



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND  
INCORPORATED 1786

# TOWN OF ELLINGTON

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187  
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187  
[www.ellington-ct.gov](http://www.ellington-ct.gov)

TEL. (860) 870-3120 TOWN PLANNER'S OFFICE FAX (860) 870-3122

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2025, 7:00 P.M.

**IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT**  
**REMOTE ATTENDANCE: VIA ZOOM MEETING, INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED BELOW**

### I. CALL TO ORDER:

### II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items):

### III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Plan of Conservation & Development, Chapter 4-Conservation Strategies, Natural Resource Preservation: Historic Preservation.
  - a. Townwide Historic Resources Inventory.
2. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.
3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

### IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 25-26 Budget & Expenditure Update.
2. Approval of November 18, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.
3. Correspondence/Discussion:
  - a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Update.
  - b. CT Farmland Trust – Fall 25 Newsletter.
  - c. CT Farm Bureau – From the Farm November 2025.
  - d. CT Land Conservation Council – 2025 Impact Report.

### V. ADJOURNMENT:

*Next Meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2026*

---

Instructions to attend remotely via Zoom Meeting listed below. The agenda is posted on the Town of Ellington webpage ([www.ellington-ct.gov](http://www.ellington-ct.gov)) under Agenda & Minutes, Conservation Commission.

Join Zoom Meeting via Link:  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84568904772>  
Meeting ID: 845 6890 4772  
Passcode: 501124

Join Zoom Meeting by Phone:  
1-646-558-8656 US (New York)  
Meeting ID: 845 6890 4772  
Passcode: 501124

**Town of Ellington**

**General Ledger - On Demand Report**

Fiscal Year: 2025-2026 From Date:11/1/2025 To Date:11/30/2025

Account Mask: ?????00270???????

Account Type: All

Print Detail  Include PreEncumbrance

Print accounts with zero balance

Include Inactive Accounts

Filter Encumbrance Detail by Date Range

Account Number / Description

Budget Range To Date YTD Balance Encumbrance % Remaining Bud

1000.02.00270.10.50103  
Part Time---Conservation Commission-- \$1,600.00 \$0.00 \$390.00 \$1,210.00 \$0.00 \$1,210.00 75.63%

1000.02.00270.20.60221  
Advertising Printing---Conservation Commission-- \$400.00 \$0.00 \$48.89 \$351.11 \$0.00 \$351.11 87.78%

1000.02.00270.20.60222  
Dues & Subscriptions---Conservation Commission-- \$1,350.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$1,350.00 \$0.00 \$1,350.00 100.00%

1000.02.00270.20.60223  
Travel---Conservation Commission-- \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 0.00%

1000.02.00270.20.60234  
Professional Development---Conservation Commission \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 0.00%

1000.02.00270.20.60250  
Contracted Services---Conservation Commission-- \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 0.00%

1000.02.00270.20.60254  
St of CT Surcharges---Conservation Commission-- \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 0.00%

1000.02.00270.20.60341  
Office Supplies---Conservation Commission-- \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 0.00%

1000.02.00270.30.60341  
Office Supplies---Conservation Commission-- \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 0.00%

Fund: 1000 \$3,350.00 \$0.00 \$438.89 \$2,911.11 \$0.00 \$2,911.11

Town of Ellington

General Ledger - On Demand Report

Fiscal Year: 2025-2026

From Date:11/1/2025 To Date:11/30/2025

Account Mask: ?????00270???????

Account Type: All

Print accounts with zero balance

Include Inactive Accounts

Filter Encumbrance Detail by Date Range

Print Detail

Include PreEncumbrance

Budget Balance

Account Number / Description

Budget Range To Date

Balance Encumbrance

% Remaining Bud

Grand Total:

\$0.00

\$438.89

\$2,911.11

\$0.00

\$2,911.11

End of Report



Jared LaVack and Kies Orr LaVack run Fort Hill Farms with the help of an adorable friend.

## Advancing Dairy Sustainability Through Conservation and Innovation

Nestled in the quiet, rural northeastern corner of Thompson, Fort Hill Farms shows how dairy farmers can thrive by blending tradition, innovation, and conservation.

Dairy farming for 70 years requires commitment and innovation. Did you know that Fort Hill is one of six CT farms whose milk is sold under “The Farmer’s Cow” label?”

As one of just 87 dairy farms left in the state, this fourth-generation family farm remains a pillar of the community while adapting for the future.

Today, Fort Hill Farms is led by Kies Orr, who took over management from her parents. Her leadership earned her recognition as the state’s 2022 Outstanding Young Farmer — a testament to her forward-thinking

leadership and commitment to sustainable agriculture.

“Farmland protection gives us the security to diversify and keep farming here long-term.”

– Kies Orr, Fort Hill Farms

“Our family looks at farming as more than a job — it’s a way of life and something we are passionate about,” Kies explains. “We know that the community

needs to experience agriculture to understand and value it, and we are happy to help make that possible.”

Dairy remains at the core of the operation — with over 400 cows, including 200 actively milking — while agritourism brings the broader public onto the farm. Kristin Orr, Kies’ mother, focuses on the agritourism side of the business.

The farm is a community destination with lavender, gardens, and a nature walk. Fall is a special time on the farm with intricate corn mazes and pumpkin festivals — creating

– Continues on page 3



*Elisabeth at Cold Spring Brook Farm.*

“Every farm we conserve is a story of people who care deeply about their land and the future of farming in Connecticut.”

## Changes in the Seasons

**As the winter season approaches, I wanted to share that I, too, like the weather, am in transition.**

After more than 21 years of leading Connecticut Farmland Trust, I will be stepping down as Executive Director at the end of March 2026. This decision comes with a full heart.

When I joined Connecticut Farmland Trust, we were a young organization with a bold vision: to protect working farms across Connecticut. Together with farmers, landowners, donors, and partners, we’ve turned that vision into reality. Today, more than 75 farms and 6,100 acres of productive land are permanently conserved, ensuring that future generations will know this landscape as farmland, not rooftops and pavement.

Cold Spring Brook Farm in Berlin was the first farm I helped to protect. A stone’s throw from the Berlin Turnpike, the 41-acre farm was eyed for industrial development. Tom Nielson, who owned the farm with his cousin Steve Bengtson, told me, “This farm is worth more to me than any developer could ever pay for it.” The farm had been in their family for nearly 100 years. After they conserved it, Tom’s wife shared that he quietly toasted the portrait of his father and grandfather above the fireplace, saying, “This is for you.”

Over the years, I’ve seen that same deep connection to land and family reflected in the 50 projects I’ve had the privilege to help complete. Those moments, and the people behind them, are the memories I will always treasure.

What I am most proud of is not only the acres we’ve protected but the community we’ve built. Every conserved farm tells the story of people who care deeply about their land and the future of farming in Connecticut. Being part of those stories has been the honor of my career.

The Board of Directors has already begun a thoughtful process to select the next Executive Director, someone who shares our values and can guide the organization into its next chapter of protecting farmland and supporting farm families. We expect to welcome that person by early spring 2026, and I will work closely with them to ensure a seamless transition.

I am deeply grateful for your encouragement, generosity, and belief in the importance of farmland conservation. Though my role is changing, my admiration for this work and this community remains as strong as ever. Thank you for being part of this journey — and for ensuring Connecticut Farmland Trust’s best work is still ahead.

With gratitude,

Elisabeth Moore  
Executive Director



*Manure digesters (anaerobic digesters) convert manure and food waste into renewable energy used to power the farm and contribute to the local grid, while enhancing water quality and soil health.*

– Continued from cover

meaningful connections between rural agriculture and the local community.

Since 2018, the Orr family has partnered with the Department of Agriculture’s Farmland Preservation Program and the Connecticut Farmland Trust to permanently protect seven separate parcels of land.

Their conservation agreements conserve prime soils and provide the financial stability needed for reinvestment. Kies reflects, “Having our land protected gives us the security to diversify.

We can invest in renewable energy that works for the farm and its soils,

reduces costs, and helps keep us farming here long-term.”

One significant innovation has been the installation of an anaerobic digester through a partnership with AgGrid Energy.

Since 2021, the digester has converted manure and food waste into renewable electricity – powering the farm, lowering emissions, and contributing to the local grid.

Plus, the nutrient-rich by-product of anaerobic digestion enriches the soil and helps protect water quality.

The farm has also built a new dairy barn featuring robotic milking machines, which boost efficiency and animal welfare.

Conservation tillage, cover cropping, and nutrient recycling round out their efforts to maintain soil health and long-term productivity.

Kies and her husband Jared’s innovative approach won them regional recognition this year when they were awarded the 2025 New England Green Pastures award for Connecticut.

Fort Hill Farms exemplifies how dairy farmers – especially leaders like Kies Orr – can leverage farmland protection as a springboard for innovation, resilience, and community vitality.

## You Are Helping the Next Generation of Farmers

**The risks to farmland in Connecticut are real. Based on a study in 2016, the average age of a Connecticut farmer was 58, and over 90% of senior farmers lacked a clear succession plan.**

When retirement savings are primarily tied up in land, and as health care and other costs rise, selling the land to whoever can buy it can become a necessity, even if it means the land won’t be farmed.

Yet we know there are new farmers ready to farm and looking for land. Fortunately, a voluntary conservation

agreement called an “agricultural easement” can go a long way to helping senior farmers and new farmers alike.

The sale of development rights through an agricultural easement reduces the cash value of the farmland, providing new farmers who aren’t inheriting land a viable path to ownership. Older farmers may find the cash they need in retirement.

We visit conserved farms every year; a partnership that is possible because of ongoing community support. Thank you.

# Dicks Farm Remains a Place of Family Pride

**It has been two years since Dicks Farm was permanently conserved, and for David Dicks Jr., the decision brought some relief.**

Looking back, David recalled many seasons spent alongside his father and brothers, first with the dairy and then on their beef cattle farm in Southbury.

The daily rhythms of caring for their animals and tending the land passed on key personal values — responsibility, persistence, and an understanding of where food comes from.

Among the lessons David carried forward was a deep conviction that the land would remain farmland forever.

That conviction set him on a path toward land conservation. At 221 acres, Dicks Farm is unusually large in Connecticut. According to the USDA's 2022 Census of Agriculture, the average farm in the state is just

74 acres. New farmers, especially those who are not inheriting land, need smaller parcels.

After his father passed, as David and his brothers addressed settling the estate, they worked with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and the Connecticut Farmland Trust to structure conservation of their land in three parcels, a thoughtful step that provides flexibility for future farmers.

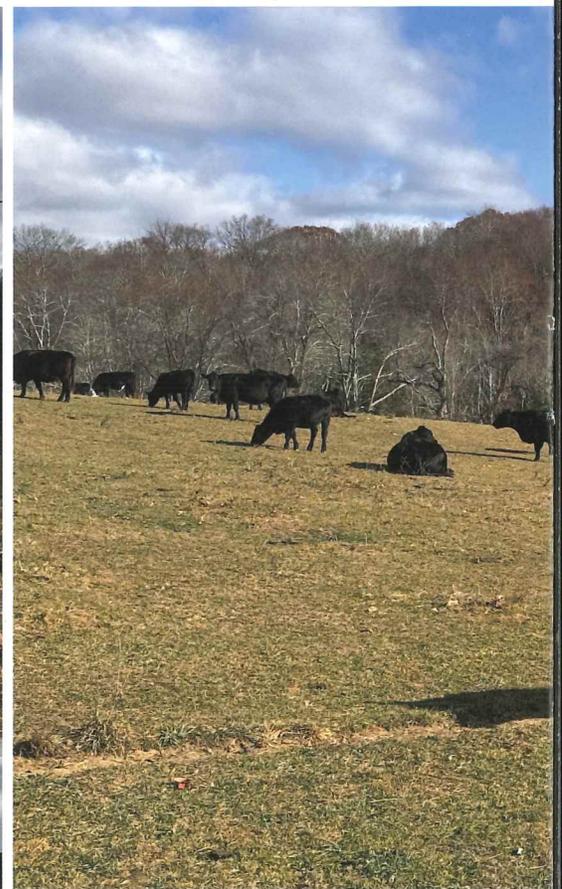
Most of the funding for the purchase of development rights came from both federal and state governments, but there was a gap.

Fortunately, the Southbury Land Trust had long recognized the property's significance due to its location and proximity to nearly 2,000 acres of conserved lands.

Southbury Land Trust played a central role not only in shaping the conservation strategy and contributing \$128,000 to close that critical funding gap.

As with many of our partnerships, our role included developing a conservation plan with the landowners, preparing the federal funding proposal, coordinating with state officials, and ultimately co-holding the conservation easements.

By serving as an easement holder, we remain connected to the land long after the project is completed, working with current and future landowners to ensure the conservation vision is honored for generations to come.



