East Haddam Open Space Ordinance

Section 1 - Purpose - Open space areas within the Town of East Haddam have been and continue to be a diminishing resource, and such open space areas are considered a valuable asset to the community. It is recognized that there is a need to obtain additional open space areas in order to meet future recreational needs, to preserve agricultural lands, to protect natural resource areas and to maintain the Town's quality of life. In the 1980's, the State of Connecticut through its Plan of Conservation and Development made commitments to acquire open space but have fallen far short of their commitment. The Town of East Haddam cannot depend solely on the State. The establishment of an Open Space Trust Fund will permit the acquisition of land and/or purchase of development rights for areas identified in the Plan of Development, Open Space Plan and other recreation and conservation planning documents.

Section 2 - Goals - not in any set order of importance

a. Protect contiguous areas of open space. Assemble corridors or greenbelts, wildlife corridors and trails, and add to present open space throughout the Town and adjoining communities.
b. Protect surface water, wetlands, watercourses, and aquifers.
c. Protect critical or threatened species and natural communities with emphasis to areas identified in Connecticut's Natural Diversity Data Base and Endangered Species List. Preserve areas to support the existing diversity of species, species in decline, and improve habitats.
d. Preserve farmland and productive forest land.
e. Protect lands of cultural importance including archeological and historical sites.
f. Develop in areas capable of supporting development without adversely impacting the environment.

Section 3 - Benefits - not in any set order of importance.

a. Protects East Haddam's Rural Character and maintain and improve the quality of life for the residents.
b**.** Preserve the diverse and native plants, animals and natural communities indigenous to East Haddam by protecting the open spaces they need to survive and coexist with the residents of East Haddam.
c. Tourism is recognized as of major economic importance to East Haddam. Retaining open space will provide a long-term economic base for tourism by continuing to maintain an attractive landscape for the tourism industry.
d. Protect and enhance the value of all properties with progressive planning.
e. Reduces the final burden on the taxpayers. It is recognized that development increases the tax base but never covers the cost incurred for Town services. Studies concluded that towns with the most commercial and industrial activity still have higher yearly tax rates. The town can preserve Open Space without sacrificing the tax base.
f. Provides property owners with another option or devise to protect their property rather than selling the property for development.

Town of East Haddam Open Space

At a Town meeting on June 25, 1998, residents of East Haddam, interested in protecting East Haddam's rural character and retaining our quality of life, voted to enact an Open Space Trust Fund ordinance to set aside funds to help acquire important, agricultural lands and natural resource areas. The ordinance established a commission to review, select, prioritize, and protect these lands.

Nine-teen years ago on January 6, 2003, the Town of East Haddam, through a referendum vote (778 to 135 – 85%), approved a $5 million dollar bond authorization to be used to purchase land or conservation easements on key parcels of land. This "Bond Authorization" expressed the towns peoples' willingness to preserve open space but required each acquisition to be voted on as a separate question.

The Town's Plan of Conservation, approved in 2008 and 2019, calls for the preservation of 10,000 acres of the remaining 25,000 acres of vacant land. Since 2008 the combined efforts of the Town, the State of Connecticut, the East Haddam Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy have set aside 2730.37 acres for open space preservation or 27% of the goal.

The Open Space Committee has been part of several applications, acquisitions, donations, and easements over the past 24 years:

Town Open Space – Bonded Properties	**$4,514,350**
$485,650 remaining in the bond authorization.	
Town Total Commitment since 1995	**$4,993,736**
Outside Grants for Town Properties Since 1995	**$3,649,054**
State of Connecticut Open Space Grants	**$3,007,404**
The Nature Conservancy	**$329,650**
East Haddam Land Trust for Town Properties	**$52,000**
Eightmile River W&S Watershed	**$15,000**
Bafflin Foundation	**$30,000**
Private Donations	**$15,000**

Since 1995 – Town acquisitions, donations, & easements – 2484.27 acres of open space.

