

**Town of Easton South Park Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 20, 2020**

**Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Meeting ID: 573 146 5822
Password: SPAC0720
Total attendees: 15**

1906 Call to order by John Cunningham

Committee members present: John Cunningham, Ross Ogden, Tara Sanft, Lisa Keane, Jeff Becker, Elliot Leonard, Andy Kachele, Dwight Senior, Bob Schrage

1. Review minutes from June 15, 2020 meeting, motion to approve minutes by T Sanft, second by A Kachele, vote was unanimous.

2. Public comment: none

3. Old Business

A. Review and discuss June 15 meeting, no comments.

B. Committee reports on ongoing investigations

1. Solar farm, presented by T Sanft and B Schrage, no formal proposal received, Micah from Sky View would be interested in leasing land, not purchasing

2. Ag application, presented by J Becker and Victor Alfandre, proposal for farmer to farm hops for profit of town (1/3 of parcel). They reached out to hops farmers for information, hops yield around \$15-16/lb, non-organic, no demand for organic, one-acre yield is variable, 100% or more. Initial investment for hops farm is high, labor costs are high and mechanics expensive, and there is only one harvest per year. Typical hops farm is 5 acres or less. A farmer suggested a trout lodge, but committee's opinion is the river is not lodge worthy. A Kachele suggests reaching out to CT Agriculture Experiment Station for further hops research. It's the opinion of V Alfandre that hops would not be very profitable for the town.

3. Educational/Nature Center, presented by L Keane, awaiting Fairfield University to get back if interested.

4. Preserve and protect, presented by D Senior, awaiting word from Park and Rec for costs and ability to help maintain parcel.

5. Residential development, presented by R Ogden, he was not able to follow up with Gina Blaze but A Kachele had a conversation with her and she would be willing to grant a conservation easement to the town that would be about the same area that the ALT is trying to obtain. We still would like an appraisal for balance of the parcel, minus the ALT amount, and an appraisal for the entire parcel. We have received the ALT land appraisal, see attached. Per J Giorlando, appraisal was done per 3 acre zoning for entire property, yielding \$210k/lot.

6. Commercial development, presented by A Kachele and J Cunningham, there has been no word back from Kleban Associates. E Leonard

proposes a motion to make a three-person sub-committee to explore other non-local, large real estate commercial firms, made up of A Kachele, R Ogden and E Leonard. A Kachele states he does not have the expertise and states that J Cunningham can be on the committee. Concerns raised that some residents may not want commercial development but this committee is charged with bringing all possibilities to the BOS. Motion amended, to replace A Kachele with J Cunningham, and form a subcommittee to investigate the interest by commercial real estate firms in the development of this property; committee members are E Leonard, R Ogden and J Cunningham. Motion passes. E Leonard to chair.

7. ALT grant application status presented by J Giorlando. Application, letters of endorsement (will send to secretary once complete), and appraisal of property submitted to state. J Becker asks if there are any hang ups with the application, J Giorlando responds a phase one environmental site assessment was not done when the town purchased the property, that would need to be done before ALT could purchase, site clean up needed before purchase. J Becker comments that a clean up of the parcel would be best done after the leaves fall off, per Ed Nagy.

4. New business

A. Public outreach and emails received, presented by L Keane and A Kachele. This committee received 15 total emails from the public, 6 emails suggesting a town pool, to be forwarded to Park and Rec, 3 wanting to leave it, a pollinator garden, a town cemetery, meditation center, community garden that could be used by town families/schools/scouts, senior low income housing, see attachment for emails in entirety. A Kachele states that there is a break between 2 alternatives: keep, and what to do with it or sell, and what is beneficial; we should draft our report in that format.

B. Discussion of other interested parties, by J Cunningham. Both SHU and Fairfield U have expressed interest in possible faculty and/or graduate student housing.

C. Discussion of additional contacts: L Keane and T Sanft to investigate town cemetery suggestion. A Kachele to follow up with Transcendental Meditation Center suggestion.

5. Public comment: June Logie, 140 Rock House Rd, suggests reaching out to Patti Popp for meditation information/interest, also look at Real Food Share in Newtown, providing food for the hungry, if we are keeping the property.

Grant Monsarrat, 370 N Park Ave, states his concern for the continued search for commercial firms.

D Senior asks if E Leonard has any history with proposed sought after firms, E Leonard states he has no history with them.

A Kachele responds that our charge is to look at all possibilities, regardless of our desires. We owe it to the BOS and the 7500 people who live in town.

Discussion of how the town came to own the parcel, A Kachele states that the resolution did not read explicitly to preserve the land, it was bought to preserve our zoning, there was a contract already proposed for the sale to the New England Prayer Center, when purchased. Referendum read by Grant Monsarrat.

6. Next meeting, August 17,2020, 7pm

2045 Motion to adjourn by J Becker second by E Leonard, vote unanimous.

Zoom recording:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/2vc2JKHfzT1JQoXq4X70ApZiJqPdX6a82iUa-KcJzRzMOqnLCftrCF2wU8HAt9gQ>

Password: rizqq4=A

Minutes submitted by Lisa Keane, SPAC Secretary

SPAC Emails received

Mon 6/15/2020 10:25 AM

Hello,

There has been a lot of requests and interest in having a town pool. Has recreation been considered for this space? Town pool, ice skating rink, playground, bike paths for kids to play and be safe. This can be revenue generated by having people purchase season or yearly passes depending on use. I think a recreational space for kids and families would be a great draw for families looking to move here.

Sincerely,
Bryna Theriot

Mon 6/15/2020 11:00 AM

Hi!

I would love to help come up with ideas for the South Park Property. One question first. I asked this to Kristy Sogofsky a while back, and she thought the answer was no.

As far as I am aware, there are zero marketing materials for this property. How would we go about selling it without the ability to advertise it?

My recommendation had been to approach the Transcendental Meditation Association for CT...who I proactively floated the idea with several months back. Right now they rent out places. But again, no marketing material to share with them.

Best,
Stephanie

Mon 6/15/2020 8:08 PM

Hi,

I live in Easton and would like to suggest a use for the above mentioned property. We and many others I know, would LOVE a town pool/spray park and/or Rec center similar to what Newtown and Ridgefield recently put in. This would definitely help attract buyers to Easton and give the town something more to enhance our offerings especially since we have minimal retail and things to do here.

Thanks for considering!

Kristi

Tue 6/16/2020 10:25 AM

Hi All,

I know you are invested in looking at all possible uses for the land trust in Easton with acres and acres of property to think about.

The first thing that comes to mind would be a town pool and sprinkler park and playground. Similar to Wolfe Park. What a tremendous addition that would be to our

town!!! New Canaan added in a town pool in Waveny park and it has been such a success and would make our town very desirable to live in. Other surrounding towns have pools and/or beaches/sprinkler parks and it is something we lack and typically exit our zip code for. There are a lot of families with young children that move here and having a facility like that would be a no brainer. As with Wolfe park, you could even charge a rental fee to rent a pavilion with picnics tables for parties. It would be amazing to have something like that here. It would be truly be an amazing aspect of our town to have something like that here.

Thank you,
Ashley Murdoch

Fri 6/19/2020 7:31 AM
Hello,

On Facebook people are saying they want pools, splash pad, nature trails, hockey rink.

I think we should look at how to make that happen. Money is on an issue of course so let's raise the money.

Easton needs an outdoor pool to gather at and an indoor pool to go in the winter. The Newtown pool is incredible but lacks an outdoor option. But if we had an indoor pool like Newtown but add big sliding doors or garage doors opening to the outside where the splash pad is and small playground you have a indoor/outdoor space available all year round. There can be trails to walk on, horses riding trails and inside the pool building a fitness center, basketball court etc. In fact the whole community center can move to that location.

You can build a building or center with all these Money making options...

- Resident Membership fees
- Non-resident Membership fees (that location will pull -Fairfield, trumbull, Bridport, even Shelton all which need indoor family pool options
- conferences for professional development
- functions for small businesses to raise money at (the location right off the highway makes that an easily accessible location)
- horse boarding (maybe)
- swimming lessons
- swim teams....winter and summer to compete with the ymcas in area
- camps
- preschool (again a school pulling kids from neighboring towns)
- daycare center
- build tennis courts and have a tennis team
- jb highschool can rent the pool for swim team
- Fairfield highschool can rent for swim team (both Fairfield highschools do not have their own pools)
- psychotherapists can rent space in the building for therapy sessions
- other professionals can rent small offices as well like yoga teachers, nurtionists, personal trainers, acupuncturists, natural healers, massage therapists, Reiki healers, chiropractors... the building can have a whole wellness center attached. Are those professionals in our town traveling to other towns to do their practice. So in this wellness community center let's make space for those professionals to do their work here in Easton.

This town needs a place to gather in water and enjoy neighbors and being outside and getting outside of their houses in the winter.

If getting the money is an issue then raise the money. Have fundraisers, and make a plan that gets the residents excited about it and maybe donate to the cause. If we had a center line that in our town the town becomes so much more desirable to live in. And it is way more practical than adding in stores or restaurants to our town which no one would shop in or go to eat at.

Thank you so much for offering us the chance to express our ideas.

I would love to be in the committee to get this going and planning for the center etc. So if you need people let me know or let me know how to join.

Thank you so much

Mary Kate Robb, LCSW

Fri 6/26/2020 5:02 PM

I would look into the Aspetuck Land Trust option for the unbuildable acres and sell the remaining to a developer to build 5-10 homes to recover as much \$ to the town as possible. If \$ is so important to the schools, community & safety the town should do all they can to find new revenue vs increasing property taxes.

Dave Castle
75 Burr St

Dennis Laccavole

Fri 6/26/2020 7:11 PM

Keep the property as is! It is a pristine piece of property containing some of the best native trout fishing in Fairfield County. It is a treasure and it would be a tragedy if it were lost to development.

Fri 6/26/2020 7:32 PM

If we have the funds to fund it it would be awesome to have a community pool that we paid a small annual fee as Easton residents and we could open it to other towns at a higher fee or daily use. Or a nature center One that focused especially on the types of farms we have in the area and nature classes etc :)

Good luck!

Sarah Walker
45 Easton Heights Lane

Fri 6/26/2020 7:50 PM

Hi,

I suggest you create a pollinator garden with native plants. You could work with the Aspetuck Land Trust to help the town create a beautiful garden with native plants that can then be propagated through pollinators. The garden can have pathways and areas for sitting and enjoying the garden.