Now, two years after the farm was conserved, David reflects on the journey with pride. “Knowing this land could never be paved over is great reassurance, not only for me, but for future farmers,” he shares.

“My experience on this land has shown me just how deeply farming is a way of life. Caring for this land has given me strength to tackle the many real challenges of farming in Connecticut.”

Today, David continues to farm two of the conserved parcels, and new farmers have begun their own chapter on the third.

For many people, conservation is what makes land access and a future in farming possible.

When families, land trusts, and public partners come together, they help ensure that farmland, and the sense of community it supports.



“Knowing this land could never be paved over is great reassurance, not only for me, but for future farmers.”

## Is Conservation Right for You or Someone You Know?

**Dicks Farm is an example of how families can leave a legacy and also facilitate future farm access.**

**Yet it's a decision we know often takes time.**

Working with the Connecticut Farmland Trust can help you sift through various options and understand how the process of farmland conservation works.

If you — or someone you know — want to leave a farming legacy, protecting your land is one of the best ways to do it.

You would continue to own and manage the land and can sell or bequeath the land knowing that your conservation agreement (conservation easement) will run with the land forever.

There are state and federal sources of money that may be able to pay for an agricultural easement.

People who can donate (partially or in full) an easement are eligible for reductions in federal and state income taxes. We are available to discuss the details.

Please contact Elisabeth at [emoore@ctfarmland.org](mailto:emoore@ctfarmland.org) or call her at 860-247-0202, extension 224.





## Small Farms, Big Impact Diversified Farming, Conserved Land

### In the heart of Ellington, a quiet transformation has taken place at 43 East Porter Road.

Once known as Wraight Farm, a property historically used to raise pheasants, this 40-acre landscape conserved by Connecticut Farmland Trust has found new life as Greenwood Holistic Farm under the care of Tina and Dan Greenwood.

The Greenwoods launched their farm in 2022 with a clear mission: to raise food that is clean, humane, and sustainably grown.

They raise Belted Galloway cattle, Berkshire and Duroc hogs, Cornish-cross chickens, and a variety of hens for eggs. Their practices are rooted in regenerative agriculture, focusing on soil health, animal welfare, and environmental stewardship.

### The Challenge of Farmland Loss

In towns like Ellington, farmland is steadily replaced with housing and commercial development, making it harder for new farmers to access affordable land.



**“We need to prioritize farmland protection to balance development in our region.”**

— Tina Greenwood

That reflects a larger trend state-wide, where farmland is increasingly at risk. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, the state lost about 460 farms — an 8 percent decline — between 2017 and 2022, due largely to rising land costs and suburban expansion.

Farmers like Tina and Dan were looking for land and as the managers of Connecticut FarmLink program at that time, we were able to match them with the Wraight farm and guide them through the transition.

This farm transition demonstrates how land protection can support the next generation of farmers while preserving the state’s agricultural landscape.

“We are fortunate that there is conserved farmland in Connecticut. Our farm demonstrates that local, family-operated farms can thrive in communities across the state,” reflected Tina, continuing “We need to prioritize farmland protection to balance development in our region.”

Across the state, growing numbers of farmers like Tina and Dan, including young and transitioning farmers, are seeking help to find affordable, high-quality farmland.

As development pressures continue, we will rely on strong partnerships with farmers, state programs, and supporters like you to ensure farmland in Connecticut remains affordable and viable for the future.

# Federal Farmland Conservation Funding

## Uncertainty for Farmers

**Recent shifts in federal priorities for farmland conservation programs are raising concerns among farmers and advocates nationwide.**

These changes could have real consequences for working lands in Connecticut and the people who depend on them.

In January 2025, federal funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that supported key conservation programs was suddenly frozen.

In a state where farmland is already under intense development pressure, the loss of those funds could mean the difference between thriving farms and lost opportunities to keep land in production.

There has been some good news since then. Portions of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) funding were released in February, and Connecticut's program is now accepting applications through the end of the year.

ACEP remains one of the most effective tools for protecting farmland from development and ensuring that agricultural soils stay in active use.

Still, significant uncertainty remains. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its conservation arm, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), are undergoing major restructuring.

More than 15,000 employees across the country have opted for early retirement under a deferred retirement plan, and thousands more have been laid off.

In Connecticut, the departures represent the loss of hundreds of years of combined technical expertise — knowledge that will be hard to replace. With fewer staff, it's not yet clear how quickly programs will move forward or how funding decisions will be managed.

USDA has not provided much clarity about the future of several grant programs, and many details may hinge on the next Farm Bill.

As the situation evolves, we'll continue to monitor how federal funding changes affect farmland conservation in Connecticut.

For more frequent updates, we encourage you to subscribe to our e-newsletter where we'll share news as it emerges.



# A Beloved Place, Forever

## Connecticut Farmland Trust's supporters saved the sunflowers

**If you asked anyone in Newtown to name their favorite farm, Castle Hill Farm would top the list.**

Purchased in 1927 by Justyna and Stephan Paproski, the 100+ acre farm was once the second largest producer of dairy products in Fairfield County. Now owned and operated by Steve and Diana Paproski, Castle Hill has been a staple of the Newtown community for decades.

Over the past several years, the farm transitioned from dairy production and is now known for its fields of sunflowers. Yet you'd be hard pressed to name something that the farm doesn't do — Christmas trees, pick-your-own pumpkins, pick-your-own sunflowers, hay, and a corn maze, just to name a few.

A Ukrainian festival has made the farm a local staple. The Paproskis have also diversified their operation to make the farm a destination for weddings and corporate gatherings.

"When I look back to 1981, when my husband Steve's dad died, I really have to give Steve credit for preserving the farm," said Diana Paproski.

Recognizing that once the farm was gone, it would be gone forever, Steve and Diana worked with Connecticut

Farmland Trust, the Town of Newtown, and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to create a strategy to conserve the farm.

As a result, 31 acres of prime farmland were conserved, creating an anchor in the town and an inspiration for future generations of farmers.

"I'm so happy that the people in Newtown can drive down Route 302 and look at that beautiful field. And to be able to say that it'll be like that forever, that's wonderful," said Diana Paproski.

Land conservation projects like this take time, often spanning years depending on the desired pace of the farm family and the funding opportunities.

It involves listening to a farmer's goals, understanding the family situation, and crafting a protection strategy that can tap into community resources as well as state and federal funding. Often, conservation projects are years in the making.

Thanks to people like you, with your ongoing support, other farmers in Connecticut will have the opportunity to conserve their land like the Paproski family.

And because of that, other special places like the field of sunflowers will become a lasting part of the community.



"I'm so happy that the people in Newtown can drive down 302 and look at that beautiful field. And to be able to say that it'll be like that forever, that's wonderful."

— Diane Paproski

# Farmland Conservation Gets a Boost with New Staff

We are delighted to introduce two new staff members who have a passion for farming, land conservation, and working with communities. With Hannah and Rebecca on board, we will continue to assist local farmers and communities invest in farm viability approaches as well as explore how conservation is right for them.



## Hannah Abbott – Conservation Coordinator

Hannah Abbott joins Connecticut Farmland Trust as the Conservation Coordinator. With a background in soil and water testing, she brings scientific expertise and a personal connection to farming through her family's management of a grass-fed cattle operation in Litchfield.

Hannah earned a B.S. in Natural Resources from the University of Connecticut and a master's degree in Natural Resources from Virginia Tech. Her career began with five years as a lab analyst focused on soil and water quality. Outside of work, Hannah enjoys birdwatching and hiking. She has a special fondness for the American Kestrel – a farmland-loving bird that reflects her passion for open spaces and working landscapes.



## Rebecca Ridgway – Stewardship Coordinator

Growing up on her family's protected farm in Cornwall, Connecticut, Rebecca Ridgway has experienced firsthand how farmland conservation shapes a community. Today, as Stewardship Coordinator, she supports CFT's mission to visit protected farms and ensure the next generation of families can thrive on the land.

Rebecca earned a B.A. in Environmental Studies from Hamilton College and a master's in environmental studies from the University of Pennsylvania, where she focused on sustainable agriculture policy. Beyond her work at CFT, Rebecca enjoys arts and crafts, swimming, hiking, and savoring farm-fresh produce. She also volunteers as an EMT with the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department, reflecting her commitment to both community and conservation.

## New Website on the Horizon

In the coming year, you'll have a way to explore more farmland conservation options, review farm conservation stories, and explore an interactive farmland protection map. Highlights include:

- **More Information About Conservation** – Whether you are looking for general information on conservation, explanations of specific concepts, or a guide for how to protect your farm, we will have it.
- **Details on CFT-Protected Farmland** – You'll find stories that explain how, and why, farmers have conserved their land.
- **Ways to Give** – If you are curious about your options for making a donation, from cash to stock to donor advised funds, we will have it ready for you. Interested in protecting farmland in your will? You'll be able to access information about bequest giving, too.



CARLA MCELROY PHOTOGRAPHY

## Businesses Show Up for Farmland Conservation

Across Connecticut, many local and regional businesses are stepping up to help keep farmland healthy and productive for future generations.

Their support reflects a shared belief that caring for the land strengthens the communities where we all live and work.

These businesses choose to invest in something lasting — clean water, thriving farms, and the local food that connects us. Their generosity, combined with the gifts of hundreds of individuals, helps make farmland conservation possible across the state.

Please join us in thanking our **2025 business sponsors** for their leadership and commitment.

Cork and Antler Club  
Farm Credit East  
Harney & Sons Tea  
Long Table Farm  
Northwest Community Bank  
Principal Financial Group  
United Ag & Turf  
The Walker Group  
White Flower Farm

“The Walker Group takes its support of the community seriously, and we vote on employee-nominated organizations with potential for big impact. Connecticut Farmland Trust has received our community distribution dollars for two years in a row. We are proud to know our investment helps protect farmland in Connecticut and furthers the awareness of the need to conserve it.”

– **Diana Sutcliffe**, Business Operations and Marketing Director, The Walker Group

# There Are So Many Ways to Make a Difference

**You don't need to be a farmer to make a difference for Connecticut's farms. Every person has something meaningful to contribute — time, connections, or resources.**

You might choose to make a tax-deductible gift that helps protect farmland before it's lost. Or you may have land you'd like to see farmed again, or space to lease to a farmer just getting started. You could also bring people together by hosting a small gathering or meal to introduce others to the idea of farmland conservation.

Each action, large or small, adds up. Together we can keep the fields that feed us thriving and grow a community that values the land and the people who care for it.

## Tax-Friendly Ways to Give

- **Make a one-time special gift** by check or online. Donating appreciated securities such as stocks may help you avoid capital gains taxes.

You can also make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA to reduce income tax on your required minimum distribution. Recent federal legislation may increase your tax advantages for giving.

- **Give monthly** to make an impact all year long while supporting your budget. People contribute anywhere from \$5 to \$500 or more per month. **Now is a great time to start because a donor has pledged \$2,000 in your honor once we have 20 new monthly donors.** You can leverage your gift!

## Cash-Free, Tax-Savvy Ways to Give

- **Include a gift to Connecticut Farmland Trust in your will or living trust.** For bequest language or more information, contact Kimball Cartwright at [kcartwright@ctfarmland.org](mailto:kcartwright@ctfarmland.org)
- **Name Connecticut Farmland Trust as a beneficiary** of your retirement plan, life insurance policy, or financial account.
- **Recommend a gift from your donor-advised fund (DAF)** or name Connecticut Farmland Trust as a successor of interest.

## Everyone's Gift Matters and Will Make a Difference

Please contact Kimball Cartwright at 860-247-0202, ext. 223 or [kcartwright@ctfarmland.org](mailto:kcartwright@ctfarmland.org) to brainstorm ways you can help, including underwriting a program or suggesting a business that would like to support the protection of working farms.

Have you signed up for  
our free eNewsletter?

You'll read breaking news,  
updates on farmland conservation,  
and information about upcoming  
programs and events.

Sign up at [CTFarmland.org](http://CTFarmland.org)

 @CTFarmland

 @ctfarmland

### Board of Directors

**Keith Stechsulte**, *President*  
Farm Credit East, Enfield

**Nicholas Moore**, *Vice President*  
Sharon

**Michele Murray**, *Treasurer*  
Farm Credit East, Enfield

**Dawn Adiletta**  
Woodstock

**Lisa Bassani**  
Yale School of the Environment,  
New Haven

**Chris Casiello**  
Arethusa Farm, Litchfield

**Robert Chang**  
Echo Farm, Woodstock

**Robin Chesmer**  
Graywall Farms, Lebanon

**Baylee Drown**  
Long Table Farm, Lyme

**Joan Nichols**  
Nichols Forestry, Franklin

**Steve Rickenbacher**  
East Hampton

**Dr. James Shepherd**  
Smokedown Farm, Sharon

**Tim Slate**  
Kahn Tractor, Franklin

**MC Whelan**  
Massaro Farm, Woodbridge

### Staff

**Elisabeth Moore**  
Executive Director

**Hannah Abbott**  
Conservation Coordinator

**Kimball Cartwright**  
Development Director

**Rebecca Ridgway**  
Stewardship Coordinator

**Linda Veronesi**  
Accountant



Printed with soy inks.

