CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

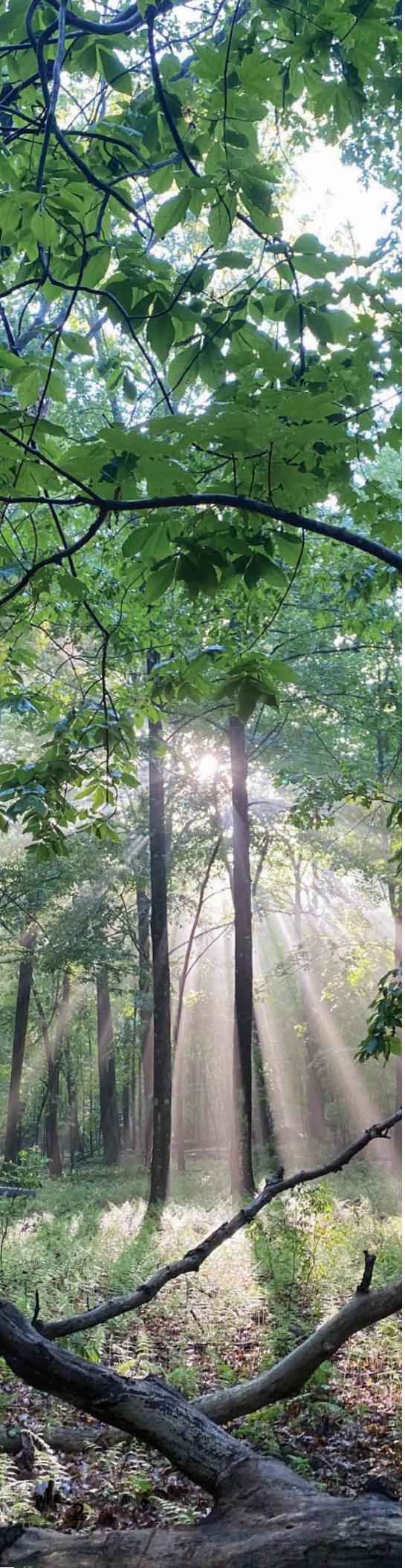
2021 Updates & Highlights

Connecticut's only statewide land trust service association



"Land Trusts have become an even more essential part of our communities during the current pandemic. There couldn't be a better time for our organizations to reach out and connect with the people we serve."

– Vic Herson, Wintonbury Land Trust



Finding Hope. Taking Action.

I love my trail runs. Each morning, along with my dogs, I head out to get some exercise and clear my head.

It's a great way to collect my thoughts—or allow them to wander—and while I've never taken my access to trails and preserves for granted, the past 18 months have confirmed how essential that access is to my physical and mental state.

I'm not alone. Research has told us for years: Everyone needs nature, fresh local food, and healthy places to live, work, and play. The good news is that land trusts are stepping up to make that happen—coming together all over the state to conserve land and create greenspaces at a pivotal time.

We know that we need to act now—and fast. Nature is at a tipping point: Development pressure is on the rise, the impacts of a worsening climate crisis are all around us, and almost a third of the world's plant and animal species are at risk of extinction.

These challenges are daunting. Yet they are a rallying cry to collectively ramp up the pace and quality of land conservation, embrace our role in saving the earth's natural resources, and make sure that the work of land trusts reaches and better serves more people in all communities across the state.

By investing in the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, you are bringing needed funding, tools, and strategies to land trusts throughout Connecticut as they pursue innovative land conservation projects, advocate for essential state and federal grant programs, build collaborative relationships, and adapt their communications, stewardship, and programming to make land conservation more welcoming and inclusive.

The coming year could be extraordinary. Land trusts are in the business of hope and action, and we have a chance to seize this moment, find a way forward, and inspire others to join us.



Working with you and land trusts across Connecticut, we can and must make an impact that extends well into the future. Our children and the generations to come are counting on us.

Sincerely,

Amy Blaymore Paterson
Executive Director

CONSERVING LAND BY STAYING CONNECTED

Upcoming Programs and Conversations

Find a comfy spot, grab a cozy beverage, boot up your laptop, and connect with your land conservation community.



Connecticut Land Trust Risk Management Initiative

In partnership with the Land Trust Alliance, CLCC is kicking off our fall programming with a series of workshops covering risk management, risk assessment, and mitigation as it relates to governance, finance, land transactions, and stewardship.

Following the workshops, land trusts will have the opportunity to apply for one-on-one consulting support in risk mitigation.