Thank you,

Allison Michaud

Fri 6/26/2020 8:42 PM

True low income housing for we seniors on limited income.

Nathalie S Taranto

Sat 6/27/2020 1:16 PM

Dear Committee

I live directly across from the SP property.

How about a town owned cemetery? Other towns have done it... I believe Plymouth Connecticut has a town owned cemetery. There may be others that I am unaware of. It would be a wonderful use and would not disrupt the beauty (especially if it were either a 'green' cemetery <https://www.everplans.com/articles/the-three-different-types-of-green-cemeteries>, or a cemetery with only footstones - but I' might be dreaming too big here....) It would keep the neighborhood quiet, be very little upkeep and would not disturb the river. In addition, it would maintain the integrity of a gateway property into the town of Easton.

If we could combine the cemetery with the Aspetuck Land Trust acquisition, I think that would be ideal.

Whatever you do, please, please do not consider commercial use! This property is the first property that people see as they come in to Easton. Let's keep our jewel a precious gem!

Thanks for your work and consideration

Colleen Kearney
47 S Park

Sat 6/27/2020 7:37 PM

The referendum that the town approved was for the preservation and conservation of the South Park Avenue property. This property is the entrance of the Town of Easton and keeping it as open space showcases the beauty and tranquility that Easton is known for. Any development will destroy what we know as Easton's beauty and turn Easton into one of its overbuilt neighbors. We need to preserve Easton as the jewel of Fairfield county.

Protect Easton.

Sincerely,

Christopher Michos
8 Princess Pine Lane

Sat 6/27/2020 9:11 PM

Easton needs a town pool - not commercial space. Easton needs to replicate what Monroe did with Wolfe Park. We have the space, we have the trout stream, there could be plenty of room for parking and I can attest over time this will help property values.

By adding a pool with a picnic area with grills for cooking and perhaps an area where live music could be played in the summer time will attract more people to our beautiful town. We could charge for the evening concerts and sell memberships to join the pool. A reduced rate for residents and a higher rate for out of towners. Either seasonal memberships or a daily fee.

I'm sure we could also look at perhaps more tennis courts or a horse shoe or bocce pits. There are so many things we can do for families that will help more people discover our town.

The town needs things geared towards families, this in turn will help property values go up which will bring in more tax dollars. This is a win win for all!

Let me know if I can help.

Ken

Ken DeVecchin

Donna Mcclowry
Sun 6/28/2020 9:16 PM
Leave it the way it is

Tue 6/30/2020 11:44 AM

Dear South Park Advisory Committee members:

I am writing in regards to the request for use options for the 29.5 acres of South Park land. Five years ago, just before I moved to Easton, I was the architect for one of the submissions for the previous request for proposals for this land, so I have had the opportunity to walk the land and experience it first-hand. I also heard all of the use proposals at that time and their merits and deficits. I understand that the desire for a pool and similar town amenities was a strong consideration in that deliberation (thinking of the SHU proposal), and I am assuming that plan was thwarted when SHU acquired the GE property. Additionally, septic disposal was a major concern, especially when thinking of density in an environmentally sensitive area. When it comes down to it, though, I wholeheartedly believe that the best use of the land is as a park. The one thing that we can't get more of is land and, relatedly, open space. Once it is gone, it is gone. I see this happen far too often, being an architect and working with developers. There is always a drive to fill these open spaces.

This is an opportunity to create value out of an asset the town owns. Whether it be by simply cleaning it up and officially naming it a park or by developing the portion by the existing building (if there is still that interest, even make that into a pool pavilion and build a pool). The existing building could also become a museum dedicated to the history of Easton and its people, or the nature center proposed in conjunction with SHU (I like this idea and it would be a great resource for our schools and children as well as adults, without increasing the density of our schools). But it would be great to maintain the vast bulk of the property as fields and trails. The land is not only beautiful, but has evidence of this sort of use in the form of trails near the river, and even old worn out tables down in the woods, if I remember correctly from that time. Additionally,

the adjacency to the delicate river points toward its value as a low density development. The Trout Unlimited proposal points out many of the concerns of developing this parcel with significant density and coverage, and I would like the committee to consider the environmental aspects when thinking of future development of this land.

I would be happy to provide more thoughts, options, or feedback if the committee is interested.

Sincerely,
Chris Hull

Tue 6/30/2020 8:45 PM

Hi,

Could a portion of the land be set aside as community allotments that can be used by individuals to grow organic vegetables and flowers?

This would allow people in lower Easton who may not have enough sunlight the opportunity to have their own gardens.

The allotments could be auctioned or granted by lottery with the possibility of raising a small amount of money.

The garden club and other local groups could sponsor events to help people get started.

Some allotments could be set aside for school kids, including in high school and college, to use in the summer. Parks and Rec, the Easton Community Center, church groups, boy and girls scouts could all be invited to participate.

Allotments could be made available to neighboring people and community groups from Bridgeport providing a way to build greater community.

Thanks for your consideration,

John Meyer
18 Lantern Hill Road

**Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant
Program**

A Program to Assist in the Acquisition or Restoration of Open Space

Grant Questionnaire

Grant Application Deadline: July 1, 2020

Project Title: 18 South Park Avenue, Easton, CT
Sponsor: Aspetuck Land Trust
Sponsor's Address: P.O. Box 444, Westport, CT 06881-0444
Name/Title of CEO: Bill Kraekel, President
Name/Title of Preparer: David Brant, Executive Director
Phone: 203-331-1906

PROJECT COST, VALUE OF THE LAND ONLY:

TOTAL PROJECT AREA (Ac): 18.7 acres

TYPE OF REQUEST: Acquisition in Fee

OSWA 2020: Aspetuck Land Trust's acquisition of 18 South Park Avenue, Easton, CT 1

1. ELIGIBILITY:

- Applicant must be a municipality, non-profit land conservation organization (e.g., land trust), or water company:

Aspetuck Land Trust is a nonprofit land trust and serves the towns of Easton, Weston, Fairfield and Westport. The land trust owns additional lands in Bridgeport, Redding, and Wilton.

- For municipal applicants, if the municipality's Plan of Conservation and Development is more than 10 years old, a grant will not be awarded without written approval by the Office of Policy and Management. **Not applicable.**
- Water companies must purchase land that can be classified as "Class I" or Class II" after acquisition. Water Companies must show if and how they intend to allow access to the proposed land for recreational uses. **Not applicable.**
- If the proposed property is being purchased from a water company, the property must be classified as surplus (Class III) land. The Water Company (title holder) must be granted permission to dispose of the property by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) and the Department of Public Health (DPH). **Not applicable.**
- If a Land Trust is purchasing an interest in land located in a Targeted Investment Community/Distressed Municipality, it must obtain approval from the Municipality's chief elected official or governing legislative body. Approval must be submitted with the application. **Not applicable**, the Town of Easton is not a Targeted Investment Community/Distressed Municipality.
- All lands or interest in lands acquired under this program must be preserved in perpetuity, predominantly in their natural, scenic, and open condition. **See Section 4.**
- Applicants must show evidence of compliance with past OSWA funded properties. **See Section 13.**
- The applicant must clearly show how the public will access and enjoy the property. If public access is not clearly shown, the property will not be evaluated or offered a grant. **See Section 6.**
- The applicant must have a reasonable anticipation that all matching funds will be secured and a closing can take place within one year of the grant award. **See Section 11.**
- Grant funds cannot be used to purchase:
 - Land to be used for intensive recreation purposes (see FAQs for more information) **Not applicable.**
 - Land which has already been committed for public use. **Not applicable.**
 - Land to be acquired by eminent domain. **Not applicable.**

2. Conservation, Climate, and Recreation Value

Describe your proposal's resource conservation, climate, and recreation initiatives.

Provide a linkage, create or contribute to a developing or existing greenway? Does this greenway offer opportunities for recreation or non-motorized transportation? If so, please describe such opportunities and plans to develop such recreational or transportation options.

The site will complement existing preserved open space land, especially the protection and aid of wildlife migration because the property abuts land already acquired by The Aspetuck Land Trust (ALT) that would connect the existing two Warner Angler Preserves totaling 4 acres on the Mill River. If the ALT is successful in obtaining this parcel, the preserve would more than quadruple in size by gaining 18.7 acres of habitat and an additional 3,300 linear feet of riverine bank that includes protection from at least a 200-foot buffer of land. Additionally, nearly 2,800 feet of the opposing river bank is dedicated Town of Easton Open Space. Protection of the riparian lands is important in maintaining the habitat quality of the coldwater fishery that the Mill River provides and will preserve riparian habitats along the river that are used by wildlife as migratory corridors.

In total, connecting these two preserves with this additional property will provide 23.6 acres of protected habitat including 4,860 linear feet of riverine bank which will provide fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing, painting, and photography for the general public. Access to these opportunities will be provided by a proposed parking area and blazed trail linkages throughout the property. New and existing trails will be provided along the entire stretch of the property.

Protect or complement existing preserved open space or preserved agricultural land, especially if such protection will aid wildlife migration?

One of the major components of the ALT's green corridor is to conserve and preserve undeveloped strategically located land parcels in a six-town region by either purchasing them or receiving them as donations. Through the ALT's strategic conservation mapping they have identified 42 properties for protection totaling 805 acres. This property would serve as a key component of a north-south wildlife corridor that exists along the Mill River.

Criteria used to geolocate the Green Corridor is as follows:

1. Maintain and preserve habitats along important riparian corridors (e.g. Saugatuck and Mill Rivers and Sasco Brook).
2. Link existing ALT properties and other protected open spaces.
3. Link habitats of known rare flora and fauna and other species of conservation concern.
4. Avoid and mitigate the effects of habitat fragmentation.
5. Protect properties with important farmland soils.

Acquisition of the South Park property is consistent with 5 out of 5 of the Green Corridor's criteria.

Aspetuck Land Trust's Green Corridor initiative was a local response to the advocacy of the Highstead Foundation's H2H Regional Conservation Partnership, a partnership that links Westchester County NY with Fairfield County, CT by aligning conservation goals in this geographical area. According to the H2H Mission:

"The H2H partner network advances the pace and practice of regional land protection and stewardship from the Hudson to the Housatonic by collaborating across boundaries to enhance the connection between people and nature".