 Share this newsletter with a friend or recycle.



77 Buckingham Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
860.247.0202



Barbra Galovich  
Town of Ellington  
57 Main St  
PO Box 187  
Ellington CT 06029-0187



“I like that the Trust is focused on protecting working farmland. Its easement terms are set up to be flexible so farms, like mine, can be viable and continue to evolve as farming changes.”

– **Chris Hopkins**, owner of the former Stone Wall Dairy, Cornwall

Visit our website [CTFarmland.org](http://CTFarmland.org) to learn more details.



## 150 YEARS OF INNOVATION

### CAES RESPONDS TO DISEASE, CLIMATE AND THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

Last year, strawberry growers began seeing a type of root rot that hadn't appeared in Connecticut before. A scientist with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station took on the issue immediately as a research project and within six months had determined the cause of the pathogen, found other cultivars that are more resistant to it, and stopped the disease before it could spread to other plants and growers.

"When a farmer brings a problem to us, we know they need a solution immediately," says Jason C. White, director of the experiment station.

As it marks its 150th anniversary this year, the CAES reflects on its mission and ongoing initiatives, highlighting research that scientists say could lead to significant technological breakthroughs in agriculture both locally and nationwide.

CAES was the first experiment station in the country, established by the state in 1875 to conduct agricultural research. It was followed by a network of land-grant university experiment stations across the country, including the UConn Agricultural Experiment Station, founded in 1881. CAES is the only one in the U.S. that's a state agency, says White, and its focus is research in agriculture, the environment and public health while the UConn experiment station's emphasis is on education and agriculture.

"We have 110 staff members, including post-doctoral scientists and of those, there are 45 Ph.D. scientists whose primary job is to do research," says White. "Agriculture is a big part of that."

Continued on page 3

## FARMER PROFILE: BISHOP'S ORCHARDS



At Bishop's Orchards in Guilford, siblings Ryan, Sarah and Carrie have taken the reins.

### A NEW CHAPTER AT BISHOP'S

#### Co-CEOs Usher in the Future While Honoring the Past

After decades of seven-day-a-week farm work, Keith Bishop is finally living his best life. Since officially retiring in August 2024 as CEO of Bishop's Orchards in Guilford, he's spent much of his time exploring the world with his wife, Debbie, traveling to places like Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Spain. For a man who's dedicated his life to his family's generational farm, this new season is well-earned.

The business he leaves behind is in steady, forward-thinking hands: His daughters, Sarah Bishop DellaVentura and Carrie Bishop Healy, were officially named co-CEOs a year ago after a lifetime of gradual training. And although their titles are new, their leadership isn't.

"Once we made the decision to come back to the business, I knew that was my end goal — for our father to step away knowing the business was in good hands," said Sarah, 45, who oversees farm operations and retail. "As the next generation, moving the farm into the future is so important to us."

Carrie agrees: "This business has been a cornerstone of the community for 154 years," she said. "We were raised with the values of contributing to the greater good and staying deeply connected to those around us. Preserving our traditions and keeping farming alive is at the heart of what we do — it's how we honor our legacy and ensure future generations can continue to be a part of it."

Continued on page 4

Let's talk about

# ATV safety



**Having the safety talk with your kids isn't just important — it's essential.**

In 2023, 19% of deaths in off-highway vehicle (OHV) accidents were children under 16, with only 2% wearing helmets.<sup>1</sup> This alarming statistic prompted Nationwide to launch the **Let's Champion Rider Safety®** campaign, providing tips and resources for effective safety discussions and protection for young riders.



Scan code to get  
safety tips for your  
young riders.



Learn more at  
[Nationwide.com/ATVsafety](https://www.nationwide.com/ATVsafety)

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Nationwide and the Nationwide N and Eagle and Let's champion rider safety are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. The Farm Bureau, FB and the FB National logo are trademarks of the American Farm Bureau Federation and are used with permission under license by Nationwide. © 2024 Nationwide FBO-0221CT (08/24)



## 150 YEARS OF INNOVATION

Continued from cover

CAES's mission, he says, is "putting science to work for society" and the scope of that includes plant diseases, public health, food safety and soil testing.

"More than 25,000 citizens a year come in for help from our offices," says White.

CAES is currently working on a research project exploring how nanotechnology can be used in agriculture. It's a mix of science and engineering that involves applying tiny particles — at the atomic and molecular level — directly to plants. As White puts it, instead of spreading chemical fertilizers over an entire field, nanofertilizers zero in on the plant itself, making nutrient delivery more efficient and potentially much more effective.

White, who has a Ph.D. in environmental toxicology and is a research affiliate within the National Science Foundation's Center of Sustainable Nanotechnology, says the research can improve crop productivity, reduce chemical use and minimize the environmental impact of pesticide application. CAES researchers were among the first in the country to study nanotechnology in agriculture, he adds, and "now a large number of groups are working in this space."

"The motivation for a lot of this nanotechnology work is that agriculture tends to be fairly inefficient," says White, noting that 60 to 70 percent of the fertilizer or pesticides applied to crops never reaches the plant system. "Nanotechnology enables you to deliver it precisely."

Historically used in medicine — to deliver drugs to targeted cells, for example — White says he and other ag scientists began researching nanotech in agriculture about a decade ago.

"We asked ourselves, if you can use nanotech to deliver something to the human body, which is a complex system, can we do the same thing to specifically deliver nitrogen or phosphorus or some pesticide directly to the location where it's needed?" says White. "It will make things cheaper for the farmer, have a significantly less damaging effect on the environment and make plants more resilient."

The research is ongoing, but White says he envisions the technology eventually being utilized by the average farmer. Several

companies in Europe, South America and Asia are actively developing nano-based solutions, he says.

"If you do this right, it can have significantly positive benefits," White adds. "It's getting harder and harder to farm so we need to come up with novel strategies that will benefit the agricultural community."

It's just one of the several innovative approaches CAES is exploring to make agriculture more efficient and sustainable in the years ahead. Farming, as White puts it, "is a tough business." New technologies must be affordable, easy to use and deliver real results. "If I'm going to convince a farmer to do something different, I think that it needs to be both cheaper and more effective."

But nanotech is only part of the story. Among its most ambitious initiatives are four research hubs known as Centers of Excellence, each tackling critical issues in agriculture and public health. These include the Center for Vector Biology & Zoonotic Diseases (CVBZD), the Center for Nanotechnology and Agricultural Pathogen Suppression (CeNAPS), the Center for Nanoscale Phosphorus Delivery (CeNaPD) and the Center for Nanoscale Sulfur Research (CeNaSR) — the latter two supported by a major USDA grant aimed at making agriculture more precise, sustainable and effective.

CAES is also expanding work on invasive aquatic plants like hydrilla, which has increasingly taken hold in the Connecticut River due to warming winters. "Twenty years ago, it was too cold for hydrilla to overwinter here. That's changed," White notes, "and it's now moving into our rivers and lakes." Thanks to legislative support, the program now includes a dedicated office and three new scientists focused on the threat.

That spirit of responsiveness extends beyond the lab. Public outreach is baked into CAES's mission, from diagnostic services to public lectures. "All of our scientists are expected to speak not just at scientific conferences, but also to the public," White says.

And for farmers, gardeners and the public, CAES offers a growing number of ways to stay informed — from social media updates and publications to podcasts, videos and alert systems.

As White puts it: "You'd be hard-pressed to find another institution our size doing the breadth of research that we do."

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Paul Larson**  
President

**Keith Bishop**  
1st Vice President

**Lars Demander**  
2nd Vice President

**Kimberly Brockett**  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Walter Adametz**  
**Ken Assard**  
**Mark Blackmer**  
**Vickie Bomba-Lewandowski**  
**Wayne Budney**  
**Patrick Hedden**  
**Josh Nemet**  
**Diana Paproski**  
**Matt Wraight**

## STAFF

**Tracey McDougall**  
Executive Director  
traceym@cfba.org

**Breanne Salerno**  
Administrative Assistant  
adminsupport@cfba.org

**Traci Neal**  
Newsmagazine Editor  
tracineal110@gmail.com

## CONNECTICUT FARM BUREAU

78 Beaver Road, Suite 1C  
Wethersfield, CT 06109  
860-768-1100

[www.cfba.org](http://www.cfba.org)

## FROM THE FARM

is published by The Connecticut Farm Bureau Association. The editor welcomes letters on agricultural topics and news items about Farm Bureau members and activities.

**Fairfield County**  
pete@sepefarm.com  
203-470-4084

**Hartford County**  
hcfb@comcast.net  
860-251-9318

**Litchfield County**  
lcfb@sbcglobal.net  
203-598-9701

**Middlesex County**  
middlesexcountyfb@gmail.com  
860-349-1250

**New Haven County**  
nhcfb@nhcfb.org  
203-430-8807

**New London County**  
newlondoncountyfb@gmail.com

**Tolland County**  
tollandcountyfarmbureau@gmail.com  
860-742-5725

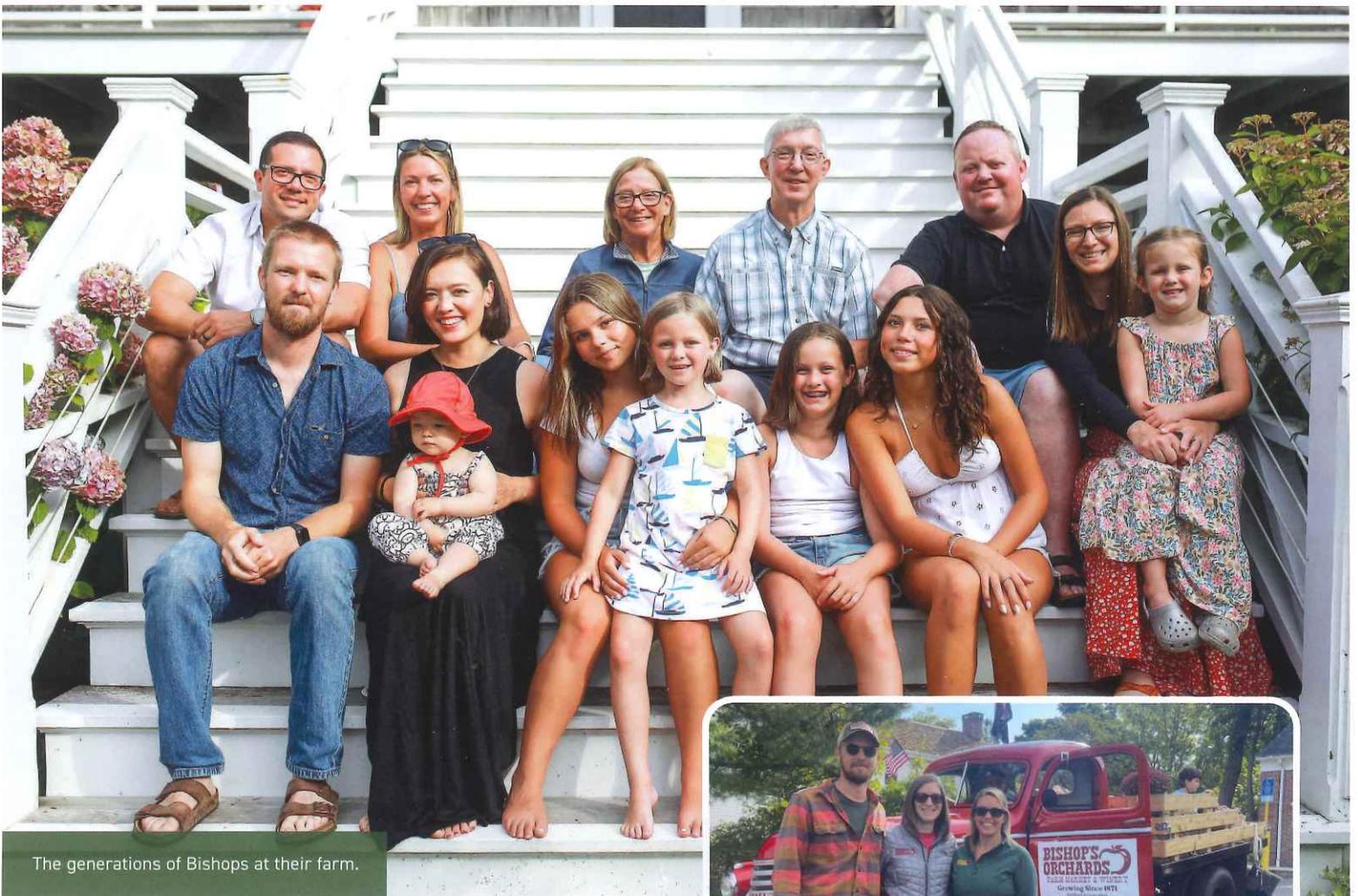
**Windham County**  
rblackmer@charter.net  
860-923-2710

## ADVERTISING RATES AND DEADLINES

Call 860-768-1100 for rates and deadlines. Discounted rates are available for CFBA Members.

