

COMMISSIONER OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1998 ANNUAL REPORT  
to the  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

in compliance with

Public Act No. 97-227, Section (b): An Act Concerning  
Acquisition of Open Space Land . . .

January 1999

1998 ANNUAL REPORT  
to the  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC ACT No. 97-227: AN ACT CONCERNING  
ACQUISITION OF OPEN SPACE LAND . . .

Overview: Public Act No. 97-227, Section (b) states that "It shall be the goal of the State to have not less than 10 percent of the State's land area held by the State as open space land." The Commissioner of Environmental Protection is charged with the responsibility of providing a strategy for achieving the State's goal. In addition, the Commissioner is charged with setting a goal for increasing the amount of land held as open space by municipalities or by private nonprofit land holding organizations. The strategy must be developed in consultation with The Council on Environmental Quality and private nonprofit land holding organizations

Status: In 1997 it was estimated that the State owned approximately 210,000 acres of open space land. The land is managed by the Department of Environmental Protection as the State's system of parks, forests, wildlife, fisheries, boat access and natural areas. Municipalities owned an estimated 60,000 acres designated as open space land. Private nonprofit land holding organizations owned approximately 45,500 acres of land. The United States of America owned approximately 9,900 acres of open space land in Connecticut as scenic trail corridor, flood management resources, or wildlife management areas.

Goal: Meeting the 10 percent goal established by Public Act No. 97-227 will require the State to hold title to 320,600 acres. The State's current open space land holdings, 210,000 acres, is equal to 6.6% of Connecticut's land area. The State will need to acquire an additional 110,600 acres. Building upon the State's goal, the Commissioner has set a goal of having 21 percent of the State's land preserved as open space by the year 2023. The additional 11 percent is the goal set for municipalities and private nonprofit land holding organization.

Action Taken: 1) Planning: In compliance with Public Act No. 97-227, the Department of Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Council on Environmental Quality and private nonprofit land holding organizations, prepared a draft comprehensive strategy for achieving Connecticut's open space goals. The draft "Connecticut Green Plan for Open Space Acquisition" delineates the State's open space goals and the types of lands to be sought, outlines the current amount of open space in the State and how much is needed, describes the programs and funding available for land purchases, and the process for acquisition. The Green Plan is intended to serve as general guidance for program managers, as a tool for those who want to work with the State in preserving land, and as a basic explanation of Connecticut's approach to open space acquisition for the public. A final revision of the plan will be completed in the first half of 1999.

2) Achieving State Land Goals: The Department of Environmental Protection acquired additional open space lands during 1998 through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust program. This program is the DEP's principal strategy for meeting the 10 percent open space goal through the acquisition of lands for the State's system of parks, forests, wildlife, fisheries and natural resource management areas. The program is intended to acquire land that represents the ecological diversity of Connecticut, including natural features such as rivers, mountainous areas, coastal systems and other natural areas, in order to ensure the preservation and conservation of such land for recreational scientific, educational, cultural and aesthetic purposes. During FY1998-99 \$19.5 million was authorized for this program.

A major effort was made during 1998 to streamline the acquisition process. With the approval of "lump sum funding" provided by Public Act 98-157, and efforts to promote cooperative acquisitions, the Department of Environmental Protection greatly accelerated its acquisition efforts in the third and fourth quarters of 1998. Since July 1, 1998, the Department of Environmental Protection acquired 12 properties in 15 municipalities involving nine different cooperators acquiring 1,611 acres at a cost of \$6,618,000. The contribution by cooperators and available grants sought by the DEP has resulted in a documented real savings of \$2,709,000 or 29 percent of the actual purchase price. During this six-month period, the Department of Environmental Protection acquired three times the six-month average of the past two decades.

Properties acquired through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust program during calendar year 1998 are listed on the attached chart.

3) Assisting Municipalities and Nonprofit Organizations: The Department of Environmental Protection's principal strategy for achieving the open space goal for municipalities and nonprofit organizations is through a grant program that helps leverage local and private acquisition money. For FY1998-99 the Governor proposed and the General Assembly approved \$10 million in grant funds for distribution. Working with private nonprofit land holding organizations, municipalities, water companies and the Natural Heritage, Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Review Board established by Public Act 98-157, DEP developed and implemented the Open Space Protection and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. The program, authorized by the public act, provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire land for open space or to preserve agricultural heritage, and to water companies to acquire land to be classified as Class I or Class II water supply property. Applications for the grant program were solicited for a first \$5 million round of grant awards in Autumn 1998. The DEP reviewed and evaluated fifty-nine project proposals valued at approximately forty million dollars. The first round of grant funds of five million dollars will be awarded in early February.

Agenda 1999:

- 1) The Department of Environmental Protection will finalize the "Connecticut Green Plan for Open Space Acquisition."
- 2) Additional lands will be evaluated and acquired through the Recreation and Natural Trust program. The Agency will seek an additional \$20 million in funding for the program.
- 3) The first round of grants to municipalities, private nonprofit land conservation organizations, and water companies will be awarded and administered. A second round of grants will be solicited, awarded and administered to provide a total of ten million dollars in grant assistance provided available funds are approved by the State Bond Commission. The DEP will seek \$10 million in new funding for continuation of the program in Fiscal Year 2000 and, if funds are made available, a third grant round will be held in Fall 1999.