Land Trust Focus Groups

Calling all treasurers, board presidents, fundraisers, stewardship warriors, and executive staff! Are you looking for an opportunity to gather with like-minded land trust folks for a deep-dive discussion on your area of expertise?

Join us for this facilitated series of focus groups to tackle the hot topics you're eager to explore with your land trust colleagues across the state.



Regional Roundtables

Join CLCC and your regional land conservation neighbors for an open discussion on the challenges and opportunities in your neck of the woods. We're coming to you (virtually) to learn how we can best support your conservation efforts in the coming year.



Want to Learn More?

We will be sending out additional information via our eNewsletter, social media, and our website www.ctconservation.org.



"It is comforting to share thoughts and challenges with land trust peers around the state, as well as stay up-to-date on the topics that are most relevant to our land trust, right now. Most importantly, these virtual meetings have sent a signal that, really, 'we're all in this together.'"

– Michael Hveem, Executive Director Joshua's Trust



You and Your Land Trust Can Help Unlock Funding for Conservation


Bill Arnold

"Additional conservation funding would be a game-changer. Our communities know the importance of clean water, trails, local food, and wildlife habitat. Land is changing hands and we have a once in a generation chance to save it."

– Pete Govert, East Haddam Land Trust

It was a legislative session like no other.

With the Capitol closed throughout the year, public hearings were convened via Zoom. Hallway conversations and office meetings with legislators and the administration were replaced by text messages, emails, and phone calls.

Yet, as always, your efforts made a difference. We were able to make some headway for land conservation priorities, including bond authorizations for open space, recreational trails, and climate resiliency. Additionally, the dedicated accounts for the Community Investment Act and Passport to the Parks programs, respectively, stayed intact.

Unfortunately, despite strong public support and the potential for enormous economic and community benefit, the final Climate Adaptation Bill was stripped of the section giving municipalities an option to establish a local real estate conveyance fee.

Refusing to include this conveyance fee is truly disappointing—cutting off an opportunity for municipalities to fund climate resilience, affordable housing, land conservation, and other community projects, including federal and state program investments that require a local match.

New federal conservation funding at risk

At a time when Connecticut's largest forests and local farmland are rapidly being lost to development, the state invests less funding to land conservation than any state in New England.

CLCC is committed to helping close this funding disparity.

Towards that effort, CLCC wrote, and was recently awarded, a federal grant in partnership with DEEP to help local land trusts conserve important lands and waters across the state. **This grant has the potential to bring millions of dollars to help conserve the special places in Connecticut we care about.**

But there is a catch: without a significant investment of state funds, we risk leaving these federal dollars on the table and losing the opportunity to protect thousands of acres of land.


Joe Meehan

What does that mean?

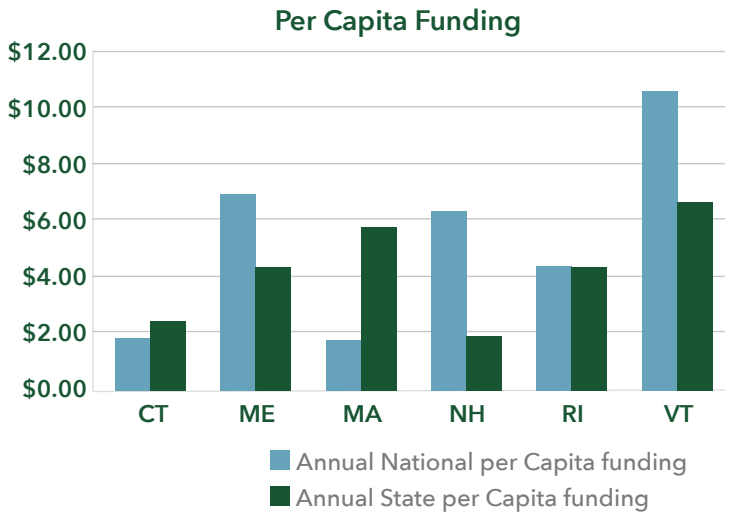
We need legislators to:

- **Protect state funds** dedicated for open space so they aren't used for other budget issues.
- **Significantly increase the amount of bond funding** for land conservation—and ensure those funds are consistently released to support grant programs.
- **Provide DEEP with the resources** it needs to effectively and efficiently leverage this opportunity for additional federal funds.

What can you do?