## THE MISSION OF THE CONNECTICUT FARM BUREAU

is to elevate the stature of agriculture in our state. Through education, market promotion and legislative advocacy, we strive to increase farm income and to improve the quality of life not only for Connecticut farmers, but also for their consumers.



The generations of Bishops at their farm.



## FARMER PROFILE

Continued from cover

Their shared leadership mirrors a successful model established by their father and his cousin Jonathan Bishop, who led as co-CEOs before them. "They did succession right," said Sarah. "They never held us back from innovating, and they stepped back when it was the right time."

### ROOTS THAT RUN DEEP

Bishop's Orchards has been in the family since 1871, and it shows. Generations of Bishops have shaped it into what the 300-plus-acre business is today: not just a farm, but a year-round agritourism destination and full-service grocery market. While their grandmother Barbara once resisted the idea of year-round operations — "that was not the way back then," said Sarah — today it's a big part of what keeps the business going.

"I think about what's going to happen in the future all the time," said Sarah. "I've got two daughters in high school now, and I want to leave this place in a state that excites them, the same way my dad and grandfather (Albert) and other generations before them did for us."

The Bishop family has long emphasized the importance of outside, off-the-farm life experience before returning to the business. All four siblings — Sarah, Carrie, Ryan and Allison — worked elsewhere after college. "At the time it felt unfair," Sarah said, "but looking back, it was the best thing we could've done. It gave us perspective — and appreciation."

### INNOVATIONS AND EXPANSION

Under Sarah and Carrie's leadership, Bishop's has leaned into agritourism and innovation with full force while building on their seed-to-table traditions.

"We're focusing on growing specialty vegetables specifically for use in our prepared foods, as well as for private farm-to-table dinners and, potentially, larger private events held in the orchard," said Carrie, 39.

In May, they launched their Apple Blossom Festival, reviving a concept that hadn't happened since before COVID. The event featured everything from kids' pedal carts and a "bubble barn" to wagon rides, live music and educational talks by local beekeeper Vincent Kay. "It was all about creating something immersive and exciting for families," said Sarah.

"Our goal is to bring more people together to create lasting memories in meaningful ways," said Carrie. "We envision expanding the business with that purpose at the core — whether it's shopping in our market for ingredients to enjoy a home-cooked meal, spending time with friends listening to live music over our food and drinks, or connecting with the farm through pick-your-own experiences and seasonal activities. At the heart of it all, we want to foster connection."

The apple festival was just the beginning. The newly dubbed Big Red Barn, built two years ago on the main orchard property, has become the hub for all agritainment events. Nearby, they're transforming a decades-old Quonset hut — once used to store tractors — into the Cider Hut & Cider Garden, complete with an old 1941 Chevy pickup retrofitted as a cider truck. The hut, which opened this summer, offers the farms own hard cider and wine, with picnic tables nestled among fields of flowers, and will be available for private event rentals, said Carrie.

"In addition," Carrie added, "we're in the planning stages for a new Little Red Barn, which we sadly lost to a fire in 2024. Our goal is to reimagine it as a vibrant, multiuse space for our guests to enjoy in new and meaningful ways." The sisters also expanded the farm's play area with new attractions designed to keep families coming back.

"We're not looking to become an amusement park," said Sarah, "but we are using the foundation of what this farm was built on and bringing it to new light for future generations."

**LOOKING AHEAD**

Their brother Ryan, 35, is preparing to eventually take over the agricultural side of the operation. Their sister Allison lives on the West Coast but remains deeply connected to the family legacy.

Still, Sarah admits she often worries: "What if we're the last generation? I'll never force my kids — but in the meantime, we're doing our best to be here for the community, be a farm, and be a voice in the industry for as long as we're around."

The farm's culture is changing, too. Gone are the seven-day workweeks of past generations. Today, Bishop's focuses on sustainable staffing and work-life balance. "We're still working just as hard," said Sarah, "but we're building a business and a culture where we can also watch our children grow up."

**Connecticut Organics**

**Premium Bagged Mulch & Soils**  
A Division of Connecticut Mulch Distributors, Inc.

**Family Run and Operated Since 1977**  
Highest Quality Products at an Affordable Price!  
Call for our full line of mulch products and pricing  
Bulk: 860-698-9579 Bags: 860-835-5014

1-800-353-3331  
101 Hampton Road  
Pomfret Center, CT  
06259

**Hull forest products**

Helping sustain your forest by providing a path to financial return

www.hullforest.com

Growing Beauty and Value in Your Forests Since 1965

- Professional woodland management
- Careful timber harvesting
- Always buying logs
- We help keep forests as forests

**DEER FENCING INSTALLED**

- Installation of high tensile woven wire up to 8' & 10' high for the most effective deer control. Installations to USDA and NRCS standards.
- Installation of livestock fencing, cattle grates, high tensile electric and high tensile woven wire for cattle, goats, sheep and horses.
- Post Pounding for trellising of apples and grapes.
- Competitive Pricing on all fence supplies.
- Smart Net Systems installed as well.

800-483-8889 www.nodeer.com ORANGE, CT 06477

**SPECIALTY AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS, LLC**

**LYONS & WRIGHT INSURANCE**

**Your Local Farm Insurance Agency**

35 COLD SPRING ROAD, UNIT 221 • ROCKY HILL, CT 06067  
860-257-0022 • LWINSURES.COM

MATT WRAIGHT - MATTW@LWINSURES.COM

## GOOD NEWS FROM NATIONWIDE

Through Connecticut Farm Bureau's partnership with Nationwide Insurance, members have access to a range of benefits designed to support your personal and agricultural needs. Since 2009, Nationwide and CFBA have partnered together to provide tailored protection for both large and small farming operations in Connecticut. Founded by farmers in 1926, Nationwide understands the unique needs of the agricultural community, making it the preferred protection company for farmers and their families in Connecticut.

### INSURANCE COVERAGE & SERVICES

**Farm Insurance:** Tailored for farms of all sizes, including property, equipment, and liability.

**Home & Auto Discounts:** Members can save up to 20% when bundling home and auto policies.

### EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

**Online Loss Control Education:** Access presentations on topics such as animal handling, agritourism liability, rural road safety, and electrical safety.

**Webinars & Consultations:** Participate in educational webinars and schedule one-on-one consultations with licensed Nationwide representatives.

### FINANCIAL SERVICES

**Farm Succession Planning:** Receive assistance with transition, estate, and legal planning.

**Retirement & Investment Solutions:** Access a variety of financial products, including life insurance and IRAs.

### MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT

**Risk Management Assessments:** Benefit from consultations with Nationwide's risk management experts.

**Ag Insight Center:** Stay informed with the latest resources and information to drive your business success.

To explore these benefits further or to get started, you can contact Nationwide at 1-800-255-9913 or find a local farm agent.

### WILD CULTIVATED SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS

- Wholesale to the trade
- Grown on Connecticut white oak logs
- Deep umami flavor & health benefits
- Best Agroforestry methods
- Dehydrated for 2 year shelf life
- Fresh harvests every week
- Special treat for your CSA boxes
- Call or write for samples



**VERSAILLES FARMS**  
52 Locust Road, Greenwich  
203-862-0400 • [info@versaillesfarms.com](mailto:info@versaillesfarms.com)



BE GOOD TO THE LAND & THE LAND WILL BE GOOD TO YOU  
Farm Founder, Philip James Jones 1821-1912

# Jones

**FAMILY FARMS  
& WINERY**

**Proud Supporter of  
Connecticut Farm Bureau**



Shelton, Connecticut • [www.jonesfamilyfarms.com](http://www.jonesfamilyfarms.com)

## ELM CITY TRAILER

Est. 2013

**ElmCityTrailer.com**

*Work or play, we're behind you all the way!*

74 Amity Road • Bethany, CT 06525 | 203.535.0075

# LOW-COST WAYS SMALL FARMS CAN LEAN INTO TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Technology is transforming agriculture, and small farms are no exception. With the right tools, even modest operations can boost productivity, reduce risk and stay competitive.

## AFFORDABLE TECH SOLUTIONS

Today's agricultural technology comes with tools designed to empower farmers, streamline operations and maximize productivity, and it's now more accessible than ever, even for small-scale farms. Thanks to advancements in technology and increasing competition in the market, many of these tools are becoming more affordable and scalable. Farm management apps are often available through subscription models or even free versions, making it easy for small farmers to access livestock tracking, grazing schedules and record-keeping without a high upfront cost.

- Soil and weather sensors
- Drones and GPS systems
- Remote monitoring systems

These innovations are shaping a future where small farmers can leverage cutting-edge tools to improve efficiency and yields, closing the gap between large- and small-scale agricultural operations.

## RISK MANAGEMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Innovative technology not only boosts efficiency but can also improve safety and mitigate risks. Nationwide partners with a variety of agtech vendors to provide solutions to customers with preferred pricing.

- Asset tracking and theft prevention



With Razor Tracking, farmers can monitor the location and usage of their equipment in real time, reducing the risk of theft and ensuring efficient use. This system provides peace of mind and helps protect these crucial assets, potentially saving farmers thousands of dollars in losses or downtime.

- Fire prevention tools
- Propane safety systems

These solutions provide small farms with the tools needed to address potential threats before they become costly problems.

## HOW NATIONWIDE ENCOURAGES FARM INNOVATION

By investing in the right tools and technologies, small farms can pave the way for greater resilience, efficiency and success.

With Nationwide as their partner in innovation, adopting and implementing agtech solutions has never been easier or more essential.

Visit [AgInsightCenter.com](https://AgInsightCenter.com) for more resources and expert tips to help you run a successful business and maintain the safety of your operation.

Nationwide, the Nationwide N and Eagle, and Nationwide is on your side are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. © 2025 Nationwide

# Protect your next

**At Nationwide®, we're committed to protecting your future and your next — whatever that might be.**

Whether you're focused on business success, family security or community prosperity, Nationwide® can help you constantly evolve to ensure a bright future.



To learn more, visit  
[nationwide.com/cfba](https://nationwide.com/cfba)



Products are underwritten by Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company and affiliated companies, Columbus, Ohio, and are subject to underwriting guidelines, review and approval. Availability varies. Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, member FINRA, Columbus, Ohio. Nationwide and the Nationwide N and Eagle are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. The Farm Bureau and the letters FB are registered service marks of the American Farm Bureau Federation and are used under license by Nationwide. © 2024 Nationwide FBO-0222CT (08/24)





78 Beaver Road, Suite 1C  
Wethersfield, CT 06109

[www.cfba.org](http://www.cfba.org)

PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 2805  
HARTFORD, CT

**INSIDE**  
*From the Farm*

Farmer Profile  
**Cover**

CAES Celebrates its 150th  
**Cover**

Farm Innovation with  
Nationwide  
**Page 7**

BARBARA GALOVICH  
ELLINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
55 MAIN ST  
PO BOX 187  
ELLINGTON CT 06029-0187



**DISCOVER  
AN ENTIRE  
ORGANIZATION  
WORKING FOR  
YOUR SUCCESS.**



Nobody serves your ag credit needs like Farm Credit East.

Farm Credit East was made in agriculture. It's all we do. So every product, every service and every person is dedicated to meeting your financial needs and growing your success. We know agriculture, we understand your business needs, and work to achieve your goals.

Discover the difference at Farm Credit East.

[farmcrediteast.com](http://farmcrediteast.com)  
800.562.2235

- Loans & Leases
- Financial Record-Keeping
- Payroll Services
- Profitability Consulting
- Tax Preparation & Planning
- Appraisals
- Estate Planning
- Beginning Farmer Programs
- Crop Insurance





CONNECTICUT  
Land Conservation Council

2025

IMPACT REPORT



## Our Great Green Connecticut

On the final night of Connecticut's 2025 legislative session, I was at the Capitol, meeting with legislators and advocating until the very last minute. One of the bills voted on that last day included the state bond package—which held essential funding for a critical state land conservation and urban greenspace grant program for land trusts and their communities.

As we do every year, we worked hard to ensure that the funding was included, and although I was confident the bill would pass, I still felt nervous.

And I wasn't the only one! As the votes came in, a board member sent me a short message:

– *"Voting now in House. Lots of green on the board."* –

Those words stayed with me. In that moment, "lots of green" meant a resounding win for land trust funding and for the communities, wildlife, and future generations who will benefit from conserved lands. But more than that, it became a powerful metaphor for the year we've had at the State Capitol.