The H2H Regional Conservation Partnership's vision is that "A landscape mosaic abundant in forests, farms, wildlands, and waterways of the Hudson to Housatonic Region enriches the quality of life for all who live, work and play here" is supported by strategic land acquisitions such as the South Park property acquisition as it connects habitats, waterways, wildlife corridors, and people across various geopolitical and natural resource geographies.

18 South Park Avenue is a significant component in both the H2H initiative and extending/connecting an existing open space corridor in Easton. Currently, Warner Anglers Preserve is made up of 3 Overview Drive, a 4.3 acre property southwest of 18 South Park; 88 South Park, .6 acre property at the northern tip of 18 South Park, and a 3.8 acre property across South Park and Riverside Lane (see **Table 1**).

The Mill River runs along the eastern border of 18 South Park Avenue, and much of the land on the opposite side of the river is also protected, about 13 acres of land is owned by the Town of Easton on South Park Avenue and Riverside Lane.

North of the ALT land, the State of Connecticut owns over 100 acres of protected land and the Aquarion Water Company owns well over 500 acres of watershed land surrounding the Easton Reservoir. The Mill River runs from the reservoir through the ALT, Town of Easton, State of CT and Aquarion lands. **Attachment 2-F** and **Table 1** provides further details.

Table 1. Existing Open Space in the Vicinity of 18 South Park Avenue			
Address	Parcel ID	Acres	Direction from property
<i>Warner Anglers Preserve (ALT/ALT Easement)</i>			
3 Overview Dr	5501A 163 OP	4.29	SW border; across street
South Park Ave	5502D 6	3.11	NW; not adjacent to property
88 South Park Ave	5502D 3A	.6	Northern tip
<i>Town of Easton Dedicated Open Space</i>			
40 Riverside Ln	5513B 40 PAR D	3.02	North border of 5513B 8; SW border of 5502D 2; not adjacent to property
Riverside Ln	5513B 8	4.18	Eastern border
South Park Ave	5502D 2	6.76	NE border
<i>Aquarion</i>			
35 Buck Hill Rd	5502B 56	212.56	Northern border of 5502B 71; not adjacent to property
Old Oak	5502A 33A	380	Adjacent to 5502B 56 (Aquarion)
<i>State of Connecticut</i>			
South Park Ave	5502B 71	26.81	North of 5502D 6 (across street)
South Park Ave	5502B 14	5	Across South Park From 5502A 56
119 Flat Rock	5502A 56	33	Across South Park from 5502A 33A (Aquarion)
South Park Ave	5502A 62	62	Adjacent to 5502A 33A (Aquarion)
	Total:	741.33	(Current)
18 South Park Ave	5502D 5513B 3	18.7	(Additional Proposed)

Provide for high-quality, passive recreational uses? Please describe such uses and plans to develop such uses, if needed.

This section of the Mill River, which sits below the Easton Reservoir, was designated in 2002 as one of the state's first Class 1 Wild Trout Management Areas (WTMA). This tailwater fishery for

wild trout in southwestern Connecticut provides for a unique, high-quality passive recreational fishing experience for the general public in Fairfield County. Cold water releases (~55° F) from the bottom of the reservoir provide stable summer water temperatures that support thriving populations of wild Brook Trout and wild Brown Trout. While trout in most of Connecticut's streams become stressed during the summer months, trout in the Mill River benefit from nearly optimal water temperatures throughout the growing season. Growth of both species of wild trout in the Mill River is rapid with Brook Trout up to 13" and Brown Trout up to 19" having been collected during DEEP Fisheries Division's annual sampling (Cited from Matt Gocłowski, CT DEEP Report on Mill River Wild Trout Management History presentation given to Town of Easton South Park Advisory Group on May 18, 2020.)

Additionally, the upland meadows and low floodplain adjacent to the river provide many opportunities for additional passive recreational opportunities that include hiking, wildlife viewing, painting, and photography. A small parking area will be provided a minimum of 200 feet from the river in the upland area with a small footpath blazed beyond the top of bank to provide access along the length of the river by foot. The footpath will provide for a high-quality scenic hiking trail along the river.

Provide a valuable resource for recreation, forestry, fishing, wildlife habitat or other natural resources initiatives?

Forestry: The site does provide timber resources for forestry, but forestry management would likely entail limited treatments for biodiversity, as commercial timber harvests are constrained by wetland soils on a portion of the parcel, the proximity to the Mill River, and the steep slopes on the west side of the proposed parcel.

Fishing/Fisheries Resources: Fisheries resources of the Mill River are presented in **Table 2**. This table presents sampling data collected by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP) on the Mill River in 2012 just upstream of the Warner Angler's Preserve.

The Mill River at Site No. 173912012 is considered upper perennial riverine habitat. The data at this Site show that upstream reaches are inhabited by a fish community composed of native species that represent both coldwater and warmwater fisheries. The presence of wild populations of both Brook Trout and Brown Trout and American Eel are indicative of a cold-water fishery, while White Sucker represents a warm-water fishery. Both species of trout and the Yellow Perch are important game species sought by anglers.

Table 2. Fish Species Collected from Site No. 173912012: Mill River Easton, CT¹.

Common Name / Scientific Name	No.	Feeding Guild	Preferred Habitat Attributes ² & ³	CT WAP GCN Designation
American Eel <i>Anguilla rostrata</i>	18	Invertivore, Piscivore	Rivers, streams, ponds, and the shallow, more productive areas of lakes; spawns in Sargasso Sea	Most Important
Bluegill sunfish <i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>	17	Invertebrates and fishes	Larger streams and ponds	
Brook Trout - Wild <i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>	13	Insectivore	Yearly dissolved oxygen concentrations that do not drop below 5 mg/l	Most Important
Brook trout – stocked <i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>	13	Insectivore	See above	
Brown Trout - Wild <i>Salmo trutta</i>	46	Insectivore	Yearly dissolved oxygen concentrations that do not drop below 5 mg/l	Most Important
Brown trout – stocked <i>Salmo trutta</i>	46	Insectivore	See above	
Rock Bass <i>Ambloplites rupestris</i>	9	Invertivore, piscivore	Small, cool, weedy lakes or littoral regions with extensive cover in larger lakes; streams with rocky, silt-free substrate, low turbidity, perennial flow.	
Yellow Perch <i>Perca flavescens</i>	3	Invertivore, Piscivore	Clear, vegetated backwaters or pools of small to large rivers, shallow waters of lakes, and large ponds	Important
White sucker <i>Catostomus commersoni</i>	10	Variety of invertebrates and small fish	Shallow riffles for spawning	Important

¹ <http://www.cteco.uconn.edu/projects/fish/viewer/index.html>

² Whitworth (1996). ³ Jacobs and O'Donnell. (2009).

Wildlife Habitat: The site provides habitat for important game species and non-game species. Game species include White-tailed Deer, Gray Squirrel, Eastern Cottontail Rabbits, and Wild Turkey. There are a number of non-game species that are expected to occur on site either as resident species or transient individuals that likely use the Mill River as a travel or dispersal corridor.

An abundance of White-tailed Deer were noted on site during a site visit conducted on May 28, 2020. Woodchuck, Eastern Cottontail Rabbit, and Red Fox are expected to occur around the woodland edges. Raccoon, Opossum, and Mink likely frequent the riparian zones, and arboreal-roosting bats are likely to be found within the forests. Gray Squirrel, Red Squirrel, Eastern Chipmunk were also noted on site, and a variety of small mammals such as, mice, voles, and shrews are expected to occur in the various habitats of the site. These animals likely support larger predators expected to occur on site from time to time such as Bobcat, Fisher, and Coyote, which are known to occur on nearby conservation lands in Fairfield and Easton.

Game species noted include on site include White-tailed Deer, Gray Squirrel, Red Squirrel, and Eastern Cottontails, and likely also include Wild Turkey, American Woodcock, and a variety of fur-bearing animals. Non-game species include an abundance of native resident and migratory bird species, various small mammals, herpetofauna, and invertebrate species.

Wildlife cover in the uplands is provided by abundant fallen coarse woody debris, rock walls, standing dead wood from storm damage or insect infestation, densely vegetated eco-tones, leaf litter, evergreen leaves of dense Mountain Laurel and conifer stands, and hollows within dead and decaying limbs/boles.

In the wetlands, sedge tussocks, leaf litter, coarse woody debris, dense stands of emergent woody shrubs, root masses from storm-toppled trees, and Sphagnum moss provide cover.

Notable wildlife food sources observed on site for each of the major feeding guilds are as follows:

- Insectivores: Food for Insectivores abound in the form of aquatic insects, especially mayflies (Ephemeroptera), stoneflies (Plecoptera), and caddisflies (Trichoptera) – (indicators of excellent water quality) - which are expected to occur along the stream channel substrate; isopods, cladocerans, and various Diptera which can be found in the seasonally saturated wetland pools of former river channel scars; Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) larvae which can be found in the forest canopy and leaf litter; Hymenoptera (ants, bees, and wasps) which occur in the leaf litter, dead and decaying woody debris, and under and among the boulders, etc.

- **Herbivores:** Food for herbivores is provided in the lush foliage of various grasses, forbs, and tree seedlings in herb and shrub layers; low hanging branches of wetland shrubs and sapling trees.
- **Granivores:** Seed-eating rodents, squirrels and birds find an abundance of foods in the form of weed seeds, acorns, beechnuts, hickory nuts, and the samaras of maples and Tuliptree.
- **Frugivores:** Poison Ivy, Virginia Creeper, Maple-leaved Viburnum, Silky Dogwood, Northern Spicebush, Lowbush Blueberry, black cherry, blackberries, Green Brier, are examples of abundant fruit-bearing wildlife sources.
- **Nectarivores:** Sweet Pepperbush, Pinxterflower Azalea, Mountain Laurel, Northern Spicebush, Silky Dogwood, and a variety of flowering herbaceous plants are notable examples of nectar sources that are important to pollinators and other nectarivores.
- **Carnivores:** rodents and other small mammals (Eastern Chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits), songbirds, snakes, and amphibia (Spring Peeper, Gray Tree Frog, Green Frog, et al.) and fish provide ample food for predatory animals such as raptors, Minks, foxes, Coyote, and Bobcat.

Protect lands that preserve high-quality natural waters, drinking water resources, and core forests?