Prior to 1995 – Town owned open space = 192.1 acres

Total Land Preserved by the Town and Partners since 1995

	Acres Preserved	Cost
Town of East Haddam	2484.70 acres	$4,993,736
State of CT	1360.46 acres	$11,248,604
TNC	379.32 acres	$661,579
EH Land Trust	566.40 acres	$971,000
Total	**4790.88 acres**	**$17, 874,919**

Town of East Haddam
Developed and Undeveloped Land, Committed Open Spaces

State Owned Property	3,137.66 acres	9%
Cone and Dill Property Ct Ag. Dev. rights	594 acres	1.7%
Nature Conservancy	1,429 acres	4.1%
Nature Conservancy Conservation Easements	166.06	.5 %
East Haddam Land Trust	556 acres	1.6%
E. H. Land Trust Conservation Easements	104.93	.3%
Town of East Haddam Open Space	2000 acres	5.8%
Fox Hopyard Conservation Easement	230.32 acres	.6 %
Banner Golf Course Conservation Easement	168 acres	.48%
Dean & Gelston Town Dev. rights	348.4 acres	1%
Total	**8770.37 acres**	**25.4%**
East Haddam Fish and Game Property (uncommitted)	2,353 acres	6.8%
I Park (uncommitted)	424 acres	12.3%
Town of East Haddam Municipal Properties Schools, Fire Dept, etc	268 acres	0.1%

Total area	**Developed land**	**Committed open space**	**Vacant land**
34,517 acres	**6400 +/- acres**	**8770.37 acres**	**19,350 +/- acres**
	18.5 %	**25.4%**	**56.1 %**

Dec 1 Open Space presentations

Connecticut's Open Space Goal

Preserve 21% of Connecticut's land base as public open space.

10% to be held by CT DEEP – Presently at 82% or 157,326 acres short.

11% to be held by CT DEEP land conservation partners, municipalities, non-profit land conservation organizations. – Presently at 71.5% or 100,197 acres short.

Town's goal – 7000 acres including all partners.

How does a Bond Authorization work?

A pre-approved bond authorization establishes a fund to be used for open space acquisition of "as yet undetermined" land parcels. The Town will have greater flexibility, credibility and timeliness when pursuing open space because the public and the lending institutions will have already given their permission to borrow funds to purchase the property once the property is approved.

Over the past twenty years the town has budgeted approximately $600 million in expenditure. The $5 million appropriated for open space has been less than 1% of all expenditure. 0.008

Open Space Benefits

Preserves Natural Resources & Rural Character

East Haddam benefits from its wide variety of natural resources, open spaces, rivers, watersheds and the many parks, preserves, and farmlands that dot its landscape. East Haddam's diverse ecosystems, scenic natural environments, and wildlife are a few of the many defining features that contribute to the town's rural and historic character. In fact, according to the town-wide community survey, the environment and its outstanding natural resources were listed as the number two reason residents choose to live in East Haddam. For many residents the natural environment and the resources that it provides are vital to preserving the quality of life in East Haddam. For these same reasons, the importance of conserving and protecting these spaces has only increased as competing demands for land ownership between multiple levels of governments and private entities intensify. The natural environment is just as vital to a community as its built environment and the conservation of those resources provides economic, ecological, and social benefits to the Town's current residents as well as future generations to come.

Outstanding Resource Value – Wildlife Habitat - The rarity, diversity and abundance of species and natural communities throughout the Town tell a significant amount about the quality of the watershed ecosystem and its biological diversity. The size and quality of habitat, along with the physical, biological, chemical, and hydrologic conditions of the water all interrelate with and influence the species and communities that are found in the Watershed. The species and communities, whether rare or common, are important to overall ecosystem function. From insects

to birds to mammals they all play a role in ecosystem health and their presence or absence can cause significant effects to overall ecosystem quality. Due to the existence of large contiguous areas of forestland and undeveloped areas, East Haddam has an abundance of wildlife species that we interact with daily.

Environmental Cost – Water Quality, Flood Mitigation, Air Quality

Water Quality & Flood Mitigation – Health and Safety

Healthy and functioning watersheds naturally filter pollutants and moderate water quality, resulting in less flooding and soil erosion, cleaner water downstream, and greater groundwater reserves. Allowing the rate of water runoff through development contributes to flooding of bridges, culverts, roadways, and personal properties.