There are a number of ways you can help:

- **Contact your legislators** and tell them how much state open space funding means to your land trust and your community–and how we have an opportunity to leverage it with millions in federal funds.
- **Invite them for a hike** on a land trust property, and let them know what other projects are at stake.
- **Emphasize the importance of local forests and wetlands** to help absorb flood waters and carbon pollution, and to build climate resilience.
- **Talk to them** about how Connecticut dedicates the lowest level of conservation funding in New England—and how that's got to change.
- **Explain that land trusts—across the state—are standing by** to help local families and communities conserve the lands that matter most. Yet, because of a lack of funding, many have to walk away from amazing opportunities to protect land. The federal conservation funds would help to change that.



Connecticut's conservation funding, per capita, is the lowest of any state in New England. *(Source: Wildlands and Woodlands, "Public Conservation Funding in New England: Recent Trends in Government Spending on Land Conservation.")*

"CLCC watches important environmental legislation so closely that if they ask land trust members to write to our legislators, I know it's important. CLCC makes contacting our legislators easy to do."

– Gwen Marrion, Bolton Land Trust


Don Shaw Jr.

LAND AND CLIMATE

Natural Climate Solutions for Addressing Climate Change

Our state's forestlands, natural areas, and working lands are among our strongest defenses against climate change. As erratic weather increases, these lands can help capture carbon, reduce flooding, filter pollutants, and mitigate against other impacts of climate change.

As the umbrella organization for Connecticut's land conservation community, CLCC works with land trusts, municipalities, councils of government, regional conservation partnerships, and other entities committed to land conservation and other nature-based climate solutions.

CLCC was a proud member of The Governor's Council on Climate Change's (GC3) Working and Natural Lands Working Group Forest Sub-Group and advocated for many of the recommendations of the GC3 final report during the legislative session.

Land trusts throughout the state joined us in urging legislators and local elected officials to take action. They continue to share information about climate change as part of their community engagement and social media feeds.

In addition to outreach and policy work, land trusts are working to address climate change through strategic land conservation planning. Many, like the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy, Wyndham Land Trust, Aspetuck Land Trust, and those working together as part of the Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative, are creating forested corridors and wildlife pathways to allow species to migrate to new habitats.

Connecticut Farmland Trust, Warren Land Trust, Northern Connecticut Land Trust, Steep Rock Association, and so many others are helping to save farmland and important soils that have the potential to store carbon and provide healthy, local options for food.

Land trusts like the Avalonia Land Conservancy are also considering the design and stewardship of their own lands to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Land trusts have always been practical, hands-on, problem-solvers. They can be the difference makers.

We know that so many more land trusts across the state are taking action. Please share your stories with us through our website to be featured in our monthly #LoveYourCTLandTrust eNewsetter.

"Climate change and loss of habitat challenge the well-being of humans, animals, and plants. We must accelerate the pace of land conservation if we are to have any hope of meeting that challenge. CLCC is our most important advocate to make that happen in Connecticut." – Barton Jones, President, Cornwall Conservation Trust


Katharine Lange

The 30 x 30 Initiative: Land Trusts are Key to Its Success

To slow the alarming rate of extinctions and address the climate crisis before the planet reaches a point of no return, the United States has committed to a global initiative to conserve 30 percent of the earth's land and 30 percent of its ocean waters by 2030 ("30 x 30").

This urgent call to action, further emphasized by this summer's report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) places a greater responsibility on land trusts, communities, and the state to ramp up conservation efforts over the next ten years.

The report, and the growing body of research in this country, reiterates the emergent need to transition to renewable energy, enhance energy conservation, and prioritize land and water conservation for climate resilience. It also emphasizes investing in soil health and keeping working lands in the hands of farmers.

The 30 x 30 initiative underscores the role of land trusts in being part of local and sustainable solutions to global issues and in ensuring that these efforts are embraced by communities everywhere. This means advocating strongly for more state funding for land conservation programs and financial incentives for landowners who are interested in working with their local land trust to save the lands they love.

CLCC is working at Connecticut's Capitol, in partnership with land trusts and conservation groups, to ensure that we collectively, collaboratively, and boldly, step up our efforts to make this happen.

"[W]e must empower private landowners to conserve their natural and working lands at a much greater pace and scale. Land trusts are uniquely qualified to make that happen and, importantly, they can do so in an inclusive and equitable way."

– Andrew Bowman, president and CEO, Land Trust Alliance, "An audacious and timely conservation challenge," January 29, 2021



Follow our eNews

If you'd like news on research, partnerships, funding and innovative solutions, please follow our eNews. We'll keep you posted on statewide, regional, and national programs related to land trusts and their work around climate change.