Water Supply Protection: The site and adjacent parcels have a Class GA groundwater quality. Designated uses of Class GA groundwaters are for existing private or potential public or private water supply suitable for drinking without prior treatment, and to sustain base flow for hydraulically-connected surface water bodies. The site provides fresh drinking water via subsurface aquifers that support residential wells on the property and on properties adjacent to the site. It also contributes to baseflow of the Mill River, a watercourse with a Class A designation which ultimately flows south to discharge into Long Island Sound at Southport Harbor in Fairfield. (http://cteco.uconn.edu/maps/town/wtrqualcl/WtrQualCl_Easton.pdf)

This sustained discharge of relatively clean water into Southport Harbor is likely a major reason why Southport harbor enjoys a Class SA water quality designation while Black Rock Harbor to the east in Bridgeport and Westport Harbor to the west have SB Surface water quality designations.

The wetland habitats of the property provide a variety of functions and values. The hydrology of the Mill River is supported largely by discharge of a base minimum outflow of the Easton Reservoir. Groundwater discharge provides additional contribution either directly from the toe of slope along the river or via smaller, intermittent, unnamed tributary streams from the site and adjacent parcels off site. The full biota of these wetland and adjacent upland systems have

not been inventoried for rare species and have potential to harbor various species of Greatest Conservation Need among a variety of animal taxa especially the Lepidoptera, Odonata, and Ephemeroptera among the invertebrates.

Provide for protection of habitats most at risk from climate change, including forested swamps, lands adjacent to freshwater and tidal wetlands, riparian lands adjacent to cold water streams, beaches and dunes, and areas of potential tidal marsh migration?

The property provides protection of the following habitats most at risk from climate change:

- Forested swamps
- Lands adjacent to freshwater wetlands, and
- Riparian lands adjacent to cold water streams.

The vegetated wetlands themselves provide carbon sequestration service as deep organic soil deposits were observed in the site wetlands bordering the Mill River.

Protect a naturally-occurring feature such as a shoreline, river, stream, mountainous territory, ridgeline, inland or coastal wetland, estuary, or geological feature?

The property protects a reach of the Mill River, its riparian forested bank, and an associated bordering vegetated inland wetland and floodplain features.

Protect a habitat of a plant or animal species that is either threatened, endangered, or of special concern? Only species that are represented by the Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) should be reported, unless a qualified specialist has identified such species.

Rare Species: A review of CTDEEP Natural Diversity Database (NDDDB) Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping revealed almost the entire reach of the Mill River on site to be a mapped locality for one or more species listed in the CT Endangered Species Act.

Correspondence with the CTDEEP NDDDB (copy provided in **Attachment 2-H**) revealed that the following species are known to occur on or proximal to the site:

Eastern Box Turtle: The Eastern Box Turtle is a terrestrial, diurnal turtle that is found in open deciduous woodland, old fields, powerline clearings, and ecotones on sandy soils, often not far from wet areas such as vegetated inland wetlands, watercourses, and small ponds. This turtle reaches the northeastern part of its range in southern New England. It is listed as Special Concern in the CT Endangered Species Act. The Eastern Box Turtle is reported to have a low reproductive rate and to require ten years

to reach sexual maturity (Klemens, 1993). Due to its reproductive biology, its conservation status is of concern because populations experiencing increased mortality rates due to direct human impact (e.g., roadkill) or indirect human impact (e.g., habitat loss and degradation) may not be replenished by the species' natural reproductive rate.

Within their occupied ranges, Eastern Box Turtles seek out available microhabitats for the various stages of their life histories or in response to changing temporal or seasonal conditions. During hot, dry weather, they may be found in water, mud, or may burrow under logs or decaying vegetation for extended periods of time. During periods of inactivity they often seek out brush piles or thickets for cover. During the winter, they typically spend the season buried in the soil substrate, adjusting their depth below the ground surface depending on air and soil temperatures. Females seek out sandy areas in which to dig nests and lay eggs. Reported food items include earthworms, slugs, snails, insects and their larvae (particularly orthoptera, lepidoptera, coleoptera, and hymenoptera), crayfish, frogs, toads, and snakes. Also eats carrion, and assorted vegetable matter such as leaves, grass, berries, fruits, and fungi (DeGraaf and Yamasaki, 2001). Eastern Box Turtles are typically sedentary, maintaining the same home range for many years. Home range and dispersal studies often report distances of only 150 to 750 ft travelled. However, individuals may occasionally leave their normal home ranges as they wander in search of food or nesting sites. The combined conservation lands proximal to the site would expand the protected available habitat for Eastern Box Turtle populations and keep this large portion of the landscape roadless.

Wood Turtle: This diurnal turtle frequents slow moving meandering streams with sandy bottoms and overhanging riparian vegetation. During summer months it can wander into adjacent woodlands, meadows, and roadsides. Home ranges tend to be linear, oriented along water courses where it eats vegetation, grass, moss, mushrooms, berries, insects and their larvae, worms, slugs, snails, tadpoles, frogs, fish, and carrion. It is reportedly intolerant of pollution. Fecundity is low. Clutch sizes range from 4 to 12 eggs with the average being about 8-9. Young may also suffer a high mortality rate as young wood turtles are seldom encountered in the field (DeGraff and Yamasaki, 2001). Riparian development, pollution, and collection for commercial trade have impacted Wood Turtle populations which are now listed as Special Concern species in the CT Endangered Species Act.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: This small bird-eating hawk is reportedly a rare and local nester in the northwest and northeast hills of Connecticut. No details were provided by the NDDDB response as to the status of this bird reported from the project area. Zeranski

and Baptist (1990) report that the last known nesting site for Sharp shinned Hawks in lower Fairfield County was in 1947 and the bird was virtually extirpated from Connecticut as a nesting species by the late 1950s. Reports have increased since the late 1970s but the species is still rare as a breeding bird in Connecticut despite being surprisingly abundant during peak migration periods from mid-September to mid-October. They are listed as an endangered species in the CT ESA. Sharp-shinned Hawks prefer mixed coniferous and deciduous forests with clearings or edges bordering on brushy meadows - attributes provided by the South Park property.

Protect a native ecological community that is unique or uncommon?

The project area is characterized by a temperate deciduous riparian woodland dominated by tall growing broadleaf trees that often grow out over the Mill River shading the watercourse. The wooded riparian corridor is important for bank stabilization, shading the watercourse below to keep water temperatures cool, and for adding organic material to aid in-stream productivity via the detrital pathway. The conservation and protection of the upper reaches of perennial streams in Fairfield County is a conservation priority (AudubonCT, 2013; CTDEEP, 2016). This reach of the Mill River is a Wild Trout Management Area. Angling is allowed for catch and release only using barb-less, single-hook, artificial lures and flies <http://www.nutmegtrout.org/fishing/where-to-go/mill-river/>.

Within the forest matrix lie palustrine forested wetlands with special habitat attributes that are important to sustaining several Greatest Conservation Need (GCN) species as identified in Connecticut's State Wildlife Action Plan (CTDEEP, 2016) (Please Refer to **Section 10**).

Enhance or conserve the water quality of the State's lakes, rivers and coastal waters?

The upper reaches of perennial streams as they flow through forested landscapes tend to have little in-stream production as the substrates are typically composed of gravel and rock devoid of or lacking vegetation. It is here where the stream's productivity is dependent upon the headwater forested wetlands and the adjacent upland tree canopy cover. The former producing abundance of organic carbon via the lush hydrophytes growing in the wetland, and the latter adding energy to the riverine environment via leaf litter that falls into the streams and is subsequently shredded and consumed by aquatic insect larvae and other aquatic organisms. Therefore, it is important to protect the forested portions of the upper perennial streams where cool, clear, groundwater discharges contribute to the hydrology of these reaches and sustain the flow of the greater watercourse systems.

Please provide any other information pertinent to your proposal.

Supporting Material:	X	Wetland Map with Topographic Features	Attachment 2-A
	X	Road Features with Aerial Imagery	Attachment 2-B
	X	Property Boundary Map	Attachment 2-C
	X	Provide two or more high-resolution photographs showing flora, fauna, waters or watercourses, summit view sheds, and/or other natural resource-based features (JPEG)	Attachment 2-D

Additional Applicant Supporting Material:

	X	Public Access & Trails Map	Attachment 2-E
	X	Existing Open Space Map	Attachment 2-F
	X	Green Corridor Map	Attachment 2-G
	X	NDDB Request	Attachment 2-H
	X	IPaC Report	Attachment 2-I

3. PROPERTY COST ESTIMATES – ACQUISITION:

The grant amount will be based upon the DEEP-approved fair market value. Appraisal costs are not reimbursable. The effective date of the appraisal and/or appraisal review must be dated within one year of the application deadline. Applicants applying for additional State and/or Federal grant funding must submit a Yellow Book appraisal and a Yellow Book appraisal review (first option below). **If a property is valued at less than \$100,000.00, only one (1) Yellow Book appraisal is required.**

SUPPORTING MATERIAL:

(X) One (1) Yellow Book appraisal and one (1) Yellow Book appraisal review (include appraisal and appraisal review summaries in your application) ***To be mailed under separate cover by August 1st, 2020.***

4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Who is the current property owner? Town of Easton. The Town of Easton owns two contiguous lots at 18-22 South Park Avenue. The "Property Boundary Map" in **Attachment 2-C** depicts a proposed lot line revision of the two parcels that creates 18 South Park Avenue (Proposed Parcel B) to be conveyed to the Aspetuck Land Trust and 22 South Park Avenue (Proposed Parcel A) that will remain with the Town of Easton.

Has the owner previously sold or donated other permanently protected land? **YES X NO** ____

Yes, the Town of Easton has protected over 600 acres of land to open space that has provided high quality outdoor passive recreational opportunities to the public.

Has a title search been conducted on this property? **YES X NO** ____ (title search cost is not reimbursable).

Is the property free from any lien, claim, encumbrance or easement that would prevent the land from being used for open space purposes? **YES X NO** ____ . If there is a lien or encumbrance, how will it be resolved prior to the property purchase?

Is the current property owner a willing seller? Yes, the Town of Easton is a willing seller.

- Is the site on the market? **YES** ____ **NO X**.
- Has a Purchase & Sale Agreement been executed? **YES** ____ **NO X**.
- Is there a signed and certified Letter of Intent to sell? **YES X NO** ____.
- Do the seller and applicant intend to close within one year? **YES X NO** ____.

Are there any reserved rights, restrictions or environmental impacts (power lines, landfills, structures, roads, etc.) on or near the proposed site? **YES X NO** ____ . If yes, please give details.