This session delivered many "green victories": the codification of Nature-based Solutions as part of the state's climate action plans; a long-overdue increase in funding for the Community Investment Act, which supports local land-use projects; and, of course, the renewed commitment to bonding for land conservation. At a time when federal conservation, climate, and environmental protection programs have faced freezes, cuts, and setbacks, Connecticut charted a different course – one that lifts up the environment, equity, and resilience.

For me, this was a personal highlight of the year – a reminder that even in challenging times, progress is possible when people come together for a cause they love. Thanks to your support, CLCC was there every step of the way: advocating, testifying, building relationships, and ensuring that "lots of green" isn't just a moment in the legislature – it's a movement for the future of Connecticut.

As you read through this report, I hope you will enjoy the many shades of "green" we achieved together as told through the perspectives of conservation friends and colleagues – from policy victories to the projects and partnerships that continue to shape a more resilient, equitable, and connected Connecticut.

Thank you for your continued support in making all of this possible.

With gratitude,

Amy Blaymore Paterson  
Executive Director

For Land  
For Community  
For Connecticut



Conserve Land  
Plan Your Legacy  
Sponsor Us  
Donate

Visit [ctconservation.org/ways-to-give](https://ctconservation.org/ways-to-give)



# LAND



Laurel Ridge by Winchester Land Trust

Connecticut is a green state, a testament to the collective efforts of a vibrant conservation community. This past year the state has made remarkable strides in land acquisition, community engagement, and environmental advocacy. From safeguarding critical habitats to fostering inclusive access to nature, CLCC and its partners have worked tirelessly to protect and enhance Connecticut's natural beauty and ecological health for all.

## Introducing the Land & Easement Acquisition Program (LEAP)

To empower land trusts to swiftly protect Connecticut's invaluable land and water, CLCC launched the **Land and Easement Acquisition Program (LEAP)** in January 2025. LEAP addresses the critical need for new and matching funding for land and easement acquisitions, helping land trusts bridge funding gaps and move at the speed of the real estate market. Funded through a generous grant from **The Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation**, LEAP requires all awarded projects to close within 12 months or less, ensuring prompt conservation action.

For land trust leaders, LEAP grants fill a gaping hole in conservation finance - fast access to capital. For private landowners, LEAP makes land trusts more viable buyers. And for the officials at the **Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP)**, LEAP creates more viable projects for its Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) Grant Program.

Since its launch, LEAP has awarded **\$1,539,719** through nine grants, leading to the **permanent protection of 7,278 acres** across the state. This significant investment accelerates land conservation, safeguards critical habitats, enhances biodiversity, and expands public access to nature. Examples of LEAP projects follow.

**"CLCC's grant programs foster crucial partnerships and provide vital gap funding for smaller organizations. This enables a larger pool of conservation projects and expands our collective impact."**

**- Andrew Hoskins**  
Chief of Staff, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

**Aspetuck Land Trust** was awarded \$50,000 for acquisition of a ~6-acre addition to Poindexter Preserve, and \$59,850 to acquire a second parcel that further expands the preserve by another ~4 acres. These acquisitions will expand the popular preserve by over 15%, safeguard diverse wildlife habitats, scenic rock walls, a wetland and grassland meadow cherished by nature enthusiasts, and establish essential public amenities, including safe off-street parking and a new central trailhead.

**Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (NCLC)** received a grant award of \$98,500 for acquisition of the 117-acre Glen Brook property in Sherman, expanding NCLC's Strauss Morrissey Preserve and creating a continuous 277-acre public recreation area. The Glen Brook property is a critical remaining farmland and forest parcel, featuring core forests, wetlands, and vital habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species like the Eastern Box Turtle, Wood Turtle, and Spotted Turtle. The project will establish a public parking area and a new trail network, connecting to existing trails for a total of 4.5 miles of passive recreation opportunities.

**Wyndham Land Trust** was awarded \$75,000 for the acquisition of the 320-acre Hillandale Woods property located in Pomfret and Brooklyn. This project is significant for its connectivity, linking previously protected conservation lands and enhancing regional wildlife corridors. For residents of Brooklyn, a town with a very low percentage of protected land, Hillandale Woods will offer opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and bird watching on existing logging roads.

**"LEAP provided crucial gap funding for our flagship Bond project. Land trusts need programs like this so that we can move faster and close more land deals."**

**- Dennis Main**  
Board Chair, Avalonia Land Conservancy

### LEAP Grants, January - September, 2025

Land Trust	Project	Town	Acres	Grant
Aspetuck Land Trust	Poindexter Preserve Addition #1	Easton	6	\$50,000
	Poindexter Preserve Addition #2	Easton	4	\$59,850
Avalonia Land Trust	Bond Property	Montville	669	\$500,000
Litchfield Land Trust	Putnam Property	Litchfield	105	\$52,034
Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy	Colebrook Reservoir	Colebrook & Hartland	5,200	\$250,000
	Glen Brook	Sherman	117	\$98,500
Trust for Public Land	Girl Scout Camp	Lebanon	350	\$280,000
Winchester Land Trust	Laurel Ridge	Winsted	507	\$174,335
Wyndham Land Trust	Hillandale Woods	Brooklyn & Pomfret	320	\$75,000
<b>TOTAL (9 Grants)</b>			<b>7,278</b>	<b>\$1,539,719</b>



Putnam Property by Litchfield Land Trust

## Transaction Assistance Grant Program (TAG)

CLCC's Transaction Assistance Grants (TAG) help land trusts cover due diligence costs such as land surveys, appraisals, and environmental assessments. These grants are indispensable for land trusts, helping close the gap in funding for essential activities that are challenging to fund.

From July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, CLCC awarded 22 TAG grants totaling **\$233,488**, facilitating the **protection of 2,837 acres**. Since launching the TAG program in 2023, CLCC has provided a total of \$517,000 in TAG grants to 40 land trusts, helping them protect ~5,300 acres across Connecticut.

## 2025 Katchen Coley Award for Excellence in Conservation

### David Sargent of the North Branford Land Conservation Trust

CLCC was honored to present the Katchen Coley Award for Excellence in Land Conservation to **David Sargent**, President of the **North Branford Land Conservation Trust (NBLCT)**. Under his guidance, NBLCT has navigated unique challenges to achieve remarkable success, acquiring key properties including the 22-acre Harrison Farm Preserve, the Starry Lane property, which created a crucial trail connection for the community, the 16-acre Angeloni Woodland Preserve, and a 37-acre parcel near Lake Gaillard. His dedication and vision make him a truly deserving recipient of this award.



## TAG Grants, July 2024 - September 2025

Land Trust	Project	Town	Acres	Grant
Aspetuck Land Trust	Poindexter Preserve Addition #1	Easton	6	\$50,000
	Poindexter Preserve Addition #2	Easton	4	\$59,850
Avalonia Land Conservancy	Raymond & Althea Main Conservation Area	Ledyard	30	\$3,000
	Victor & Murray Czczotka & Lucy Lefevre	Griswold	28	\$6,000
Bolton Land Trust	Esche Property	Bolton	52	\$6,885
Cornwall Conservation Trust	Cobble Forest	Cornwall	42	\$16,800
Farmington Land Trust	Cohen Property	Farmington	37	\$3,500
Groton Open Space Association	Center Groton Preserve	Groton	84	\$18,000
Kent Land Trust	Lovig Property	Kent	62	\$1,803
Litchfield Land Trust	Putnam Acquisition	Litchfield	105	\$18,000
Morris Land Trust	Humphrey Farm Reserve	Morris	37	\$2,500
Norfolk Land Trust	Erder Property	Norfolk	12	\$6,500
Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy	Milde Farm	Litchfield & Torrington	670	\$20,000
Old Lyme Land Trust	188 Four Mile River	Lyme	42	\$15,000
Ragged Mountain Foundation	Pinnacle Cliffs	Plainville	3	\$7,500
Roxbury Land Trust	Weinberg Property	Roxbury	259	\$18,000
Salisbury Association	Miles Mountain	Salisbury	221	\$20,000
Southington Land Conservation Trust	North Ridge Preserve	Southington	60	\$1,000
Steep Rock Association	Hidden Valley Expansion: Cornell Parcels Acquisition	Washington	145	\$12,000
Winchester Land Trust	Laurel Ridge	Winsted	507	\$20,000
Wolcott Land Conservation Trust	The Edward & Adelaide Piteo Preserve	Wolcott	34	\$2,000
Wyndham Land Trust	Abbott Project	Pomfret	380	\$20,000
<b>TOTAL (22 Grants)</b>			<b>2,837</b>	<b>\$233,488</b>

# Advocacy & Conservation Policy

**“For the state, CLCC’s leadership on the Natural Heritage and OSWA Review Board is invaluable, as it guides and informs decision-making on legislative changes and policy that directly impact land trusts.”**

– Lindsay Suhr  
Director, Office of Land Acquisition & Management, CT DEEP

CLCC continued to be a leader in land conservation policy at the Capitol, working closely with legislators, **CT DEEP**, and **CT Department of Agriculture** to advance 2025 funding and policy priorities including restoring bond authorizations for the open space grant program; integrating Nature-Based Solutions into CT climate action, response, and preparedness policies; increasing funding to support open space and urban greenspace projects; and establishing a new grant program supporting farmland access for under-served farmers.



CLCC’s Amy Blaymore Paterson at CT DEEP’s OSWA grant announcement.

Along with **Governor Lamont, CT DEEP Commissioner Dykes, and Hartford Mayor Arunan Arulampalam**, CLCC celebrated \$14.3M in OSWA grant funding to land trusts and municipalities. This funding was used to purchase and protect more than 2,270 acres of green space across 25 properties in 22 towns and cities across Connecticut.



Colin Piteo of CLCC; Shelley Harms of Norfolk Land Trust; Sharon Lynch of Avalonia Land Conservancy; and Aaron Lefland of CLCC at Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C.

Member land trusts take advantage of several opportunities throughout the year to learn about public conservation policy and program. At the state level, CLCC partners with CT DEEP to help land trusts navigate application requirements for the OSWA and Urban Green and Community Garden (UGCG) Grant Program. At the federal level, CLCC represents Connecticut’s land trusts at the **Land Trust Alliance’s** Advocacy Days event, sharing policy priorities with legislators and bringing guidance on federal regulations back to member land trusts.

**“CLCC’s guidance and support in applying to CT DEEP’s OSWA grant program is crucial for land trusts, especially the small land trusts I work with in Northwestern Connecticut. Acquisitions of land and easements would not be possible without it.”**

– Shelley Harms  
Board Member, Norfolk Land Trust



**“Our role as the voice of Connecticut’s land trusts allows us to publicly advocate on issues that state agencies cannot directly address. It’s an empowering position, and one that delivers real, tangible results for land trusts and the broader land conservation community.”**

– Amy Blaymore Paterson  
Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council

## Advocacy Goal: Support Funding & Staff For Land Conservation & Farmland Preservation

### Policy Priority

### Progress & Results

Champion consistent bond funding for CT DEEP land conservation, trails, and parks programs, including **Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA)**, **Urban Green & Community Garden (UGCG)**, **Recreation & Natural Heritage Trust Program**, and **Recreational Trails Program**, to protect wildlife, habitats, and clean water while providing equitable access for public recreation and local food production.

Bond authorizations for conservation programs have been renewed for the next two years. The bond package included \$10MM per year in authorizations for OSWA and UGCG. Also included in the bond package are authorizations of \$3MM per year to support the Recreation & Natural Heritage Trust Program, and \$10MM for the Recreational Trails Program.

Champion increased funding for the **Community Investment Act** and ensure the funds remain dedicated to supporting state programs for open space, agriculture, historic properties, and affordable housing.

The Community Investment Act received an increase after nearly 20 years, with 25% of the funds allocated to CT DEEP to support the OSWA and UGCG programs.

Strengthen CT DEEP’s capacity to streamline grant administration and engage in public-private partnerships that help the agency meet its mission.

CLCC’s Executive Director, Amy, continues to serve as Chair of the state’s **Natural Heritage, Open Space, and Watershed Land Acquisition Review Board**. Yaw, CLCC’s Director of Grants & Programs, continues to Co-Chair of the Land Subcommittee of the **Connecticut Equity & Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC)**. In these capacities, Amy and Yaw represent the land trust community and support collaboration between land trusts and state agencies.

Support authorization for the **CT Department of Agriculture** to administer a farmland access program, including financial assistance to land trusts, new and historically marginalized farmers, and other tools to increase farmland access opportunities for farmers seeking land.

Public Act 25-141, **An Act Establishing a Grant Program for Agricultural Preservation & Farmland Access Purposes**, was passed overwhelmingly by the General Assembly. It authorizes the Department of Agriculture to create a new grant program to encourage and retain agricultural lands for agricultural purposes, supporting new and historically marginalized farmers.

