listen to these kids pour their souls out to 100+ used-to-be strangers. It's the purest form of trust; love that I've witnessed; all of that stems directly from the pond.

Please consider donating to save not only the spirit of this camp, but the pond that keeps all of our secrets.

Sincerely,

Caden Callaway
Counselor
20
1000-1000-1000

What is your favorite activities to do in or around the pond? How would you feel if the pond were no longer here? What does coming to camp mean to you?

Dear Governor Lamont,

Windom Tolland 4-H pond. What is that? You are probably thinking it is a large body of water. Yes technically that is correct but it soooo much more than that to me and so many others. In the next part of the letter I will be telling why we all LOVE the pond sooo much.

The first reason you should donate is because of beaver cookies. Beaver cookies are something we do every Thursday night after our dance. We write something you achieve or hope to achieve in the ~~future~~ future. This means soooo much to people because it gives ~~us~~ us a chance to talk about our fun times and goals.

The second reason you should donate is because of swimming. We can go swimming to cool us off. Today we are all drowning in our sweat. It is It is super hot. I can't wait to go...

swimming.

The third reason, you should do... because of fishing. I'm gonna be honest with you fishing isn't my favorite activity but it is one of my little brother's favorite activities. I would hate for him to lose that. Even though fishing isn't one of my favorite activities I still enjoy having the time to talk with friend chill, and learn to do some thing better. I am not very good at, ~~the fourth~~

The fourth and final reason ~~you should~~ I am going to tell you about is time for thought. Even though it doesn't include the pond you can still see the gorgeous pond. Time for thought is a time to talk about or day, thank someone, and make jokes. It is a time for us to talk about how much fun we have and how sad it is to leave camp on friday. ~~the fourth~~

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Windham Tolland 4H camp in Pomfret. Recently, their beloved pond has been damaged by the powerful rain storms this summer. The pond at Windham Tolland-4 H has been the center of camp life in the Quiet Corner. If you've ever been to summer camp, you know all the wonderful opportunities being a camper or counselor can afford you in life. Camp teaches you social skills, independence, life skills and allows for understanding of humanity and the world around you. To lose the pond at WT-4 H would devastate our beloved camp. Affording the enormous dollar price tag to fix the dam to save our camp would threaten the existence of camp as we know it.

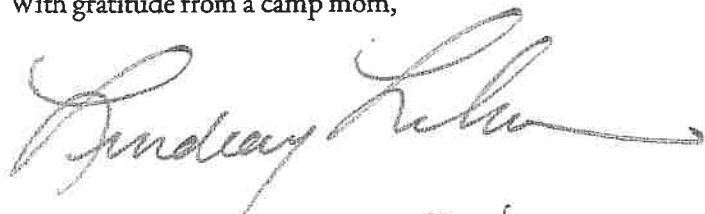
Camp life encourages lifelong learning. In a busy fast paced world, our children are inundated with social media, technology, and information overload as they scrap their way through school and life. They get caught up in their screens without realizing it and 4H camp allows them the opportunity to leave their phones behind, take a deep breath of fresh outdoor air, and have fun with their friends. They learn skills as counselors, how to take care of others and themselves. Campers and Counselors learn patience, teamwork and resilience. Losing camp would mean losing a connection with the great world we live in.

At the center of this 4 H camp is our beautiful pond, a pond that kids learn to fish in. A pond kids canoe and kayak and swim in. My daughter attends camp a few weeks each summer. She is 12 this year and it has been a difficult year with COVID and school regulations. My daughter, Rowan is an anxious child and getting outdoors at camp, being around friends, running, laughing and being active is so good for her psyche. Rowan has been raised with a pool in her yard and so swimming in fresh water is nerve wracking for her. She had a birthday party in the middle of July that she would need to swim in a pond at. I knew she was terrified. Rowan had 4H camp the week before the party and her counselor, Paige strongly recommended that everyone put on their suits and get in the water. The weather was hot and it was just before the hurricane came through New England and threatened the dam and pond. Rowan got in the water that first day because she adored her counselor. Counselors know everything- moms know nothing! She swam happily all week and even found a turtle. She found bravery that week at 4H camp and I will forever be indebted to her counselor for helping along that journey. Since, Rowan has been swimming in the ocean, a few lakes and even back at 4H camp this week. She is making memories for a lifetime because of the trust and connection she made at 4H.

Rowan is not alone in her love for the Windham Tolland 4H camp and their pond. My son is not a camp kid- he's 15 and has never had a love for camp. If you ask him his favorite part about camp he will tell you, in very few words: "the pond. The pond is my favorite part of camp. It's peaceful. It's beautiful. It's quiet. You can go out on a canoe and there isn't anything out there but the pond and the trees and the sky."

Please consider helping Windham Tolland 4H camp rebuild their dam and save their pond. The pond is the center of life at camp; a life that is crucial to the development of so many children who come from all around the country. Thank you for your consideration in helping with this project.

With gratitude from a camp mom,



Pitman CT