Yes, the Northeastern Gas Transmission Company holds an easement for their gas line and cathodic protection unit on this property. A map and the easements from the land records will be attached. The company has the "right, privilege, and authority to lay, construct, maintain, operate, alter, repair, remove, change size of and replace a pipeline ... " See **Attachment 4-C**

Is the site free from environmental contamination? **YES X NO** ____ . If no, what is your plan to address such contamination.

It is believed the site is free of environmental contamination. However, prior to the sale of the property the Town of Easton will complete a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment. If further action is required to verify or remediate any contamination, then the town will complete the requirements.

What physical changes are required to make the site suitable for passive outdoor recreation?

An interior parking lot will be constructed on the property by the Town of Easton Department of Public Works (DPW) to provide for more suitable access for the general public. Trails will be built and blazed to guide visitors through the property where they can enjoy fishing along the river and walking through the fields. There are two small outbuildings on the property that will be removed by the Town of Easton DPW. We will undertake a program to remove invasive

species throughout the property so native species can reestablish. The parking area and trails can be seen in **Attachment 2-E**. An informational sign will be posted with information and the rules of the preserve.

Will the purchase of this property displace any businesses, homes or other establishments?

No business, home, or other establishment will be displaced by this purchase.

Supporting Material

- Copy of deed/lease (current owners) **Attachment 4-A**
- Copy of title search (if conducted) **Attachment 4-B**
- Copy of any lease, lien, encumbrance, agreement or interest in the property **Attachment 4-C**
- Letter of Intent **Attachment 4-D**
Purchase and Sales Agreement

5. AGRICULTURAL USE

The DEEP Commissioner can approve limited public access under this program, based on a determination that unlimited public access would be disruptive of agricultural activities occurring on agricultural areas of the land. This is only approved if the applicant is purchasing a conservation easement and only if the property has an existing agricultural use that will continue. Such approvals for limited public access require public access that, at a minimum, provide parking and designated trail use.

Is there currently any agricultural use or forest management on the property? If so, will these activities continue to occur after purchase and to what degree?

No, there is no current use of this kind on the property.

Will agricultural use impede public access in any way? If so, how and to what degree?

There is no agricultural use on the property currently.

Will any structures (barns, sheds, etc.) be excluded from the preserved area?

Prior to the sale of the property to ALT, the Town of Easton will raise an existing barn and shed in disrepair and remove the remnants of an old greenhouse. The Town of Easton, with volunteers from Aspetuck Land Trust and Trout Unlimited, will remove all remaining debris found on the property.

Does the property contain prime or important agricultural soils? If so, what percentage?

Yes, according to the town GIS nearly the entire property is classified as either "Prime Farmland Soils" or "Statewide Important Farmland Soils". This property is a portion of a larger property that was once farmed.

Supporting Material

Indicate on a map where agriculture use currently takes place and where it will continue if applicable **Not applicable.**

Soils map showing prime or important agricultural soils **Attachment 5**

6. PUBLIC ACCESS/RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

The applicant must clearly show how the public will access and enjoy the property. If public access is not clearly shown, the property will not be evaluated or awarded a grant. Access must be through a permanent ownership abutting a public road that provides feasible access, unless otherwise approved prior to submitting an application. An on-site, off-street parking area for public safety is preferred. Land being proposed for acquisition by a Water Company is exempt from the public access requirement. If public access will be permitted, however, please describe the permitted uses.

What recreational resources exist on the property currently? Please indicate, on a map where these resources are located.

Freshwater catch and release fishing exists on the property (Mill River). However, access to the river is restricted, as visitors do not have any designated safe parking location or a clear, barrier-free path to the river bank.

Will recreational resources need to be developed? If so, on the required map, please indicate where, and to what extent these resources will be developed.

The anticipated recreational resources at the site will significantly improve public access to the site and Mill River. A small parking lot will be provided for visitor convenience and to avoid parking on town roads. A blazed dirt trail for hiking and access to the river bank will be provided.

Supporting Material

A map showing how the public will access the property and what recreational resources exist and/or will be developed. **Attachment 2-E**

7. ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Accessibility for people with disabilities is a civil right defined, for these purposes, as equal opportunity for the use and enjoyment of recreational resources. Such consideration is relevant to such elements as parking, gates, viewing platforms, and pathways, and under certain circumstances, trails.

Define how accessibility is to be integrated into the design of the project. *Not applicable.*

If accessibility for people with disabilities cannot be incorporated, please explain why.

The Mill River on this property is in a low floodplain with a steep slope bordering it along the entire property facing the river. Providing a path down to the river view shed and to fishing locations would require extensive construction on the steep slope with ground disturbance and fills within the existing 100-year floodplain. Additionally, the steep slope is well vegetated with mature trees and underbrush that provides stabilization during heavy rains and periods of flooding. The construction activities required for the path would destabilize the slope and require further improvements to protect it from erosion.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

The DEEP strives to provide public access to open space in every community. Describe the need for passive recreation areas in the municipality where this purchase will take place.

Is the property in close proximity to an urban area or population center?

Yes. The property is located on Easton's southern border and is approximately a half mile from the City of Bridgeport's northern border with Fairfield and Trumbull. With over 144,000 people (2019 US Census estimate), the City of Bridgeport is the state's most populous city.

Please identify the major service area(s) neighborhood(s), city(s), region(s) that would be affected by this proposed acquisition.

In addition to directly benefiting residents of Easton's southern neighborhoods, acquisition of this property will also benefit residents of the adjacent Town of Trumbull and the nearby Town of Fairfield (less than a tenth of a mile), as well as residents of the City of Bridgeport, which is located approximately a half mile from the site.

18 South Park Avenue is very accessible from Route 15/Merritt Parkway. From Route 15, visitors would take exit 47 to South Park Avenue. 18 South Park Avenue is a ½ mile, 1-minute drive from exit 47.

In Fairfield, the property is located within a half mile of the campuses of Sacred Heart University (SHU) and Notre Dame High School (Stratfield neighborhood). In Trumbull, the property is located under 2 and a half miles of the Westfield Trumbull mall, a 5-minute drive.

Greater Bridgeport Transit's #3 bus line provides service to the Fairfield and Trumbull destinations discussed above. Due to the Town's population density and rural development patterns, GBT does not provide service to Easton.

What is the population density of the municipality (per square mile)?

Consistent with Easton's rural character, Easton's population of 7,521 is spread out over 27 square miles, a population density of 273 people per square mile. As the property is located in close proximity to Bridgeport, Fairfield and Trumbull, the population densities of these municipalities are as follows:

- Bridgeport: 144,399 people; land area of 15.97 square miles for a population density of 9,029 people per square mile.
- Fairfield: 62,045 people; land area of 29.9 square miles for a population density of 1,986 people per square mile.
- Trumbull: 35,673 people; land area of 23 square miles for a population density of 1,544 people per square mile.

All population data is from the US Census's 2019 estimates.

Is this proposed acquisition in an area where significant growth/development has occurred or is planned? YES X NO ____. If yes, please expand upon the level of growth and the intensity of the development and how this project may compliment that development.

In Easton, land use in the area of 18 South Park Avenue is primarily low density, single family development, either 1-acre or 3-acre lot minimums. As the property is zoned residential, there has been past developer interest in subdividing the site for housing.

South of the property in Fairfield and Trumbull, these residential development patterns continue but at a slightly higher density, with housing gradually becoming denser in Bridgeport's North End neighborhood. As SHU continues to grow, it is likely that the student population will increase in this vicinity, with a corresponding need for more student housing. Since Park Avenue acts as the Bridgeport-Fairfield border, Bridgeport is literally across the street from SHU, and there has been past interest in redeveloping properties on the Bridgeport side to accommodate students. The Westfield Trumbull Mall, which is also located in close proximity to Bridgeport, has been exploring alternatives to traditional retail so as to attract more visitors. This has included allowing for multi-family residential on the site.

Easton is committed to open space preservation and connecting natural habitat. 18 South Park Avenue is a critical piece in developing an uninterrupted, protected open space corridor.

Acquisition of the site will connect the two ALT owned/managed parcels along the Mill River, as well as open space owned by the Town of Easton, the State of Connecticut and the Aquarion Water Company. Although many of the parcels are only a few acres, 18 South Park Avenue is the last large property necessary to form a 275+ acre corridor of protected open space from Easton's southern border to the Easton Reservoir.

How does this acquisition align with the applicable Council of Government's regional trail assessment, regional recreational plan, or regional plan of conservation and development?

The Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Government's Plan of Conservation and Development, "Reconnect 1 Region" (adopted in December 2015) dedicated Chapter 8 to Natural Resources.

The goal of this chapter is to *"Preserve sensitive natural areas and protect regional assets, such as local watersheds, riparian zones, regional water supplies, and wetlands, while promoting an integrated network of park and recreation areas throughout the region."* (148). 18 South Park Avenue is a sensitive natural area in the Mill River watershed. If protected as permanent open space by Aspetuck Land Trust (ALT), the property could also become a valuable natural and recreational asset for the public to enjoy.

Further, protecting a property in close proximity to neighboring MetroCOG municipalities between several currently protected smaller parcels and a northern connection to hundreds of acres of open space, supports the POCD's *"RECONNECTED"* principle. All parcels are either bordered or intersected by the Mill River. By working with ALT, Easton is supporting the development of a "green network" of open space/riparian areas for recreation and strengthened ecologic health in this part of the Greater Bridgeport Region (149).

Thus, acquisition of this land by ALT for permanent protection as open space, is a solution that directly addresses the following statement from MetroCOG's POCD:

"Existing areas of open space could help meet demand for parks and recreation, but steps must be taken to improve these areas as part of a larger publicly- owned network. While extensive natural areas exist in the Suburban and Conservation areas of the region, these areas will face the threat of development if not properly protected through easements, restrictions, or public ownership. It is also important that undeveloped areas of open space associated with floodplains and wetlands remain undeveloped to maximize the regional landscape's ability to capture and filter storm water." (151).

Supporting Material Council of Governments Plan: *Attachment 8*

9. LOCAL SUPPORT

Explain what support this proposed acquisition has received and how the public has been involved in the planning and design process.

How and when was the decision to purchase this property made? What kind of interest has the community expressed in the acquisition?

Aspetuck Land Trust's *Green Corridor Plan* has identified 18 South Park Avenue as a conservation priority because it meets each of the plan's 5 Criteria (a detailed analysis can be found in Section 10). The property is also located in a "Connector Corridor," as defined by the plan.