Nancy Strong

ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVES

Finding Additional Ways to Be More Welcoming and Inclusive

Last year's statewide land conservation conference was a wake-up call for land trusts when Rue Mapp, founder of *Outdoor Afro*, noted that "access to nature and the out-of-doors should be a right of everyone, yet not everyone feels welcome, or has the access they need."

At the request of many land trusts, CLCC developed a pilot program for land trusts to take a deeper dive into exploring diversity, equity, and inclusion as it relates to their own organizations and to land conservation as a whole.

In New London County, CLCC hosted a series of conversations with community organizations to discuss land use issues, the challenges they face, and how conservation efforts might help.

The discussions highlighted needs ranging from transportation from urban areas to nature preserves, to housing and homelessness, to a lack of food security for many residents of the region.

On a parallel track, five rural land trusts in northeastern Connecticut, alongside The Last Green Valley, participated in several conversations to identify ways they could be more welcoming and inclusive.

We are undertaking a similar program in the Waterbury/ Litchfield Hills Region.

Looking ahead, we plan to provide equity training and strategies for cultivating relationships with local organizations in other regions to encourage new partnerships and create a more holistic community vision for land conservation.

Special thanks to our equity trainers, Ashley Stewart and David Sutherland, and advisors, Lois Bruinooge, Hunter Brawley, Brian Hall, and Doris Johnson. Funding provided by Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut and Connecticut Community Foundation.

"[My] challenge to [land trusts] is to think about who else you can include and serve. That's how we continue to build on the strength of our commitment and our values here in Connecticut of protecting these special places."

– CT DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes, at CLCC Excellence in Conservation Award Ceremony, East Haddam, CT on June 25, 2021

ADVANCED COLLABORATION & MERGER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Working Together with Creativity, Cooperation, and Vision

Land trusts know that nature and farm viability doesn't stop at town borders or state lines. They see, more than ever, the value of preventing land fragmentation, protecting wildlife corridors, and creating greenways.

They understand the need to take care of the land they have been entrusted to protect. That's why so many land trusts are assessing how they can work together regionally to continue to expand, diversify, and sustain their missions and work *in perpetuity*.

CLCC's **Advanced Collaboration and Merger Assistance Program** is there to help. This past year we've provided funding and assistance to land trusts to explore collaborative opportunities in multiple regions across the state. The results are inspiring.

The successful merger of Aspetuck Land Trust and Monroe Land Trust and Tree Conservancy is a great example of taking a fresh approach to conserve more land.

"We realized we can protect more land, together, because we know that our combined efforts will inspire more people, and allow us to access more resources when opportunities arise," said Monroe's Barbara Thomas.

Together, the combined land trust will share the vision of a "Green Corridor Initiative" expanded across five towns—Easton, Weston, Fairfield, Westport, and now, Monroe.

In the Northeast, the board of Joshua's Trust worked through the collaboration process and identified an opportunity to expand their stewardship capacity in order to provide services for neighboring land trusts.

Likewise, the Lower Connecticut River Land Trust, a long-standing regional organization, sees an opportunity to be a service provider for local land trusts.

Finally, in the Farmington River Valley, 14 organizations came together around a common vision to protect the watershed. After multiple conversations the group is pursuing the development of a Regional Conservation Partnership. Several are also exploring a merger to strengthen their conservation impact.

It's this type of land trust creativity, cooperation, and forethought that's helping to accelerate the pace and diversity of land conservation efforts in Connecticut. We are delighted to assist in these efforts at the request of land trusts across the state.

Funding for coaching and discussions was provided by the Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation and community supporters. Thank you to Danosky & Associates who assisted in facilitating these projects.



We'd love to hear from you

If your land trust is interested in exploring merger or other collaborative options with another organization, give us a call.

We are happy to assist and may be able to provide funding to help facilitate the process.

2021 CONFERENCE

Inspiring Land Conservation Conference

The theme of the 2021 statewide land conservation conference, "Voices from the Field: What is a Land Trust Now?" was born out of the conversations we have had with land trust leaders across the state.









Whether single-town and all-volunteer, or staffed regional or statewide organizations, Connecticut's 130 land trusts are recognizing that their roles and responsibilities are evolving in a changing world.

The conference consisted of four roundtables and related conversations held remotely due to Covid-19 constraints.

Discussions explored both innovative concepts and foundational approaches like land stewardship, how to talk about climate change and natural climate solutions, community-based fundraising tips and the need to conserve more land, inclusive conservation and partnerships ranging from affordable housing to youth programs, and the day-to-day work of land trust.