## PEOPLE

Land trusts and conservation allies across the state look to CLCC as an indispensable partner and leader, providing critical training and resources while fostering a collaborative and forward-thinking land conservation community. With CLCC and our network of partners in their corner, land trusts can achieve much more than they could working alone.

### Building Land Trust Capacity

There are ~120 land trusts in Connecticut. Approximately 75% service a single town, with the rest operating regionally or on a statewide basis. That means that staff and board members are intricately connected to the community and adept at navigating local conservation challenges and opportunities. This grassroots strength, however, is also a barrier to success because most of the land trusts across the state are small, volunteer-run organizations with operating budgets of less than \$50,000. In a complex, costly, and changing conservation landscape, limited capacity is a persistent constraint felt by many land trusts

That's why CLCC continues to build out training, technical assistance, and resources that help land trusts serve Connecticut's communities with excellence. This year, land trusts and conservation allies accessed several new resources, including:

#### Resources for Land Trusts

**Board Development Toolkit:** Land trusts often face challenges in maintaining a high-functioning board, recruiting new board members, orienting them to the organization, and sustaining high levels of engagement. That is why CLCC partnered with the **Land Trust Alliance** to create a Board Development Toolkit, a comprehensive, seven-part resource to help land trusts build stronger, more effective boards.

**Strengthening Land Trusts Through Smart Fundraising:** CLCC partnered with **Danosky & Associates** to develop and deliver a four-part webinar series that equips land trust board members and staff with the tools and strategies for building a strong and sustainable fundraising program. From understanding donor behavior to identifying prospects and cultivating major gifts, each session offers practical insights to help land trusts and conservation organizations raise the funds needed to acquire, protect, and steward land.

**Anatomy of a Land Transaction:** Acquiring land and conservation easements is complex and time-consuming. To help land trusts navigate this process, CLCC created Anatomy of a Land Transaction, a seven-part webinar series designed to give land trust staff and board members a practical, well-rounded foundation in the core components of land conservation deals, from project selection, appraisals, and environmental due diligence, to surveys, closings, and post-closing responsibilities.

**"CLCC is an educator, a convener, and a source of financial and technical support that is indispensable to conservation in Kent and statewide."**

– **Connie Manes**  
Executive Director, Kent Land Trust



Bill Kraekel and David Brant of Aspetuck Land Trust; Amy Blaymore Paterson of CLCC; Charles Irwin Schoendorf; and Lisa Shanahan of Norwalk Land Trust.

**"This merger is about securing the future of land conservation in Norwalk. ALT brings ten full-time staff, decades of expertise, and a proven track record in protecting land and connecting people to nature. Together, we'll be able to do more, and do it better – forever."**

– Lisa Shanahan, Board President, Norwalk Land Trust

**"Aspetuck Land Trust has always taken a regional approach to conservation. Welcoming Norwalk into our network is a natural extension of our mission."**

– Bill Kraekel, Board President, Aspetuck Land Trust

#### Technical Assistance Tailored to the Needs of Land Trust Members

**Advanced Collaboration and Merger Assistance Program:** CLCC's Advanced Collaboration and Merger Assistance Program is designed to help land trusts achieve stronger organizational health and effectiveness by pursuing structural realignment, advanced forms of collaboration, or merger with other organizations. In the past year, CLCC helped three groups of land trusts join forces for long-term sustainability and impact.

The **Barkhamsted Land Trust** and **Hartland Land Trust** joined together to create the **Northwoods Land Conservancy**. By merging into a single entity, these two volunteer-led organizations seek to better serve their communities and protect and steward more land.

The **New Roxbury Land Trust** merged with **Wyndham Land Trust**, providing enhanced protection and preservation of land in Woodstock and Union. For Wyndham Land Trust, the merger expands its footprint and forms one of the largest land trusts in the state, encompassing land in eleven towns in Northeastern Connecticut.

The **Norwalk Land Trust** merged with **Aspetuck Land Trust (ALT)**, a regional organization serving Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Redding, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. By joining Aspetuck, the Norwalk community will benefit from greater access to conservation resources, expertise, and capacity to protect and care for its open spaces. By acquiring Norwalk's protected lands, Aspetuck will advance a regional vision for land conservation, the Green Corridor 2030 Initiative, which aims to connect and protect natural areas across Southwestern Connecticut.

**"We (Barkhamsted Land Trust) didn't have any capacity, we were pretty much a defunct organization, and we were concerned about what's going to happen to our properties if the land trust couldn't continue to operate. Joining forces with Hartland Land Trust was extremely worthwhile for land conservation in both towns. It's the way to go."**

– Roger Behrens  
Board Member, Northwoods Land Conservancy



# Cultivating Conservation Connections

If you were to ask the staff and volunteers of your local land trust, "Where's the best place to learn about land conservation in Connecticut?", chances are their response will include CLCC's Connecticut Land Conservation Conference. The annual event, the largest gathering of conservation professionals in the state, welcomed over 600 participants in 2025, marking the largest turnout in its 41-year history. Representatives from land trusts, conservation groups, municipal commissions, state and federal agencies, students, and allies passionate about conserving Connecticut's natural and working landscapes gathered to make connections and learn from one another on topics such as land acquisition and conservation funding; protecting biodiversity and wildlife; land use planning, tools, and technology; and stewardship and natural climate solutions.

**"Wherever I choose to be, I belong."**

**- Dudley Edmondson**  
Photographer, Filmmaker, Writer, Activist

The keynote address, delivered by photographer, filmmaker, writer, and activist Dudley Edmondson, focused on community-centered conservation. Dudley reminded the attendees that nature is everywhere. Whether in a park in Hartford or a preserve in Northwest Connecticut, every outdoor space can spark a lifelong love for the natural world. The future of conservation depends on our community's ability to foster these connections and ensure everyone has access to nature's benefits and cares about protecting them for generations to come.

**"CLCC is a great convener, and its annual conference and workshops provide invaluable training and resources that help land trust leaders acquire new skills, connect with peers, and talk through challenges and successes. It's really good content that improves overall the capacity and effectiveness of land trusts."**

**- Eric Hammerling**  
Board Member, CLCC  
Office Director, CT DEEP Environmental Review & Strategic Initiatives

**SAVE THE DATE** Connecticut Land Conservation Conference  
**March 21, 2026 Wesleyan University**



U.S. Senator Murphy, Lynn Werner of HVA, Amy Blaymore Paterson of CLCC, Tony Zunino and Tim Abbott of HVA

## 2025 Conservation Hero Award

**Lynn Werner of the Housatonic Valley Association**

Land conservation is a local endeavor, with each community presenting its own challenges. That's what makes Lynn Werner's legacy so remarkable. CLCC honored her with our **2025 Conservation Hero Award** for her transformative leadership at the **Housatonic Valley Association (HVA)**, where she served as Executive Director for three decades.

Lynn's collaborative approach fostered partnerships that have protected vital landscapes across town and state borders. She co-founded the **Litchfield Hills Greenprint**, which has conserved thousands of acres across Northwest Connecticut. She served as a key player in the Stanley Works effort, preserving over 5,000 acres along the Housatonic River. And her vision led to the Wild and Scenic designation for a 41-mile stretch of the river and the **Follow the Forest** initiative to connect forest habitats across the Northeast.

Congratulations, Lynn. Your expansive and enduring impact inspires us all.



“CLCC’s support acts as a stamp of approval, giving our forest stewardship efforts greater credibility. Because CLCC is helping fund our work, the community is more willing to trust and support the Woodbridge Park Association’s efforts.”

– Andrea Urbano  
Board Member, Woodbridge Park Association

“Land trusts don’t have many options for funding that supports land management, and that’s a big problem. We have a lot of forests in Connecticut and across New England, but they’re facing serious threats from climate change, invasive species, and ongoing development pressure. CLCC’s climate-smart program is enabling us to proactively care for and strengthen our forests.”

– David McCarthy  
Executive Director, Joshua's Trust

Land trusts are at the forefront of addressing the environmental threats of climate change. Land stewards are charged with the long-term care of Connecticut’s natural lands. They are leading the way in testing and deploying climate-smart stewardship practices that strengthen environmental resilience, enhance biodiversity, and safeguard land from stressors such as invasive species and extreme weather events.

## Advancing Climate-Smart Stewardship Practices

CLCC’s Climate-Smart Land Stewardship Grant Program helps land trusts integrate climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation into the stewardship of conserved lands. This program provides grants for developing and executing stewardship plans that support landscape resilience, sequester carbon, and nourish biodiversity.

In 2025, CLCC awarded 19 grants to land trusts - eleven planning grants and eight implementation grants - totaling **\$340,222**. The funded projects demonstrate proactive, practical, and innovative nature-based solutions, which may involve creating forest management plans, restoring pollinator meadows and early successional habitats, and implementing climate-smart forestry demonstrations. Examples of climate-smart projects follow.

**Joshua's Trust's** implementation grant is advancing a restoration project at the Madeline Regan Preserve in Tolland, focused on regenerating pitch pine and oak, removing invasive species, and increasing biodiversity in an area currently dominated by white pine. Pitch pine-scrub oak barrens are among Connecticut’s most threatened terrestrial habitats. The aim is to open up the area to promote regeneration, potentially using prescribed burns to remove pine duff and create space for seedlings. This project will enhance climate resilience by reducing the risk of blowdown and pest outbreaks typical in dense, even-aged pine stands, while fostering a more diverse and structurally complex forest.

**Great Mountain Forest's** climate-smart project is enhancing the resilience and productivity of its forest by addressing several areas with stalled growth and low diversity. Techniques include planting climate-adapted native trees, and thinning overcrowded young trees to accelerate succession, supported by invasive species removal. With funding from a CLCC implementation grant, GMF is improving structural complexity and fostering a diverse, multi-aged forest. These efforts will significantly enhance carbon sequestration and serve as a model for climate-smart forestry.

The **Woodbridge Park Association (WPA)** is working to promote forest health, resilience, and climate mitigation through its ten-year Climate-Smart Forest Stewardship Plan, focusing on “Beech Treatment for Forest Resilience.” The project is designed as an experiment to learn and disseminate effective strategies for controlling beech affected by beech leaf disease, a new threat to forest health in Connecticut. Through demonstration, signage, guided hikes, educational activities, WPA will raise awareness about beech disease and invasive plant impacts, engaging residents in caring for the health and resilience of local forests.

“As New England faces intensifying climate pressures, resilient and diverse forests are more important than ever. Funding from CLCC enables us to pursue proactive, climate-smart forest management practices that support diverse, adaptive ecosystems capable of withstanding unpredictable climate disruptions.”

– Mike Zarfos, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, Great Mountain Forest

## Climate-Smart Grants, July 2024 - September 2025

Land Trust	Implementation Project	Town	Acres	Grant
Gather New Haven	Quinnipiac Meadows Eugene B. Fargeorge Preserve Forest Stewardship Plan	New Haven	6	\$50,000
Great Mountain Forest	Restoring Forest Resilience Through Climate-Smart Management	Norfolk	56	\$49,825
Essex Land Trust	Multi-Habitat Management for Resilience at the Johnson Farm Preserve	Ivoryton	49	\$50,000
Joshua's Trust	Madeline Regan Preserve Pitch Pine Restoration	Tolland	2	\$11,553
Kent Land Trust	Meadow Restoration at East Kent Hamlet Nature Preserve	Kent	2	\$31,927
Lyme Land Conservation Trust	Climate Resilient Learning Landscape at the John Pritchard Conservation Center	Lyme	1	\$10,048
Madison Land Conservation Trust	Pollinator Meadow & Woodlands Understory Restoration at the Rettich Preserve	Madison	6	\$39,000
Woodbridge Park Association	Beech Treatment for Forest Resilience at Alice Newton Street Memorial Park	Woodbridge	8	\$46,171
<b>TOTAL (8 Grants)</b>			<b>130</b>	<b>\$288,524</b>

Land Trust	Planning Project	Town	Acres	Grant
Branford Land Trust	Van Wie Woods Sustainable Forest Management Plan	Branford	120	\$3,600
Burlington Land Trust	Seven Steps Falls (aka Fetzer Property) Forest Management Plan	Burlington	12	\$1,463
Connecticut Audubon Society	Forest Stewardship Plan at Bent of the River Audubon Center	Southbury	693	\$8,000
CT Forest & Park Association	A Living Laboratory for Climate Resilience & Stewardship at Field Forest	Durham	152	\$6,000
Darien Land Trust	Olson Woods & Piacentini Preserve Climate Resilience Plan	Darien	16	\$5,365
Essex Land Trust	Multi-Habitat Management for Resilience at the Johnson Farm Preserve	Essex	49	\$5,475
Flanders Nature Center	Forest Management Plan at Leavenworth Preserve	Woodbury	86	\$3,375
Lordship Improvement Association	Lordship Bluffs Restoration Project	Stratford	2	\$5,925
Middlesex Land Trust	Palmer Taylor Preserve Forest Stewardship Plan	Portland	87	\$4,425
North Branford Land Conservation Trust	Forest Management Plan for a Carbon-Smart Demonstration Forest	North Branford	37	\$3,750
Shelton Land Conservation Trust	Restoration of the Nicholdale Brook Riparian Buffer Zone	Shelton	67	\$4,320
<b>TOTAL (11 Grants)</b>			<b>1,321</b>	<b>\$51,698</b>

Funding for CLCC's Climate-Smart Stewardship Grant Program was paid for by the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Grant program, established through Public Act 22-118, and awarded and administered by the **Connecticut Department of Agriculture**. The Connecticut Land Conservation Council was one of twelve organizations selected to distribute sub-grants to land trusts. In 2025, CLCC completed distribution of its Climate-Smart funds.