Due to the importance of 18 South Park Avenue to the Town of Easton, the South Park Advisory Committee was formed by the Easton Board of Selectmen in February of 2020, with the first meeting occurring on March 9th. The BOS charged the Committee with the following:

"There shall be a Committee appointed by the First Selectman on the future use of South Park Avenue, which is charged with investigating and reporting to the Board of Selectmen on the options for the future use of approximately 30 acre parcel by the Town of Easton since 2008, located on South Park Avenue and bounded by South Park Avenue and the Mill River.

The committee may consider any future use, whether or not such use is consistent with current zoning, for said parcel. The committee shall consider the fiscal impact of any future use. The committee may consider mixed uses. The committee shall consider whether the town should retain ownership, sell or lease the property, or engage in a public/private project."

ALT's acquisition of the property was first discussed at the April 20th meeting of the Committee. Trout Unlimited, CTDEEP and ALT presented at the May 18th meeting. Both Trout Unlimited and CTDEEP emphasized the value the Mill River has in providing habitat for wild trout. ALT provided an overview of the property and how public access would be provided. See **Attachment 9-A** for minutes from the meeting.

Acquisition of the property by ALT has also been discussed at the June 15th and June 1st meetings. While the Advisory Committee has discussed a number of future scenarios for the site, the majority of Committee members and the public attending these meetings have supported preservation of the property, with the importance of the Mill River and the trout habitat consistently noted. Ms. Lisa Keane, a committee member also encouraged the public to provide feedback on the site in a June 13th letter to the *Easton Courier*. See **Attachment 9-B**.

Additional opportunities for the community to comment have been provided at the following meetings:

OSWA 2020: Aspetuck Land Trust's acquisition of 18 South Park Avenue, Easton, CT 20

- The Easton Board of Selectmen discussed acquisition of the property by ALT at their June 18th 2020 meeting, with a Letter of Intent to Sell distributed to the Board. The property/OSWA grant was also discussed at the June 4th and May 7th meetings.
- The Easton Planning and Zoning Commission unanimously approved acquisition of 18 South Park Avenue by ALT for open space preservation at its June 8th, 2020 meeting. The proposal had also been discussed at the May 20th meeting, with feedback from the public regarding the importance of protecting turtles at the site.
- Acquisition of the site also has been presented to Easton's Conservation Commission (June 9th and May 26th, 2020 meetings).

Provide support letters from municipal, regional or executive boards and land trusts that identify how the proposed acquisition addresses an identified need/goal in the local and/or regional Open Space Plan or Plan of Conservation and Development.

Supporting Material Support letters: municipal planning department (P&Z), inland wetland commission, conservation and/or open space commissions, regional planning agency (RPA or COG corporate/executive board approval). ***All the letters of support above will be mailed under separate cover by August 1st, 2020.***

10. ALIGNMENT WITH STATE AND LOCAL CONSERVATION GOALS

How is the proposed acquisition consistent with the Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development? See Attachment 10-A

Chapter 3, "Conservation Strategies" outlines strategies to "Protect Natural Resources" (3.2) and "Preserve and Protect Open Space" (3.3) – both of which are consistent with acquisition of 18 South Park Avenue by the Aspetuck Land Trust. The goal of this chapter is to *"Protect and preserve important resources and features in order to maintain overall environmental health and contribute to the diversity, rural character, economy and general welfare of Easton."* (14).

Natural resources at this site, consistent with those identified by the POCD as important, include watercourses, steep slopes, floodplain areas and natural diversity areas (16). Strategies to increase natural resource protection include (17):

- Continue to preserve and protect watercourses and their functions.
- Continue to protect steep slopes (> 25%) from development pressure.
- Continue efforts to preserve areas listed on the Natural Diversity Database
- Coordinate with local and regional natural resource protection agencies, groups, land trusts, and other organizations to protect natural resources.

While Easton lists 18 Park Avenue as open space in their POCD, it is classified as “other town owned land” and does not fall under either the dedicated or managed categories (see the Conservation Plan map on page 29). The land is currently zoned for residential development and has received past interest for a residential subdivision.

The importance of open space preservation to natural resource protection, as well as the role of land trusts in open space protection is emphasized in Section 3.3:

“The Town’s open space areas are a critical resource in helping to protect water quality, preserving the character of Easton and conserving important natural resources. Easton treasures the open spaces it has preserved and the overall feeling of “open-ness” in the community.

The POCD recommends that these open spaces be preserved in perpetuity and that additional open space areas be preserved as opportunities arise. Easton should continue to work with the Aspetuck Land Trust and other conservation organizations to preserve open space.” (18).

Has the Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development been completed and approved within the last 10 years? (See eligibility)

Yes, Easton’s *Plan of Conservation and Development 2018 - 2028* was approved on December 31, 2018 by the Town’s Planning and Zoning Commission.

Is the proposed acquisition consistent with or identified in other municipal or regional plans such as Water Quality, Recreation and/or Open Space Plans?

In 2016, the Easton Conservation Commission completed and approved the Town’s Open Space Plan (September 13, 2016). The proposed acquisition of 18 South Park Avenue by ALT meets the Conservation Commission’s threshold criteria, as well as many of their open space conservation values and goals for “Natural Resource Protection” (7-8). Below are these goals with explanations in italics.

- Protect and preserve the town’s natural resources, such as forests, fields, waterways, and plant and animal habitats—with special attention to critical and unique natural resources, such as the Mill River. *The Mill River forms the property’s eastern border. Much of the land on the river bank opposite 18 South Park is dedicated Town of Easton open space. This segment of the Mill River is classified as a Class 1 Wild Trout Management Area; the ALT properties adjacent to the site make up Warner Anglers Preserve, which 18 South Park will become part of.*

- Create trail and wildlife linkages (corridors and greenways) between open spaces. *18 South Avenue is located between several disconnected parcels in the Mill River watershed. Acquisition of the proposed site will connect these multiple parcels and create a connected open space corridor of hundreds of acres.*
- Protect species that are rare, endangered, or of special concern (flora and fauna). See Sections 2 &

ALT will be the entity acquiring the property. ALT's *Green Corridor Plan* has identified 18 Park Avenue as a conservation priority because it meets each of the plan's 5 Criteria. The property is also located in a "Conservation Corridor." Explanations are in italics:

- Maintain and preserve habitats along important riparian corridors (Saugatuck and Mill Rivers and Sasco Brook).
- Link existing Aspetuck Land Trust properties and other protected open spaces. *88 South Park Avenue (.6 acre), 3 Overview Drive (4.3 acres) and a 3.11 acre property north of 18 South Park Avenue are protected by the ALT and make up Warner Anglers Preserve. Adjacent to this corridor are over 600 acres of protected open space and water company lands owned by the State of Connecticut and Aquarion.*
- Link habitats of known rare flora and fauna and other species of conservation concern. *From the confluence of the Canoe Brook to the Merritt Parkway, the Mill River is a Class 1 Wild Trout Management Area. Additional details are provided in Section 2*
- Avoid and mitigate the effects of habitat fragmentation. *Acquisition of the site will avoid potential habitat fragmentation if 18 South Park were to be developed. Development of 18 South Park Avenue would eliminate the possibility of an open space corridor from Easton's southern border to the Easton Reservoir.*
- Protect properties with important farmland soils. *The site has been found to have agriculturally valuable soils. Additional details are provided in Section 5.*

Is the proposed acquisition consistent with the State's Plan of Conservation and Development (available from the Office of Policy and Management) and applicable State conservation and recreation plans (e.g., Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan [SCORP], and State's Wildlife Action Plan/Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy)?

2018-2023 DRAFT State C&D Plan, 2020 Legislative Section (December 4, 2019)

Acquisition of 18 South Park Avenue by ALT will support Growth Management Principle 4: Conserve and Restore the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources, and Traditional Rural Lands (explanations are in italics):

4.3 Expand the state's open space and greenway network through the acquisition and maintenance of important multifunctional land and other priorities identified in the State's Open Space Plan (i.e., Green Plan). *18 South Park Avenue will connect multiple smaller parcels of dedicated open space owned by ALT and the Town of Easton. North of the property, a 3.11 acre ALT owned-parcel is across the street from 100s of acres of Connecticut and Aquarion owned open space. In addition to the land's value as an open space linkage, the Mill River is a Class 1 Wild Trout Management Area and is managed for catch and release fishing.*

4.5 Encourage collaborative ventures with municipalities, private non-profit land conservation organizations and other entities to provide a system of appropriately preserved and managed natural areas and resources that allow for a diversity of well functioning habitats and the sustainable use of resources. *The Town of Easton and ALT will partner to manage the site. Easton Public Works staff will assist with improvements necessary to accommodate parking and ADA accessibility. Town staff will remove derelict buildings and repair the picnic area. Trout Unlimited has expressed interest in cleaning up the river bank and future assistance with site management.*

4.18 Promote innovative land conservation and banking practices that further local, regional and state conservation and development objectives, and minimize the need to expand infrastructure to support new development in rural areas. *Acquisition of the property will avoid additional development in a rural area.*

The Locational Guide Map indicates that the property is located in a Priority Funding Area.

2017-2022 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan [SCORP]

Acquisition of 18 South Park Avenue most aligns with Goal 1 "Protect, conserve, and manage Connecticut's natural, cultural, and historical resources as they support outdoor recreation."

Strategy A "Continue Green Plan implementation" provides a summary of the plan, which makes apparent the importance of preserving 18 South Park Avenue for both conservation and passive recreation: *"Only the public possession of property rights can guarantee that open spaces will remain protected in perpetuity for outdoor recreation access and conservation. For this reason, acquisition of open space is the backbone of outdoor recreation."* (46) More details are provided in the Green Plan discussion below.

Strategy F "Implement conservation objectives for the Wildlife Action Plan (WAP)" notes the importance of collaboration with conservation organizations throughout the state:

"Implementation of the actions will require the efforts of many conservation partners working

together to incorporate the needs of GCN species and key habitats into their programs and plans throughout the next decade.” (53). More details are discussed in the WAP section below.

Strategy D “Strategically coordinate SCORP goals internally and with other stakeholders” encourages collaboration with other stakeholders (52). The mission of the Aspetuck Land Trust is *“the preservation and conservation of open space, including farm and forest land, and the natural resources located thereon, primarily in the towns of Easton, Weston, Fairfield and Westport, for the benefit and education of the public.”* ALT’s capacity to partner with CTDEEP in realizing SCORP goals increases as it can acquire and protect more property. Further, the Town of Easton and Trout Unlimited will assist with initial improvements and future management.

