



State Highlights in Conservation: Connecticut

Profile of State Program(s)

Connecticut Department of Agriculture - Community Investment Act - Farmland: Passed in 2005, the Community Investment Act (CIA) requires a \$40 fee for recording of all municipal land records documents. The town where the document is filed retains \$4, and the remaining \$36 is distributed by the state as follows: 20% to the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism for historic preservation grants and activities; 20% to the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority for affordable housing programs; 20% to the Department of Environmental Protection for municipal open space grants (OSWA) and 40% to the Department of Agriculture for farmland preservation (FPP) and other programs. A bill passed in June 2009 temporarily increased the filing fee for the recording of local land records from \$30 to \$40, and revised the funding distribution. HB-6262, passed in 2011, made permanent the increase and revised funding.

Connecticut Department of Agriculture - Farmland Preservation Program: The Farmland Preservation Program began in 1978 as a way to preserve productive agricultural land in the state. The program acquires conservation easements on qualifying farmland, ensuring the land remains available for agricultural use in perpetuity. Applications are evaluated based on state criteria that prioritizes farms with a high percentage of prime soils located in active farm communities. Properties may include forest and wetlands. Participating landowners are required to file a plan with the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Funding for the program comes primarily through state bonds and deed recording fee revenue collected under the Community Investment Act.

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection - Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program: Created by the state legislature in 1986, the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust program (RNHT) aims to help preserve natural heritage and expand the system of parks, forests, and natural areas in Connecticut. It is the primary land acquisition program for this purpose under the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Potential acquisitions are evaluated based on their ability to provide recreational

opportunities and conservation of unique natural areas or species. RNHT is funded with state bond funds.

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection - Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program: The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA) began in 1998 and is managed by the Connecticut Department of Energy Environmental Protection. The program provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire land that will add open space, enhance recreational opportunities, protect unique geographical features and/or conserve wildlife habitat. Funding for OSWA comes from state bonds and deed recording fee revenue collected under the Community Investment Act.

Substantial State Investment

The Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program is funded through state bonds. Funding for the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program predominantly comes through a combination of state bonds and monies collected under the Community Investment Act (CIA). Initially passed in 2005, the Community Investment Act (CIA) requires a \$40 fee for recording of all municipal land records documents. The town where the document is filed retains \$4, and the remaining \$36 is distributed among four state agencies for historic preservation, affordable housing, and open space and farmland preservation programs.

State Incentive for Local Conservation Funding

The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire land that will add to a community's open space, enhance recreational opportunities, protect unique geographical features or conserve habitat for living creatures. Local communities are required to provide up to a 65 percent match for each grant though most provide up to 50 percent matching funds.

Conservation Tax Credits

In 1999, Connecticut authorized a state corporate income tax credit for donations of land or conservation

easements for open space or educational use. The credit is equal to 50 percent of the donation's fair market value, and may carry forward for up to 25 years. Donated land or easements must protect land permanently as open space or for use as a public water supply source. The Connecticut conservation easement tax credit is non-transferable and applies in addition to federal tax benefits.

Local Financing Enabled

Local governments use a variety of options to fund land conservation in Connecticut, including state general obligation bonds, state matching grant programs (e.g. OSWA, CIA), annual budget appropriations, annual mill rate allocations (e.g. 1 mill dedicated to open space), income from forestry products (e.g. timber) produced on municipal land, and in-lieu fees from developers (statute 8-25b). Municipalities in Connecticut may incur general obligation debt of up to seven times total annual tax collected. Each municipality is authorized to establish a land acquisition fund into which may be deposited annually an amount not exceeding the equivalent of a two-mill property tax.

Local Programs Included

Though the Almanac does not collect Connecticut municipal land conservation data comprehensively, the

local program data in Connecticut consists of municipal conservation spending captured when a municipal jurisdiction partnered with a state or federal entity on the acquisition of a property. Visit www.landvote.org for detailed information on municipal conservation measures approved by voters in the state.

Federal Partnerships

Federal agencies and programs that have conserved land in Connecticut include:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program
- U.S. Forest Service – Forest Legacy Program (FLP)
- U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
- U.S. National Park Service
- U.S. National Park Service – LWCF Stateside
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)



The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

The Conservation Almanac

A comprehensive database of land conservation and public conservation funding in America, the Conservation Almanac provides a context for assessing impacts of conservation and the growing conservation finance movement. The Almanac offers information on public dollars spent and acres conserved, details on local, state, and federal conservation programs, and geospatial mapping of conserved land.

Almanac data collection efforts focus on land conserved using public dollars; contributions funded by private and non-governmental organizations are not tracked comprehensively. Federal data is complete from 1998-2017. State and local data is complete from 1998-2015. In the tables and charts below, acres are allocated to each program proportionate to the size of the contributions to each acquisition. For example, if an acquisition had two contributions, and each program contributed equal dollar amounts, each program receives 50% of the acres. If you have questions or want to provide updated information, please contact Jessica Welch at jessica.welch@tpl.org.