Connie Manes and Angus Gracey of the Kent Land Trust at the East Kent Hamlet Nature Preserve

"Climate-smart projects are tangible ways to take direct local action through stewardship and channel climate anxiety into something hopeful. As we witness real-time changes and drastic climate events unfolding around us, this work gives us a way to think about the future, support the health of our landscapes, and connect others with resources to do the same."

– Ricky Bentley  
Program Manager, Connecticut Land Conservation Council

### Advocacy Goal: Support Funding & Staff For Land Conservation & Farmland Preservation

#### Policy Priority

Champion **Nature-Based Solutions** as a priority and preferred alternative in state policies, goals, and legislation to allow Connecticut's ecosystems to naturally sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase biodiversity, and protect against climate change impacts that negatively affect the state's public health and infrastructure.

#### Progress & Results

The CT General Assembly passed major climate legislation, including provisions regarding Nature-Based Solutions:

- Public Act 25-125 (HB 5004), **The Climate Action Bill** codifies the use of Nature-Based Solutions (forests, trees, meadows, wetlands, riparian buffers, healthy soils, etc.) as part of the state's comprehensive climate action strategy.
- Public Act 25-33 (SB 9), **The Climate Resiliency Bill** provides planning tools for municipalities to address climate preparedness and response. The bill includes prioritizing Nature-Based Solutions in municipal resiliency improvement districts. It also bans neonicotinoids on turfgrass and restricts the use of rodenticides to certified professionals.

Ensure public lands, including state parks, forests, wildlife management areas, and other natural and working lands of high conservation value, are protected.

Legislative victories protecting public lands included:

- Passing Special Act 25-22 (SB 1565) transferring ~47 acres of floodplain along the Shetucket River, deemed surplus property by the Department of Transportation, to the **Avalonia Land Conservancy**.
- Defeating HB 7282 which would have conveyed a portion of the Mattatuck State Forest in Plymouth to a private entity contrary to state conservation goals.

# COMMUNITY

**Community-Centered Conservation** aims to broaden the conservation movement to include people as well as large-scale landscapes and ecological connectivity. People have too often been sidelined or excluded from the equation, thus overlooking a critical link between healthy ecosystems and healthy communities.

CLCC defines this approach by centering people—their voices, needs, and lived experiences—in order to achieve a more inclusive and effective conservation movement. By engaging more groups, CLCC seeks to help land trusts build stronger communities and subsequently strengthen long-term support for the land itself, underpinned by the belief that conservation must be for everyone.



Sovereign Land Trust



Don Shaw Jr.



## Bird & Hikes

CLCC's Bird & Hike Program aims to provide opportunities for guided birding outings on land trust preserves, municipal parks, and other green spaces aimed at historically marginalized groups and communities. These events are designed to be a cornerstone of CLCC's community conservation efforts, helping to connect people with nature in welcoming environments to ignite the passion of new environmentalists and conservationists.

Thank you to the organizations that partnered with us to get people outside and interested in bird matters.

Bird & Hike Partners	Location
Dudley Edmondson	
Great Meadows Conservation Trust	Wood Parcel,
Keney Park Sustainability Project	Wethersfield
Men of Color Hike CT	
Outdoor Afro	
Sovereign Land Trust	Westmoor Park,
Outdoor Afro	West Hartford
Interreligious Eco-Justice Network	Knowlton Park,
Sierra Club Connecticut	Bridgeport
Hamden Land Conservation Trust	Brooksvale Park,
African American Society 024	Hamden
Gather New Haven	Quinnipiac
Outdoor Afro	Meadows,
	New Haven
Great Mountain Forest	Great Mountain
	Forest,
	Norfolk
Aspetuck Land Trust	Seaside Park,
Sierra Club Connecticut	Bridgeport
A.J. Lewis Academy	
The Carver Foundation	Jefferson School,
	Norwalk
Sierra Club Connecticut	Northwest Park,
Boy & Girl Scouts	Windsor
Interreligious Eco-Justice Network	Riverside Park,
Sierra Club Connecticut	Hartford
CT Forest & Park Association	
Milner Middle School	Keney Park,
Leadership Grater Hartford	Hartford



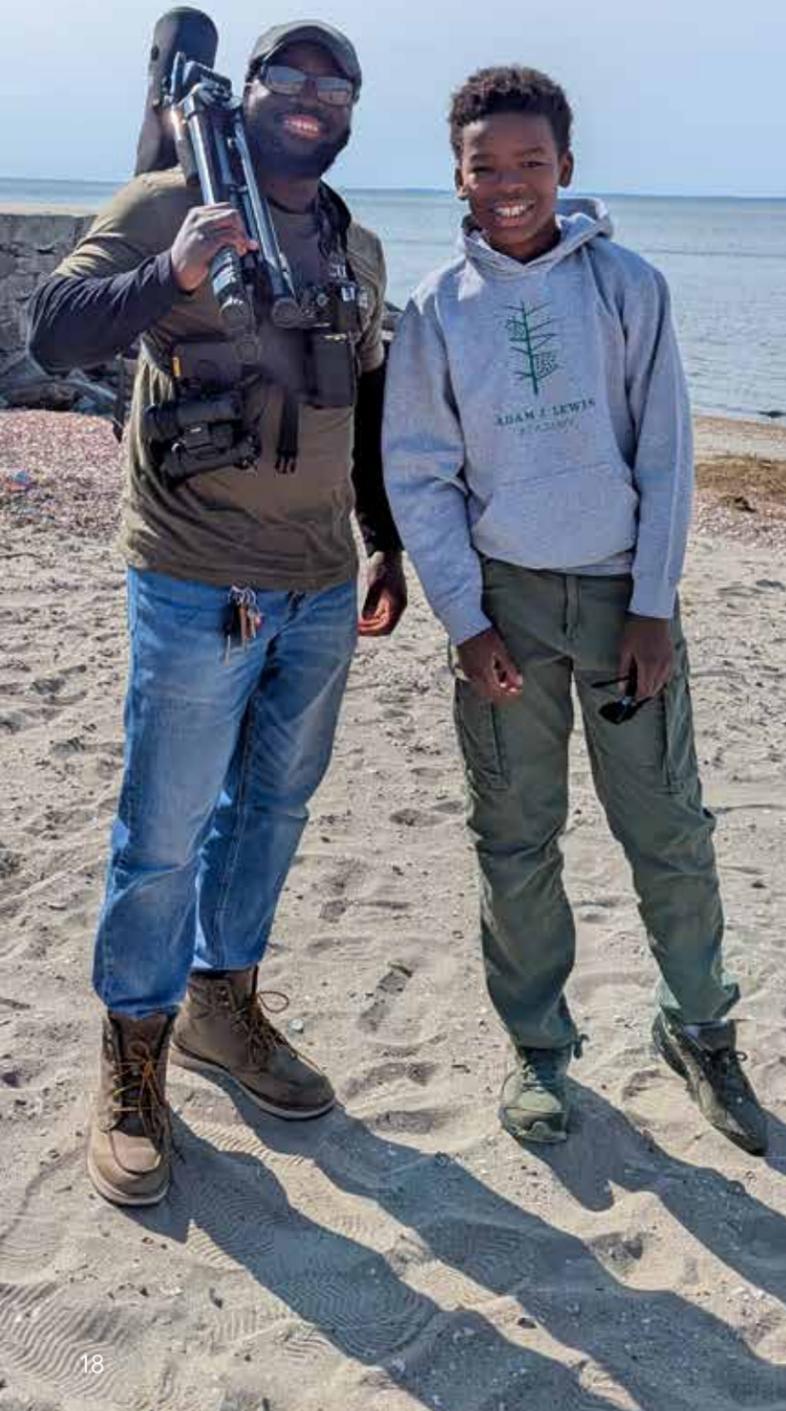
AnneMarie Goenne



Diana Johnson

## Amar'e & Ospreys in Bridgeport

Amar'e, sixth grader at Adam J. Lewis Academy in Bridgeport, experienced birdwatching for the first time on a Bird & Hike led by CLCC's Yaw O. Darko at Seaside Park. Now, he's hooked on birds and wants to learn more and do whatever he can to help. He's especially interested in ospreys, one of the species he encountered during his Bird & Hike. He interviewed Yaw to learn more about how and why he got involved in birding.



### What made you want to help birds?

Birds are fascinating creatures—they come in all shapes, sizes, and colors; they embark on incredible migration journeys; and their interactions with each other and their habitats are mesmerizing to watch.

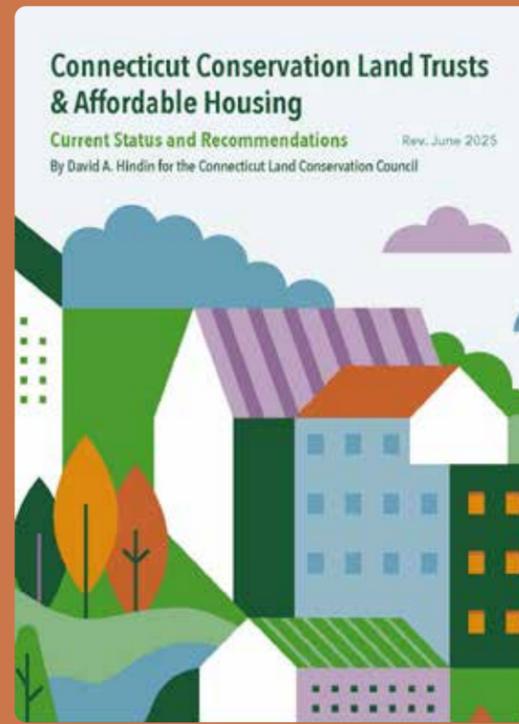
As I spent more time observing birds and appreciating their role in ecosystems, I developed a deep sense of connection with them. Seeing how human actions can both harm and help birds made me want to take an active role in conservation. Habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change threaten many species, but thoughtful conservation efforts—such as habitat restoration, nest protection, and community education—can make a real difference.

This realization motivated me to ensure that others are aware of the birds around them, whether in urban, suburban, or rural spaces. By helping people see and understand birds, I hope to inspire more individuals to care for and protect them.

### What has been your experience with ospreys?

Ospreys are one of my favorite birds to watch, especially when they are hunting. They are incredible fish hunters, often seen hovering over the water before diving feet-first to catch fish. I've observed them in Bridgeport at Ash Creek and Seaside Park; in Wethersfield and Hartford along the Connecticut River; and at different points along the Long Island Sound. I look forward to seeing them during Springtime when they return to their nest and raise their young.

Reggy St. Fortcolin



## Land Trusts & Affordable Housing

If Connecticut values a vibrant and green Connecticut, its residents must ensure everyone has a place to live. Our new report, "Connecticut Land Conservation Trusts & Affordable Housing," offers a fresh perspective on how land trusts can help address the state's housing crisis.

"This report is both a recognition of the thoughtful work many land trusts are already doing and an opportunity to learn more and take action for our broader community. Land trusts have an opportunity to expand their impact by embracing partnerships that support affordable housing—work that complements our conservation values and deepens our relevance in the communities we serve."

- Amy Blaymore Paterson  
Executive Director, CLCC

CLCC's role is to demystify this issue and inspire action. By fostering dialogue, CLCC aims to help land trusts find common ground with housing groups. "The most important thing is to make this a normative part of our conversation," said Connie Manes, Executive Director of the Kent Land Trust. "We need places where everyone who contributes to our community can live. There is no charity implied in that. It's a matter of equity."

## Land Trusts & Food Insecurity

In partnership with **Steep Rock Association (SRA)**, CLCC launched a project to connect land trusts with social service organizations, aiming to achieve a common goal: growing and distributing healthy food to people and families who need it most. Funded by the **Connecticut Community Foundation**, the effort centered on relationship-building between land trusts and food security organizations in Waterbury through a series of roundtables and a Bird & Hike at SRA's Macricostas Preserve. The groups came together and forged new alliances to discuss how to better meet the need for more hands-on education and the growing demand for fresh food.