State’s Wildlife Action Plan/Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy (2015)

Conversion of land for development was identified as the primary threat to Greatest Concern Species (GCNs) by the WAP (3-7). 18 South Park Avenue faces development-related threats, since it is zoned residential. As land is developed, habitats are fragmented (3-8) and the water quality of nearby streams and water bodies are impaired (3-18). Currently, there are multiple small protected parcels adjacent to 18 South Park. A small ALT owned parcel north of the site is across the street from 100s of acres of Connecticut and Aquarion owned open space.

The WAP identifies the Mill River as cold water habitat (4-9), which is a Conservation Opportunity Area. As a Class 1 Wild Trout Management Area (Mill River), acquisition of 18 South Park would fulfill the WAP conservation objective A, “Protect land and water habitats that support Greatest Concern Species” (4-4). The acquisition aligns with the strategy of connecting conservation areas to one another (4-31), as the property would connect multiple protected parcels to the Easton Reservoir where the Mill River begins. . Further, the following highest priority action for freshwater aquatic habitat of “Protect habitat in streams that support cold water fish communities” would be supported (4-88).

Wildlife within the project area is expected to be representative of multiple taxa, both vertebrate and invertebrate, and include several species identified as species of conservation concern by state and federal wildlife regulators. This group of species is likely to include breeding residents within the habitats of the project area. It includes some species identified by the CTDEEP’s State Wildlife Action Plan as Greatest Conservation Need (GCN) species and a variety of migratory species whose distributional ranges overlap the project area, the protection of which falls under the jurisdiction of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Information on species identified by the State of Connecticut as GCN species that were noted on site is provided in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Species Noted on Site or Adjacent Lands Identified in the CT Wildlife Action Plan as GCN Species, their Conservation Status, and Preferred Habitats

Species Name (<i>Scientific Name</i>)	GCN Designation ¹ , CT ESA Status ² ; (other conservation status as indicated)	Requisite Habitat and Special Habitat Attributes ³ or ⁴
Herpetofauna		
Wood Frog (<i>Lithobates sylvatica</i>)	GCN – Important	Moist woodlands (both coniferous and hardwood) or dry woodlands with moist microhabitats; Palustrine wetlands. Requires temporary woodland pools or backwaters of slow-moving streams for breeding
Gray Tree Frog (<i>Hyla versicolor</i>)	GCN – Important	Heard calling on site
Avifauna		
Barred Owl (<i>Strix varia</i>)	GCN – Important (Top Predator)	Inhabits extensive mature moist mixed woodlands especially those bordering lakes streams marches or low meadows prefers forests with an open understory for nesting and foraging.
Wood Thrush (<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>)	GCN – Most Important USFWS Priority conservation sp. (USFWS, 2020) BCR 30 – Highest Priority Conservation Species (ACJV, 2008)	Nest in both the interiors and edges of mature deciduous or mixed forest particularly damp woodlands near swamps or water primary habitat features include trees taller than 53 feet a shrub sub canopy layer shade moist soil and leaf litter found in wooded slopes also nest in wooded residential areas in city parks maybe somewhat tolerant of forced fragmentation on breeding grounds commonly found in woodlots 2.5 to 12.5 acres in size.
Eastern Wood Pewee (<i>Contopus virens</i>)	GCN – Important; Forest interior indicator sp. (Askins, 1987)	A variety of wooded habitats (deciduous, coniferous, and mixed woodland), with open areas or with intermediate canopy gaps.

Table 3. Species Noted on Site or Adjacent Lands Identified in the CT Wildlife Action Plan as GCN Species, their Conservation Status, and Preferred Habitats

Species Name (<i>Scientific Name</i>)	GCN Designation ¹ , CT ESA Status ² ; (other conservation status as indicated)	Requisite Habitat and Special Habitat Attributes ³ or ⁴
Blue-winged Warbler (<i>Vermivora cyanoptera</i>)	GCN-Most Important BCR 30 – Highest Priority Conservation Species (ACJV, 2008)	Nests in brushy growth in the borders of swamps or streams, forest edges of abandoned fields and pastures, thickets and 2nd growth woods. Prefers brushy old pastures in old fields with saplings more than 10 feet tall.
Ovenbird (<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>)	GCN-Important	Open mature dried deciduous or mixed forest with little understory and an abundance of fallen leaves and logs sometimes associated with undisturbed forest but breeds in a wide range of forest conditions and sizes.
Baltimore Oriole (<i>Icterus galbula</i>)	GCN - Important	Inhabits open and semi-open areas, roadside shade trees, orchards, cemeteries, parks, deciduous forest edges, wooded river bottoms and shelter belts; avoids dense forests.
Plants		
Black Oak (<i>Quercus velutina</i>)	GCN – Important	Dry deciduous woods
Sugar Maple (<i>Acer saccharum</i>)	GCN – Important	Rich woodlands
Lowbush Blueberry (<i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i>)	GCN – Important	Dry upland woodlands, clearings, and barrens and open canopy forest, full to partial shade; prefers acidic soil conditions
Common Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)	GCN – Important	Fields, roadsides, and waste places
Bayberry (<i>Morella caroliniensis</i>)	GCN – Important	Dry to moist sandy soil

¹(CTDEEP 2016), ²(CTDEEP 2015), ³(DeGraaf and Yamasaki, 2001), ⁴(Magee and Ahles, 1999)

Additionally, invertebrate species of conservation concern are expected to occur within or adjacent to the property and therefore, have potential to occur within certain habitats noted on site. They include both aquatic organisms such as certain freshwater mussels, Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies), and Ephemeroptera (mayflies) in on-site wetlands and watercourses, and a suite of terrestrial lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) as well. The latter potentially occurs in the drier Oak / Lowbush Blueberry association since various lepidoptera species are known to be specialists on plants of the family Ericaceae (Schweitzer et al., 2011).

The USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) Online Screening Tool was referenced to obtain information on species listed on the federal Endangered Species Act. An IPaC report generated for this project (USFWS IPaC, 2020) identified one rare mammal species of federal conservation concern - the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) - and 11 migratory bird species of conservation concern with distributional ranges that include the project area. Among those 11 species of birds, the following are expected to occur on the site based upon the existing habitats observed:

- Prairie Warbler (Breeding)
- Black-billed Cuckoo (Breeding)
- Wood Thrush (Breeding), and
- Rusty Blackbird (Wintering).

A copy of the IPaC report for the South Park Property is provided in **Attachment 2-H**.

The Northern Long-eared Bat is listed by the federal Endangered Species Act as threatened, and by the Connecticut Endangered Species Act as Endangered (CTDEEP, 2015).

Is the proposed acquisition consistent with the State's 2016-2020 Green Plan (Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy, available at www.ct.gov/deep/greenplan)? Explain/provide supporting justification that this proposed acquisition meets one or more of the four land acquisition priorities and targeted goals as address in the 5-year Action Strategy Section.

The State of Connecticut Green Plan States the following:

*"While progress has been made over the decades on preserving open space, lands of high conservation and recreation value continue to be lost to development, even with the current economic conditions. **Conservation lands increase greatly in value when they are interconnected with other conservation lands**".*

Acquisition of the South Park Riparian Parcel Property would serve to protect lands of existing high conservation value and with potential for notable passive recreational value, while at the same time connecting lands currently protected adjacent to and proximal to the site. The

property if acquired, would connect to existing portions of the Warner Angler's Preserve to the north and south of the parcel. This would add additional protected watershed and source water streams that feed the Mill River. These benefits align with the following three out of the four themes in the Green Plan:

- Natural Waters and Drinking Water Resources
- Natural Heritage Resources
- Natural Resource-based Outdoor Recreation.

How acquisition aligns with each of these themes in the Green Plan is discussed as follows:

Natural Waters and Drinking Water Resources

Regarding this theme, the Green Plan states:

"The Green Plan gives priority to the acquisition of lands that serve to protect high-quality natural waters and drinking water resources. Clean water, including in our rivers, lakes, and inland wetlands, are essential to life and provide some of the richest wildlife habitat in the state. Land conservation is an important part of watershed management for protecting habitat and water quality against impacts by fragmentation, climate change, runoff pollution, and other threats.

As stated in Question 2.0 above, the site and adjacent parcels have a Class GA groundwater quality, the designated uses of which are for existing private, or potential public or private water supply suitable for drinking without prior treatment, and to sustain base flow for hydraulically connected surface water bodies. The site provides drinking water via subsurface aquifers that support residential wells on property located adjacent to the site. It also contributes to the baseflow of the Mill River (a Class A Watercourse).

The hydrology of the on-site wetlands is supported largely by groundwater discharge with additional contributions from direct precipitation. The groundwater seeps on the property sustain the hydrology of a watercourse that flows easterly contributing to the headwaters of the Mill River. This watercourse is flanked by forested wetlands on the northwestern portion of the site. These wetlands provide several functions and values including groundwater discharge, sediment retention, wildlife habitat, production export, and carbon sequestration.

Continuing under this theme, the Green Plan reads as follows:

"Connecticut has several remaining areas of core forest blocks, characterized as unfragmented forested areas relatively far from non-forested areas. Core forest areas promote water infiltration and often support critical cold water streams. Protecting core forest will conserve natural vegetated cover needed to maintain cold water streams that

support habitat for native trout, aquatic invertebrates, and other dependent wildlife, and will serve numerous water quality ecosystem functions, such as reducing erosion and storm water runoff.”

Addition of the property to the Warner Angler’s Preserve brings the ALT protected riparian forested lands along the Mill River to almost 23 acres. This is far from the goal of 250+ acres for a core forest. However, due to the tall trees within the river valley and surrounding forested slopes, the site has a feel of a core forest. Forested lands to the east and adjacent to the site contribute to that feel. Some of the bird species noted on site are indicators of forest interior species such as the Barred Owl and Pileated Woodpecker.

Additionally, the site can be a contributing parcel to the larger Green Corridor Initiative – a sub-regional initiative within the still larger H2H Regional Conservation Plan and Partnership Network – described above in Section 2.