The high infiltration rates of forest soils in New England significantly attenuate surface runoff and virtually all water comprising New England streams and rivers has undergone the forest filtration process.

Air Pollution Removal

Naturally occurring air pollution processes contribute to environmental quality and health. The vegetation in conserved lands plays a role in improving air quality.

Trees and shrubs can remove pollutants from the air and store and sequester carbon. Carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, course dust and fine particles, and sulfur dioxide.

Forest ecosystems are the largest terrestrial carbon sink on Earth and New England Forests offsets more than 20% of the region's carbon dioxide emissions.

Moderating Temperature

Trees around residences keep homes cooler in the summer. Forested Open Spaces provide cooling opportunities for those who don't want to be trapped indoors under air conditioning.

Health Benefits

Research indicates that people with access to the outdoors show long term health improvement.

Physically active people typically enjoy a variety of health benefits, including lower incidence of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression, certain cancers, and obesity. Several studies indicate that billions of dollars health related are avoided. This includes avoided medical costs, worker's compensation costs, and costs related to lost productivity. These impacts, in turn, translate into lower insurance costs and improved productivity.

An apple a day and a hike a day!

Economic Benefits

Agricultural Activity – Farms including orchards, vegetables, livestock, dairy, and forestry (logging, wood products, wood energy, Christmas tree farming, and maple syrup.) Forest harvest adds income to the property owners. Jobs created, local and regional spending for products.

Accessory to agriculture - Cottage Food Producers, Riding Stables, Farm Stores, Breweries, Wineries, Distilleries, Tack Stores, Special Event venues – Hayrides, corm mazes, weddings, and

Accessible and healthy food is vital to social, economic, and environmental health.

The Open Space programs have preserved the Cone, Dill, Dean, and Shugrue Farms for future use.

Creates Recreational Opportunities / Tourism Opportunities

As for outdoor activities, one would have to devote a substantial amount of time to enjoying all of the opportunities available throughout the town. Outdoor activities enjoyed by many include hiking, jogging, biking, canoeing, kayaking, boating, fishing, hunting, camping, outdoor photography, and wildlife observation. If one decides to canoe on the Connecticut River to Chapman's Pond Nature Preserve, or hike through Babcock Wildlife Management Area, the adventure could be as short as an hour, or as long as the entire day. The Town has many other recreational opportunities available. Many take advantage of the magnificent scenery whether traveling by boat, canoe, or kayak. A quiet morning trip on the Salmon River offers views of diverse habitats, mammals, waterfowl, birds of prey, and reptiles.

In the past ten years the Nichols field property has been developed into one of the top five-disc golf courses in Connecticut. The Middle School Open Space has been developed into a mountain bike trail system that experiences high use.

Key points:

Conserved lands with public access allow for and encourage recreational use by residents.

Most recreational activities are conducted within five miles of home.

80 +/- Miles of Trails in East Haddam Open Space – East Haddam OS, EHLT, State of CT DEEP, The Nature Conservancy.

East Haddam Disc Golf, Middle School Mountain Bike Trail System

Tourism also includes uses accessory to agricultural operations.

Municipal Bond Ratings Improve – Municipal Open Space is considered a positive asset and reduces municipal interest rates on bonds.

Property Values Increase – Property values increase when located near open space parcels.

Open Space is not a tax burden on the Town – 39 separate studies conducted across New England showed that open space is not a tax burden on municipalities. On average open space requires $0.36 of municipal services for every $1 of property tax paid, while residential properties require $1.16.

Farmland and forest do not require a lot of public services.

Land conservation has traditionally occurred via bottom up, community-based initiatives.

1998 Presentation – Community Planning Group

To succeed communities will need to:

1. Maximize our Strengths.

World Class Natural Resources

Eightmile Wild & Scenic Watershed - Audubon's Important Bird Areas – Lyme Block

Champman's Pond & the Lower CT River – designated as "Last Great Places" – one of forty in the western hemisphere

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands – Connecticut River Estuary and Tidal Wetlands Complex listed as a Wetlands of International Importance

Historical & Cultural Heritage - Tourist Destination

2. Minimize our Weaknesses.

Centralized location without a complete plan

Lack of Infrastructure to support standard growth engines.

3. