

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Forestlands and trees, wetlands, healthy organic soils, riparian buffers, and other natural ecosystems are among our strongest defenses against the impacts of climate change. These nature-based solutions have a myriad of benefits for public health, the economy, and the environment, including reducing the effects of flooding, filtering pollutants from the air, and absorbing and storing carbon. These ecosystems are also critical to protecting biodiversity. We can't address one crisis without addressing the other.
- Experts have estimated that nature-based solutions can contribute 20-37% to keeping temperature increases below 2°C.¹ In Connecticut, Forestlands and trees absorb around 7% (3 million tons) of the 47 million metric tons of carbon pollution released into the atmosphere annually.²

IMPACTS

- Connecticut's conservation funding, per capita, is the lowest of any state in New England.³
- **Forests & Green Space:** Connecticut's largest forests are declining rapidly, with approximately 120,000 acres of beautiful, irreplaceable landscapes and the ecosystem services they provide over the last 30 years to fragmentation and development.⁴
- **Agriculture:** Local farmland is at risk, with 23,000 acres developed or compromised in just 15 years, putting Connecticut in the top four states nationally for the percentage lost.⁵

- **Wildlife** is struggling — about 600 plants and animals in Connecticut are listed as Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern.⁶
- **Wetlands**, are essential for biodiversity, wildlife habitats, protecting water quality, and flood control, and are crucial to sequestering and storing dangerous greenhouse gasses. They have suffered staggering losses of up to 65% in Connecticut.⁷
- Connecticut is not nearly on track to meet its statutory goal of conserving 21% of the state's land area. It will take decades to reach this goal if we continue at the current pace.⁸



1 Natural climate solutions. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (Griscom, et al. 2017)

2 New England's Climate Imperative: Our Forests as a Natural Climate Solution (Highstead 2022)

3 Wildlands and Woodlands, "Public Conservation Funding in New England: Recent Trends in Government Spending on Land Conservation"

4 CT GC3 Forests Sub-Group Report

5 Farmland Under Threat, American Farmland Trust

6 CT DEEP

7 U.S. Geological Survey National Water Summary on Wetland Resources

8 CT Council on Environmental Quality

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

- Increase bond authorizations for CT DEEP land conservation, trails, and parks programs, including but not limited to the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program, Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Program, Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program, and Recreational Trails Program.
- Increase funding for the Community Investment Act and ensure the funds stay intact and dedicated to supporting state programs for open space, agriculture, historic properties, and affordable housing.
- Strengthen CT DEEP's capacity to promptly fill vacancies and create new positions to support land conservation, wetlands protection, and other nature-based programs.
- Codify a nature-based solutions initiative as a priority and preferred alternative in the state policies, goals, and legislation to allow Connecticut's ecosystems to naturally sequester and store carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase biodiversity, and protect against climate change impacts that negatively affect the state's public health and infrastructure.
- Protect public lands (State Parks, Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, and other natural and working lands of high conservation value).



MORE INFORMATION

Land Conservation: **Amy Blaymore Paterson**, Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
abpaterson@ctconservation.org
www.ctconservation.org

Wildlife: **Robert LaFrance**, Policy Director
Audubon Connecticut
robert.lafrance@audubon.org
ct.audubon.org

Soils: **Denise Savageau**, President
CT Association of Conservation Districts
dmsavageau@msn.com
www.conservect.org

Wetlands and Riparian Buffers:
Alicea Charamut, Executive Director
Rivers Alliance of CT
alicea@riversalliance.org
www.riversalliance.org