To build on this momentum, SRA hosted workshops for community groups at its Judea Garden, offering practical experience in operating a community garden that addresses local food needs. This project has laid the groundwork for future collaboration, showing how land trusts can use their resources—beyond acquiring and protecting land—to help build more resilient and equitable communities.

CLCC also partnered with **Healing By Growing Farms** to inform and inspire land trusts to start community gardens on their land. The East Haven-based organization maintains a small farm in a residential neighborhood that provides support for brain injury and trauma survivors. Produce grown at the farm is donated to neighbors in need and distributed by local community groups.



# COMMUNITY



## Excellence in Community Engagement Award

**"It's fun to spend time in nature, and to be in a tech-free environment."**

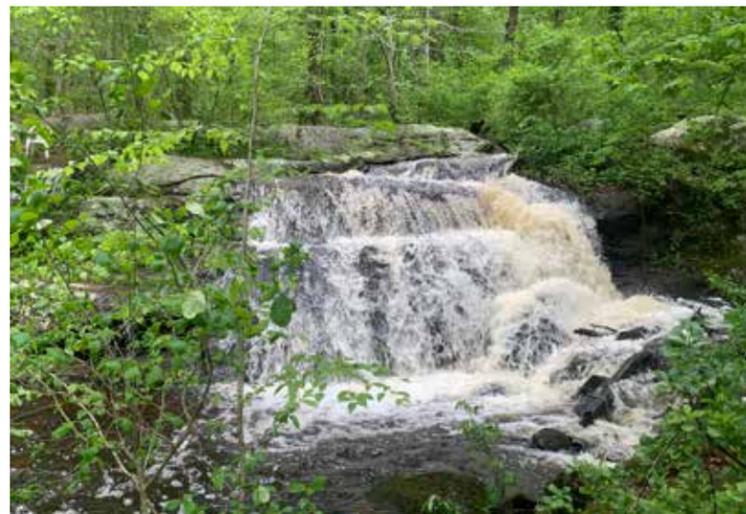
**- Connor, 2nd Grade, Groton**

### Groton Open Space Association with special recognition of Lynn & Dan O'Connell

Remember the first time you saw a real waterfall? A group of second graders experienced one for the first time when they hiked at Sheep Farm North, a preserve managed by the **Groton Open Space Association (GOSA)**.

The students were visiting through the GOSA/ Groton Public Schools hiking program, which annually introduces over 600 students in grades K-3 to local preserves and green spaces.

Lynn and Dan helped create and launch the partnership in 2023, and organize volunteer-led hikes that allow kids to explore and enjoy their natural environment, boosting their interest in outdoor activity, science, and land stewardship.



# ABOUT US



Lindsay Pettinicchi

## Progress Towards a Strategic Vision

**In a world where environmental challenges are ever-evolving, CLCC remains steadfast in its mission to elevate and strengthen land conservation in Connecticut.**

Connecticut's land trusts are doing extraordinary work conserving 200,000+ acres of natural lands - more than half of all protected land in Connecticut. Unfortunately, Connecticut's green space and its wildlife have never been more threatened. From the climate crisis to increased development pressure, natural lands are becoming degraded, disconnected, and destroyed. Limited public investments in land conservation and barriers to equitable access further challenge efforts to keep Connecticut green.

Connecticut's land trusts and land conservation community are poised to respond to these threats by accelerating the rate of land protection and using their land to address community needs. CLCC is here to help, and we are working to expand our role as a primary resource for Connecticut's land trusts.

Our strategic goals for 2023-2027 include:

- 1** Dramatically increase the pace and amount of land protected in Connecticut
- 2** Build a strong, sustainable land conservation community with capacity to permanently conserve and steward natural and working lands
- 3** Enhance permanence of protected lands
- 4** Integrate diversity, equity, inclusivity, and environmental justice into all aspects of land conservation
- 5** Strengthen CLCC's organizational capacity and sustainability to lead the state's land conservation community

***Thank you for being a crucial part of this journey.***



# Is Your Land Trust A Member?

CLCC's grant programs, capacity-building programs, and technical assistance are available to land trust members. To learn more about membership, visit [ctconservation.org/membership](http://ctconservation.org/membership).

"As a board member of my small town's land trust, I have experienced CLCC's relevance by way of its advocacy, technical and educational support, and access to much needed funding for land conservation."

– **Celina Vansetti**  
CLCC Board Member, Killingworth

## Officers & Board of Directors

- Gwen Marrion, Chair**  
Bolton
- Jonelle Reynolds, Vice-Chair**  
Coventry
- Eric Hammerling, Secretary**  
West Hartford
- Richard Newton, Treasurer**  
Mystic
- Sue Brittell**  
Simsbury
- Akiebia Hicks**  
West Hartford
- Bill Kraekel**  
Easton
- Eric Lindquist**  
Griswold
- Elisabeth Moore**  
New Haven
- Rebecca Neary**  
Warren
- Catherine Rawson**  
New Preston
- Charlie Stebbins**  
Fairfield
- Celina Vansetti**  
Killingworth

## Staff

- Amy Blaymore Paterson**  
Executive Director
- Ricky Bentley**  
Program Manager
- Yaw O. Darko**  
Director, Grants & Programs
- Vanessa Daye**  
Community Conservation Coordinator
- Rebecca Dorsey**  
Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow (2025-26)
- Aaron Lefland**  
Deputy Director
- Michael J. Sikora**  
Communications Manager
- Brett Thompson**  
Office & Operations Manager

**New Board Leadership:** Congratulations to **Jonelle Reynolds** of Coventry, CLCC's new Vice-Chair.

**New Board Members:** We added two new members to our governing board. Welcome to CLCC's Board of Directors, **Celina Vansetti** of Killingworth and **Charlie Stebbins** of Fairfield.

**Thank You:** Two members of our governing board completed their terms. Thank you to **Mandi Careathers** of Bloomfield and **Doris Johnson** of Windsor for all you do to make Connecticut green for everyone.

**Staff Promotions:** Congratulations to **Yaw O. Darko** and **Ricky Bentley**, who earned promotions to Director, Grants & Programs and Program Manager, respectively.

**New Staff Members:** Welcome to CLCC, **Vanessa Daye**, Community Conservation Coordinator; **Rebecca Dorsey**, 2025-2026 Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow; **Michael J. Sikora**, Manager of Communications; and **Brett Thompson**, Office & Operations Manager.

**Thank You:** Thank you to **Colin Piteo**, 2024-2025 Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow! We are grateful for your contribution to our mission and vision for land conservation in Connecticut.

## Land Trust Members (2025)

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Aspetuck Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                      | Great Meadows Conservation Trust 🌿                   | Northern Connecticut Land Trust, Inc. 🌿     |
| Aton Forest, Inc.                                | Great Mountain Forest                                | Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy      |
| Avalonia Land Conservancy 🌿                      | Greenwich Land Trust                                 | Norwalk Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                  |
| Avon Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                          | Groton Open Space Association                        | Old Lyme Land Trust                         |
| Berlin Land Trust                                | Guilford Land Conservation Trust, Inc.               | Pond Mountain Trust, Inc.                   |
| Bethany Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                       | Haddam Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                            | Prospect Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                 |
| Bethel Land Trust, Inc.                          | Hamden Land Conservation Trust, Inc. 🌿               | Ragged Mountain Foundation 🌿 ⚠️             |
| Bethlehem Land Trust                             | Hartford Audubon Society                             | Redding Land Trust, Inc.                    |
| Bolton Land Trust                                | Harwinton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.              | Roxbury Land Trust                          |
| Branford Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                      | Housatonic Valley Association 🌿                      | Salem Land Trust                            |
| Bridgewater Land Trust, Inc.                     | Joshua's Tract Conservation & Historic Trust, Inc. 🌿 | Salisbury Association Land Trust 🌿          |
| Canton Land Conservation Trust, Inc. 🌿           | Kent Land Trust 🌿                                    | Seymour Land Conservation Trust, Inc. 🌿 ⚠️  |
| Cheshire Land Trust, Inc.                        | Killingworth Land Conservation Trust, Inc.           | Sharon Land Trust                           |
| Chester Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                       | Kongscut Land Trust, Inc.                            | Shelton Land Conservation Trust             |
| Clinton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.            | Land Conservancy of Ridgefield, Inc.                 | Simsbury Land Trust 🌿                       |
| Colchester Land Trust 🌿                          | Land Trust of West Haven                             | South Windsor Land Conservation Trust, Inc. |
| Colebrook Land Conservancy, Inc.                 | Litchfield Land Trust, Inc.                          | Southbury Land Trust                        |
| Connecticut Farmland Trust 🌿                     | Lordship Improvement Association, Inc. 🌿 ⚠️          | Southington Land Conservation Trust, Inc.   |
| Connecticut Forest & Park Association 🌿          | Lower Connecticut River Land Trust                   | Stamford Land Conservation Trust, Inc.      |
| Cornwall Conservation Trust, Inc. 🌿              | Lyme Land Trust 🌿                                    | Steep Rock Association, Inc. 🌿              |
| Darien Land Trust 🌿                              | Lynde Point Land Trust                               | Suffield Land Conservancy, Inc.             |
| Deep River Land Trust, Inc.                      | Madison Land Conservation Trust, Inc.                | The Nature Conservancy - CT 🌿               |
| East Haddam Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                   | Manchester Land Conservation Trust, Inc.             | Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy 🌿           |
| East Haven Land Trust, Inc.                      | Middlebury Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                        | Trust For Public Land 🌿                     |
| ECFLA/Wolf Den Land Trust, Inc.                  | Middlesex Land Trust 🌿                               | Wallingford Land Trust, Inc. 🌿 ⚠️           |
| Essex Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                         | Milford Land Conservation Trust, Inc.                | Warren Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                   |
| Farmington Land Trust                            | Morris Land Trust                                    | Waterford Land Trust 🌿                      |
| Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust, Inc         | New Canaan Land Conservation Trust, Inc. 🌿           | Watertown Land Trust, Inc.                  |
| Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve | New Hartford Land Trust 🌿                            | Wilton Land Conservation Trust              |
| Gather New Haven                                 | Norfolk Land Trust, Inc.                             | Winchester Land Trust, Inc.                 |
| Goodwin University                               | North Branford Land Conservation Trust, Inc. 🌿       | Wolcott Land Conservation Trust, Inc. 🌿     |
| Goshen Land Trust, Inc.                          | North Haven Land Trust, Inc.                         | Woodbridge Park Association 🌿 ⚠️            |
| Granby Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                        | North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance              | Wyndham Land Trust, Inc. 🌿                  |
|  | North Woods Land Conservancy 🌿 ⚠️                    |   |

🌿 Plus Members   ⚠️ Welcome to our newest members!



AnnMarie Goenne



# Financials

## 2024 FINANCIALS

### Operating Income

Contributions	\$1,051,898
Investment Income	\$75,798
Program Revenue	\$52,726
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,180,422</b>

\*Includes multi-year grants that will be spent down in 2025

### Operating Expenses

Programs & Services	\$758,404
General & Administrative	\$224,259
Fundraising	\$51,441
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,034,104</b>

For a full financial statement visit [www.ctconservation.org](http://www.ctconservation.org)

This past year, CLCC bolstered its resources, expertise, and collaborations to better equip our 120 land trusts to meet today's complex conservation challenges.

Through the steadfast dedication of land trusts, partners, and your invaluable support, we stand financially prepared for this pivotal time. Every gift, whether immediate or recurring, directly funds the technical resources and grants land trusts need to make conservation happen across the state.

### What Will Your Conservation Legacy Be?

The most effective way to ensure a greener, healthier Connecticut forever is through planned giving. By remembering CLCC in your estate plans, you join others who share a passion for our natural and working lands and who value their enduring protection and stewardship.

Your planned gift—regardless of size—creates a lasting legacy, providing for the places and organizations you value most while protecting Connecticut's conserved lands for future generations.

*To learn more about making an immediate, recurring, or planned gift, please visit [ctconservation.org/ways-to-give/planned-giving/](http://ctconservation.org/ways-to-give/planned-giving/).*

# About CLCC

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council is a nonprofit dedicated to strengthening and uniting land trusts and communities to permanently protect the state's natural and working lands.

Our **mission** is to elevate and strengthen land conservation in Connecticut.

We pursue our mission by serving as the **voice and support system** for Connecticut's land trusts. We provide programs and services that help land trusts succeed, including grant funding, technical assistance, and advocacy.

Our **vision** is a future where every Connecticut community is supported and sustained by a diverse mix of conserved land, and land conservation is embraced as an essential community value.

deKoven House  
27 Washington Street #12  
Middletown, CT 06457

**ctconservation.org**  
(860) 852-5512

# #LoveYourCTLandTrust

## Join Our Community



Find your local land trust  
Sign up for our newsletter  
Connect via [f](#) [@](#) [in](#)