Land conservation leaders from Connecticut and beyond provided insights into how land trusts are evolving, increasing relevance and funding capacity, and strategizing to maximize their impact at a time when their work is needed more than ever.

The 2021 conference provided a great snapshot of what it means to be a land trust now. If you'd like to listen to the sessions, please check out our website.

Introducing the *What is a Land Trust* Booklet

Do you know landowners interested in partnering with a land trust? Would it be helpful to provide information to your community, or neighbors, about what land conservation is and how land trusts can help?



With this in mind, CLCC designed "What is a Land Trust?"—a new publication that explains much of the work land trusts do in conserving and caring for places important to our local and statewide communities.

You can download the booklet from on our website, or contact Cristina Hayden, at chayden@ctconservation.org to order hardcopies for distribution.

We'd like to thank the Rockfall Foundation and Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut for making this booklet possible.

You Make Conservation Happen Throughout Connecticut

You've heard the saying: "It takes a village to raise a child."

Land conservation is similar. It takes a diversity of partners, supporters, and creative thinkers to respond to unforeseen opportunities and address complex challenges. Land trusts by their very nature are "can-do" organizations; yet to do that, they often need CLCC's support and guidance.

As the only statewide land trust service association, thanks to the support of people like you, CLCC is here to work alongside land trusts in all facets of their mission by:

- Providing opportunities to improve organizational capacity through networking, training, and education.
- Fostering and implementing new and enduring collaborative relationships.
- Speaking up for critical conservation funding programs and policies at the Capitol.
- Delivering technical assistance to enhance the essential role of land trusts in serving communities across the state.
- Learning together how to address climate change, inclusive conservation, and what it means to protect land and water throughout Connecticut.

Land conservation is a team effort. We are stronger together because of the support you give to CLCC and your local land trust. We greatly appreciate your time, talent, and generosity.

COEAA AWARD

CLCC Receives Award on Behalf of Land Trusts

CLCC is honored to have been awarded Outstanding Organization of the Year by the Connecticut Outdoor Environmental Education Association (COEEA) at their 2021 Conference.

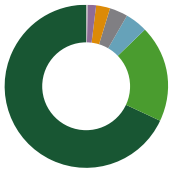
"[Outstanding Organization of the Year] is awarded to an organization for exceptional work in, or support of, the field of outdoor and environmental education, plus its dedication to using the outdoors and natural world as a catalyst to expand environmental appreciation in the children and adults of Connecticut." — COEEA

Thank you to all those who embrace learning, land conservation, and connecting people to the land in creative and thoughtful ways.

2020 FINANCIALS

Thanks to the financial assistance of land trusts, municipalities, foundations, state and federal partners, and people like you, we are able to serve land trusts at a critical time.

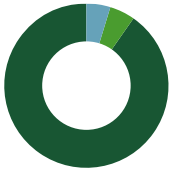
For a full financial statement, visit ctconservation.org.



2020 Operating Income

Municipal Commission Contributions	$ 1,850
Corp./Org. Contributions	$ 8,650
Land Trust Memberships	$ 14,050
Program Revenue	$ 17,435
Conference	$ 22,350
Individual Donations/Gifts	$ 95,898
Foundation Grants*	$337,500
Total	**$497,733**

**Includes multi-year grants that will be spent down in 2021.*



2020 Operating Expenses

Fundraising	$ 16,566
Management & Support	$ 16,815
Programs (Incl. Conference)	$307,062
Total	**$340,443**

2020 financial review and 990 will be available on our website at ctconservation.org.

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Ralph Chappell



Ralph Chappell

On June 25, Governor Lamont joined CLCC, state and local officials, and an enthusiastic group of land trust and community members in celebrating the 2021 Excellence in Conservation Awards honoring Greenwich Land Trust, Haddam Land Trust, and Gwen Marrion of the Bolton Land Trust.

View a recording of the ceremony and read all about it at www.ctconservation.org

"I love what the land trusts do. It is one of the most important investments we can make." – Governor Ned Lamont, June 25, 2021

Smart Ways to Support CLCC and Land Trusts

There are a number of ways you can help CLCC strengthen state land conservation policy and funding, support land trusts, and accelerate conservation statewide. Some people are surprised to know that donations of stock can save them as much as 70% on taxes; others find that gifts via their IRA's avoid triggering taxes and maximize their impact.

And, of course, there are monthly gifts that really make a difference.

You can donate online, send a check, or call Amy Blaymore Paterson if you have questions. Without you, we can't accelerate the pace of land conservation, and work to inspire local and statewide resources needed to make that happen.