



Connecting people to the land since 1895

16 Meriden Road
Rockfall
Connecticut 06481-2961
Tele: 860-346-TREE
www.ctwoodlands.org

2025 Conservation Agenda

Connecticut's forests, parks and trails are critical underpinnings of the quality of life for all State residents, contributing meaningfully to water quality, recreational opportunity, environmental resiliency, public health and our shared economic potential. Investment in conservation is an essential strategy to continue this legacy and realize a vision of Connecticut as an outstanding place for all to enjoy.

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) has put forward a conservation agenda for Connecticut's future every year since 1897. Our 2025 Conservation Agenda builds on this strong tradition and also looks forward by addressing equity and climate issues on our treasured natural lands.

Passport to the Parks

CFPA believes that broad diversions of program funds and creating new exceptions for multi-car households and specific demographics would undermine the program's integrity. We encourage the General Assembly to keep the Passport to the Parks intact so that all Connecticut residents can continue to benefit and enjoy all that our State forests and parks have to offer.

In 2024, the Connecticut General Assembly provided historic support for Passport to the Parks through updates to the program's revenue structure in the budget adjustment. The result has been both inspiring and impactful. All Connecticut residents can continue to enjoy the State's environmental and recreational heritage without paying an entrance fee to the parks.

Trails Bonding

CFPA encourages the General Assembly to support bonding for Connecticut's trail systems and related environmental causes.

Investments made in the 825-mile Blue-Blaze Hiking Trail network help satisfy interest in the singular most popular land-based outdoor recreation activity in the state, hiking, according to the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Investment in the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails also leverages significant volunteer labor - more than 18,000 hours delivered by CFPA volunteers in 2024 alone - a value in excess of \$622,000. Every \$528 invested in the statutorily recognized Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System, on average, maintains 1 mile of trail.

Bond investments in multi-use greenways that connect suburbs and urban centers to the Blue-Blazed Trails system also create meaningful access. In addition, open space bonds ensure that all trail systems are protected for future generations to enjoy, and bonded investments in our State Parks and Forests address related management goals. Similarly, CFPA supports the work of the Working Lands Alliance and its request for bonding support in 2025.

(over)

Nature Based Solutions

CFPA recognizes the strong value of nature-based solutions and encourages the General Assembly, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the statewide environmental community to continue to support a statewide policy.

A forest resilience policy, as envisioned by the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) Forest Sub-Group Strategy and advanced through a nature-based solutions policy, could help provide many benefits to people and nature, including reducing heat stress; improving air quality; promoting mental and physical health benefits; supporting local wood products, jobs and economic benefits; sustaining wildlife habitat and more livable communities for people; storing and sequestering carbon; and much more.

Strategies such as preserving marshlands and forests, mitigating the effects of sea level rise and rising groundwater (including habitat restoration), mitigating drought by encouraging groundwater replenishment, and reducing flooding risk through wetlands restoration and open space buffers are important to advance public health and safety and environmental protection.

State Land Conveyances

Every year there are proposals to convey lands held in the public trust by DEEP and the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DOAG) to private interests. It remains an issue of major concern to CFPA and the broader environmental community.

CFPA will continue to closely watch proposals for State land conveyances and scrutinize them carefully to ensure that the benefits of these public lands are not lost or surrendered to interests that would do them harm.

Agency Staffing

CFPA encourages the General Assembly to be responsive to requests from DEEP and DOAG to ensure they have the resources to fulfill their missions. The benefits of a healthy environment for the people of the State of Connecticut require both a supportive policy framework and public investment in the people to deliver on the mission.