The Department of Environmental Protection, working together with municipalities, water companies and private nonprofit land conservation organizations, has made substantial progress toward Connecticut's open space goals in 1998. The challenge is to maintain this momentum and continue the renewed effort toward achieving the State's open space goals that was begun in the past years.

Submitted by:

---

Arthur J. Rocque, Jr.  
Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection

# Recreation and Natural Heritage

## Trust

### Land Acquired 1998

PROPERTY NAME/ DATE PURCHASED (AG SEC. OF RECORDING DATE)	LOCATION	COOPERATOR	MATCH SHARE	FEE ACREAGE	EASEMENT RESTRICTION, OR P.L.O.W.A ACREAGE	PROBABLE PRIMARY MANAGER	STATE PURCHASE PRICE (Allocation or Estimate)	PURPOSE OF ACQUISITION
RN1990-0083 Sandmeyer Property 2/10/98	Robbins Swamp Canaan	None	None	37.0000	N/A	DEP	\$15,000	Acquisition compliments a major, long term preservation project designed to consolidate, protect, and enhance existing holdings. Canaan Mountain and Housatonic State Forest host a wide variety of upland habitats, and Robbins Swamp, Connecticut's largest inland wetland, is a major recreation and conservation resource.
RN1994-0067 Lippincott Property 3/26/98	Farm River/Long Island Sound Access East Haven	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	\$250,000.	57.0000	N/A	DEP	\$1,100,000	This parcel has significant frontage on the Farm River/Long Island Sound. Coastal resources at site are abundant, pristine, and unique.
RN1989-0092 Howard Property 5/29/98	Robbins Swamp and Canaan Mountain Falls Village	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Foundation/TNC	\$38,000/USF & WVF \$ 4,000/TNC	80.0000	None	DEP	\$0	This parcel represents an excellent addition to Robbins Swamp Wildlife Management Area. A majority of the parcel is wetlands which was previously low quality agricultural land. Peck Brook bisects the parcel.
RN1989-0051 DeGrande Property 7/13/98	Robbins Swamp and Canaan Mountain Falls Village	U. S. Fish & Wildlife Foundation	\$9,000.	10.0000	None	DEP	\$0	Addition to Robbins Swamp and Canaan Mountain.
RN1993-0034 Weber Property 8/5/98	Cockaponsett State Forest, Westbrook and Deep River	None	None	354.0000	None	DEP	\$780,000	Large forest acreage professionally maintained by former CT Forester of the Year; connects DEP lands and provides excellent timber, as well as recreational potential.
RN1995-0039 Blake-Coleman Property 10/27/98	Mianus River Greenway Greenwich and Stamford	Greenwich, Stamford, CT American Water Co., TPL	Greenwich- \$375,000 Stamford- \$525,000. CT American Water Co. - \$380,000.	83.0000	None	DEP	\$1,000,000	Property abuts the Bargh Reservoir, and is adjacent to land owned by the Greenwich Land Trust.
1 & Maine Ipswich 10/98	Cheshire and Southington	Cheshire, Southington, ISETEA	Cheshire- \$160,000. Southington- \$180,000. ISETEA- \$1,100,000.	65.0000	None	DEP	\$0	Extension of the Farmington Canal Greenway which will eventually connect Long Island Sound with the State of Massachusetts.
RN1994-0057 Mansfield Landing/ Farm River Property 11/16/98	Farm River/Long Island Sound Access East Haven	TPL	None	15.0000	None	DEP	\$400,000	This parcel has significant frontage on the Farm River/Long Island Sound. Coastal resources at site are abundant, pristine, and unique.
RN1989-0057 Danielson Turnpike Property 11/18/98	Old Fumace State Park, Killingly	None	None	61.2000	None	DEP	\$100,000	Rounds out State park boundary to the highway, its logical western border, and adds access, rd/geline feature, and aesthetic value to the park.
RN1994-0015 Rajon Realty/Echo Farm Property 11/18/98	East Haddam	TNC/Town of East Haddam		300.0000	None	DEP	\$2,050,000	This property has extensive frontage located along the Salmon River and Salmon Cove.
RN1994-0031 Stevens Property 12/3/98	Haddam	None	None	8.4500	None	DEP	\$0	Property was acquired as part of an exchange for a piece of disjointed Cockaponsetts Forest land.
RN1993-0084 Ashton Property 12/2/98	Wyantnock & Mohawk State Forests Comwall	None	None	362.2000	None	DEP	\$1,075,000	Property would be a great connecting parcel between Wyantnock & Mohawk State Forest.
RN1990-0057 Middlesex Corporation 12/14/98	Babcock Pond East Haddam	None	None	293.0000	None	DEP	\$950,000	Excellent wildlife habitat and recreation potential; substantial well kept acreage.
RN1993-0006 Strom Property 12/16/98	Cockaponsett Forest, Durham and Killingworth	None	None	48.0000	None	DEP	\$78,000	Acquisition will tie together two pieces of Cockaponsett State Forest into a greenway. Forest Management will be easier and hunting/fishing opportunities could be expanded and trails could be extended.
RN1991-0029 Fox Property 12/30/98	Chatfield Hollow State Park Killingworth	None	None	11.0000	None	DEP	\$185,000	Property is surrounded on three sides by state property.
<b>SUBTOTAL ACQUIRED</b>			3,001,000	1,784.86			\$7,733,000	