Natural Heritage Resources

Regarding this theme of the Green Plan, the acquisition of the South Park Property would help to protect forest bird species of state and regional conservation priority, palustrine forested wetlands, a first-order stream, and other species of conservation concern, both flora and fauna. Information regarding the natural heritage resources found on the property and adjacent forested lands that are identified in the State Endangered Species Act is provided in **Section 2** above. Information regarding these species and additional species identified in the Wildlife Action Plan (CTDEEP, 2016) is provided in the response to the initial question above in **Section 10**.

In addition to those resources, other federal trust species for which the USFWS has regional responsibility, and for whose ranges overlap the project area were identified by the USFWS (2020) as potentially occurring on the site, given the presence of suitable habitat. This information was generated via the USFWS IPaC planning tool available online, the results of which are discussed above.

Additional natural heritage resources identified as regional conservation priorities also occur on the property. Bird species noted on site that are recognized by regional conservation partners in the New England and Mid Atlantic Coast Bird Conservation Region (BCR 30) as priorities for conservation in the region include the following:

- Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) – High Priority
- Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – Highest Priority
- Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) – High Priority
- Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Moderate Priority

Natural Resource-based Outdoor Recreation.

The property could sustain limited hunting, birding, hiking, photography, or nature interpretation activities in whole or as a part of the greater South Park property. Its primary recreational usage will likely be for fishing along the Mill River.

Due to the property's location within a half mile of the City of Bridgeport, acquisition of the property will enhance urban community access to local open space. A small parking lot will be provided for visitors.

Provide supporting justification that this proposed acquisition complies with a documented need as addressed in a local or regional open space conservation & development plan (please provide written analysis).

One of the major components of the ALT's green corridor is to conserve and preserve undeveloped strategically located land parcels in a six-town region by either purchasing them or receiving them as donations. Through the ALT's strategic conservation mapping, they have identified 42 properties for protection totaling 805 acres. This property would serve as a key parcel in a north-south wildlife corridor, linking the Mill River Riparian habitats as the main geographic feature within the corridor. Criteria used to geolocate the Green Corridor and how the Acquisition of the South Park property is consistent with them are presented earlier in the response to Section 2.

Aspetuck Land Trust's Green Corridor initiative was a local response to the advocacy of the Highstead Foundation's H2H Regional Conservation Partnership, a partnership that links Westchester County, NY with Fairfield County, CT by aligning conservation goals in this geographical area. According to the H2H Mission: *"The H2H partner network advances the pace and practice of regional land protection and stewardship from the Hudson to the Housatonic by collaborating across boundaries to enhance the connection between people and nature"*. The H2H Regional Conservation Partnership's vision is that *"A landscape mosaic abundant in forests, farms, wildlands, and waterways of the Hudson to Housatonic Region enriches the quality of life for all who live, work and play here"* is supported by strategic land acquisitions such as the South Park property acquisition as it connects habitats, waterways, wildlife corridors, and people across various geopolitical and natural resource geographies.

The importance of preserving 18 South Park Avenue as open space will address the need of protecting the Mill River and cold water fish habitat, as discussed in both the local and regional POCDs:

"The Town's open space areas are a critical resource in helping to protect water quality, preserving the character of Easton and conserving important natural resources. Easton

treasures the open spaces it has preserved and the overall feeling of "open-ness" in the community. (Easton POCD, 18).

Further, the Regional POCD identified the need to connect open spaces for public recreation:

"Existing areas of open space could help meet demand for parks and recreation, but steps must be taken to improve these areas as part of a larger publicly- owned network. While extensive natural areas exist in the Suburban and Conservation areas of the region, these areas will face the threat of development if not properly protected through easements, restrictions, or public ownership." (151)

Supporting Material (Do not attach the entire plan or whole chapters of the plan. Provide only relevant excerpts)

- X Municipal Plan of Conservation & Development and/or Recreation Plan **Attachment 10-A**
- X Regional Conservation Plan **Attachment 8**
- X Other Municipal or Community Plans **Attachment 10-B**

11. FUNDING MECHANISM

All funding sources for acquisition must be disclosed. There must be reasonable anticipation that funds will be available within one year of grant award. It will be to the applicant's advantage to have funding firmly in place.

Explain how match funds will be provided. Will the applicant apply for other grant funds?

See Open Space Acquisition Account attachments. Alternative funding will be identified upon commencement of capital campaign.

Supporting Material

- X Resolution authorizing the expenditure of funds (corporate) **Attachment 11-A**
- X Budget line items where funds are held or committed **Attachment 11-B**
- X Statement showing funds available in an open space acquisition account **Attachment 11-C**
- Show commitment, amount and sources related to creative/alternative funding proposals **Not Applicable**

12. OPERATION, MAINTENANCE AND STEWARDSHIP CAPABILITIES

Provide evidence of the applicant's capability to operate and maintain the property.

Aspetuck Land Trust owns 150 properties on over 1,900-acres and maintains 45 trailed nature preserves ranging in size from 0.3 acres to 1,009 acres. We have a proven track record of stewarding our lands for public use and wildlife conservation, and conduct both rapid eco assessments as well as conservation and management plans on our properties.

OSWA 2020: Aspetuck Land Trust's acquisition of 18 South Park Avenue, Easton, CT 32

What organization(s) will manage the property and what is their management expertise? Will the maintenance of this property be a cooperative effort between a municipality, a land conservation organization(s) and/or a local community groups?

Aspetuck Land Trust will maintain the property in partnership with support from Trout Unlimited and the Town of Easton. A description of each group's role and expertise is below:

- Aspetuck Land Trust – Aspetuck Land Trust stewardship staff have conservation related degrees from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and the University of Vermont. Staff have been with the organization for a combined total of 35 years. We also retain a contract ecologist Anthony Zemba from Fitzgerald and Halliday who has completed an ecological assessment of the property. We also have trained trail stewards who will monitor the property. Last, regular calls for volunteers with hand tools and small equipment required to remove invasive plants and small debris, plant native species, and generally maintain the land.
- Trout Unlimited – volunteers and hand tools required to remove invasive plants and small debris, plant native species, and generally maintain the land.
- Town of Easton – Large equipment, tools, and labor required for raising dilapidated structures, removing heavy debris, and constructing parking area.

Does stewardship funding exist or when will it be in place?

General operating funds will cover normal stewardship activities and is in place. We created a separate Land Stewardship dedicated endowment fund to maintain our properties and the current balance of this fund is \$141,367. We continue to grow it to build principal.

13. PAST GRANT COMPLIANCE

In order to be considered for a grant, applicants must show that they are in compliance with past grant funded properties. (See eligibility)

Has the applicant received an OSWA grant in the past? If so, provide a brief update on the property(s). How has each site been maintained? How has the public reacted to the acquisition(s)?

Aspetuck Land Trust received a grant of \$165,497 on December 22, 2017 for the 38-acre Belknap Property acquisition. We created a trail on the property which is accessible from 4 public access parking areas at the dead end of Wampum Hill Road, Mayapple Road cul-de-sac, Wampum Hill Road, and Wilson Road. There has been great public interest in this property which added 38 contiguous acres to Aspetuck Land Trust's Honey Hill Preserve which now totals 119-acres. Hiking trails are maintained by Aspetuck Land Trust land stewardship staff and a volunteer trail steward. The CT Land Conservation Council and local legislators conducted a "Conservation Conversation" on the property which was carried by local press.

Supporting Material

- X A photograph demonstrating public access or, in the case of water companies, a photograph demonstrating valuable resource protection for each OSWA funded property (JPEG) **Attachment 13-A**
- X A photograph of the parking area for each OSWA funded property (JPEG) **Attachment 13-B**
- X A photograph of the permanent sign or plaque recognizing OSWA funding for each funded property (JPEG) **Attachment 13-C**

How to Submit Your Application

Please return your complete application including this questionnaire along with responses and supporting documentation to the following address:

CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program
Office of Constituent Affairs/Land Management
79 Elm Street, 6th Floor
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

References and Literature Cited:

- ACJV (Atlantic Coast Joint Venture). New England / Mid Atlantic Coast Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 30 Implementation Plan. Accessed online June 8, 2020. at https://acjv.org/BCR_30/BCR30_June_23_2008_final.pdf
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- Whitworth, W.R. (1996). *Freshwater Fishes of Connecticut*. 2nd Edition. Bulletin 114. State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection.
- Zeranski, Joseph D. and Thomas R. Baptist. 1990. *Connecticut Birds*. University Press of New England. Hanover, N.H. 328 pp.

Other Web-based Sources:

http://cteco.uconn.edu/map_catalog/maps/state/Bedrock_Geologic_Map_of_Connecticut.pdf

http://cteco.uconn.edu/maps/town/basin/basin_Easton.pdf Accessed online June 19,2020

http://cteco.uconn.edu/maps/town/SoilFarm/SoilFarm_Easton.pdf Accessed online June 19,2020

http://cteco.uconn.edu/maps/town/nddb/nddb_Easton.pdf Accessed online June 19,2020

http://cteco.uconn.edu/maps/town/wtrqualcl/WtrQualCl_Easton.pdf Accessed online June 19,2020

<http://www.cteco.uconn.edu/projects/fish/viewer/index.html> Accessed online, June 8, 2020.



CONSERVATION COMMISSION

225 Center Road - Easton, Connecticut 06612

July 17, 2020

Commissioner Katherine S. Dykes
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Attn: Allyson Clark, Open Space and Watershed and Land Acquisition
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

COPY

Re: Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition 2020 Grant Application
Property located at 18 South Park Avenue, Easton, CT 06612

Dear Commissioner Dykes:

The Easton Conservation Commission is pleased to support the Aspetuck Land Trust's application to seek funding from the State through the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program in order to acquire the 18.7 acre property located off South Park Avenue in Easton, CT.

This property encompasses part of the Mill River, immediately downstream of the Easton reservoir. It is known to contain excellent water quality and is an important cold water fishery. Additionally, it is a Class 1 Wild Trout Management Area. It is also the headwaters of the Town of Fairfield watershed which begins with release-water below the upstream hydraulic company dam. Preservation of this area through the proposed acquisition will avoid adverse impacts to natural resources and help protect the water resources and surrounding habitat of the Mill River that is home to wild native brook trout and wild brown trout.

We believe that the Aspetuck Land Trust will be the perfect steward of the Mill River and this newly acquired area will enhance land already owned by the Land Trust immediately to the north and south of the site.

Sincerely,

Dori Wollen jmd
Dori Wollen, Chair

DW/fmd

Cc. John Cunningham, Chair
South Park Advisory Committee