www.tpl.org

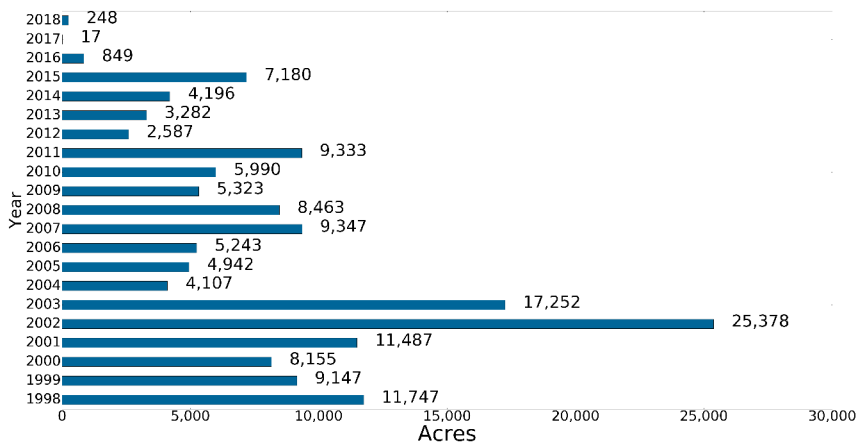
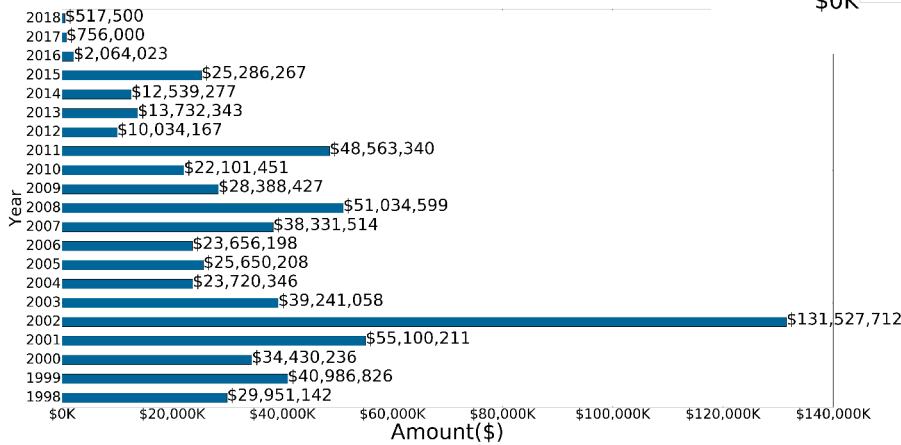
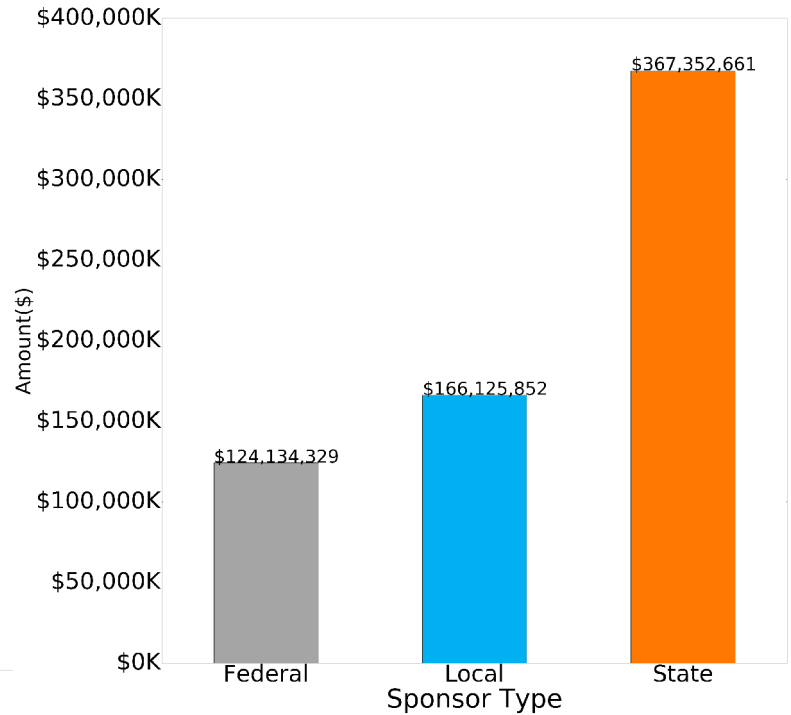
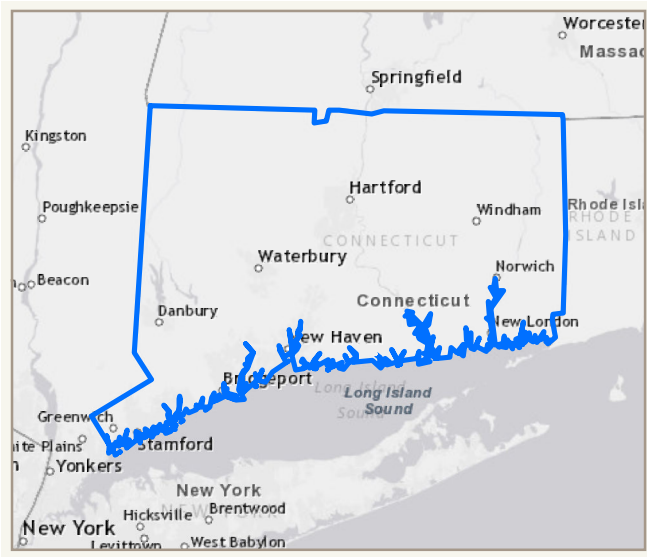
www.conservationalmanac.org

State Conservation Report Connecticut



CONSERVATION ALMANAC
Tracking Investments in Protected Lands

November 20, 2020



The data in the Conservation Almanac track the impacts of public spending on land conservation. Created by The Trust for Public Land, the Conservation Almanac brings those data together along with state policy profiles, current conservation finance news, and an interactive map, to provide a powerful online tool.