
LAND CONSERVATION & CLIMATE

Natural climate solutions for a healthy, sustainable Connecticut

How is climate change affecting Connecticut?

The impacts of rising levels of greenhouse gases on Connecticut's include:

- **Contributing to sea level rise** – putting 2.2 million Connecticut shoreline residents at risk.¹
- **Creating extreme weather events** – threatening infrastructure, public safety, wildlife habitat, agricultural viability and local economies.
- **Worsening air quality** – impacting our most at-risk populations and increasing healthcare costs.
- **Increasing invasives, natural systems upheaval** – wildlife habitat and agricultural lands face greater challenges due to pests, changing seasonal systems, and species loss.

Connecticut is one of the fastest warming states in the country.²

Our state's natural areas are among our strongest defenses against climate change

Natural climate solutions – including protection and related climate management of forests, farmland, grasslands, and wetlands – **can provide up to 21% of the cost-effective carbon reductions, in the U.S.**, we need to keep global temperature increases under 2 degrees Celsius.³

- **Forests, grasslands, wetlands and soils can protect biodiversity and absorb and store carbon** – removing it from the atmosphere and offsetting the carbon emissions from other activities.
- **Vegetated open space, protected floodplains, and wetlands absorb water** – reducing the risks and impacts of flooding.
- **Trees provide local cooling and are natural air filters** – absorbing 760,000 tons of air pollution annually in New England.⁴

The benefits of land conservation for the climate work both ways – absorbing greenhouse gases and also **preventing the release of significant levels of carbon emissions** that would be caused by deforestation and conversion of open lands to active development.

- **Land conservation is more important and cost-effective than ever** – every \$1 spent on land conservation returns \$4-11 in air pollution reduction, carbon removal, flood protection, and food production.⁵

¹ Governor's Council on Climate Change, "Building a Low Carbon Future for Connecticut" (CT DEEP, December 2018)

² <http://statesatrisk.org/connecticut>

³ Bronson W. Griscom et al., "Natural Climate Solutions," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 114, no. 44 (October 31, 2017): 11645-50, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1710465114>.

⁴ Highstead Foundation, "Protecting New England Forests," <https://www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org>

⁵ Amy Wilson Morris and Sarah L Thomas, "The Economic, Health, and Social Benefits of Conservation: A Report Prepared on Behalf of The Coalition for Our Natural Interest," November 2018, <https://ournaturalinterest.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Our-Natural-Interest-Research-Report.pdf>.

Now is the time to make land conservation a top priority

Many of our public strategies for fighting climate change have focused on reducing our energy use, or shifting to renewables, both crucial to achieving sustainability goals. This is critical, as it makes up the estimated 79% response needed to adequately slow down climate change. However, we have underestimated the capacity of nature to remove carbon and filter pollutants from the air and to provide local cooling and flood prevention.

The *Governor's Council on Climate Change*, recently expanded by Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 3, provides the state with an opportunity to ramp up investments in natural and working lands protection to help Connecticut meet its ambitious goals of achieving a 100% zero-carbon target by 2040.

What can you do?

- **Help your community save more land** – Find a local land trust and volunteer – there are many ways to get involved. If you own land, consider how to conserve your own land for the benefit of climate change mitigation and future generations. Find your local land trust at www.ctconservation.org.
- **Make your voice heard** – Ask your local, state and federal elected officials to support land conservation, in addition to renewables and energy conservation, to address climate issues. Want to get involved with policies that prioritize land and water conservation oriented climate solutions? Become a CLCC Advocate for Land Preservation and Stewardship. Sign-up for CLCC's action alerts at www.ctconservation.org.
- **Encourage energy conservation and the use of renewable energy** – Learn about and weigh-in on state policies and guidelines related to renewable energy siting to encourage the thoughtful development of facilities while avoiding sensitive lands.
- **Lead by example in your own backyard** – Plant more trees likely to survive climate change – and take care of the trees, woodlands and forests that already exist. Consider planting a pollinator garden to create healthy habitat for birds, bees, butterflies and other important species. Work to protect local wetlands and watercourses from development and other disruptions. **Want to magnify the impact?** Volunteer on a land use (wetlands, planning & zoning, conservation) commission in your municipality.
- **Support, and purchase, locally grown food** – Food in the U.S. travels an average of 1,500 miles to get to your kitchen table – using fossil fuels and generating greenhouse gas emissions. Buying your food from local farmers markets and farms you will help to reduce your carbon footprint while also contributing to the local economy and helping to preserve critical farmland. When managed appropriately, farmland can be a big part of natural climate solutions.

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#LoveYourCTLandTrust

Our Mission

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community across the state.

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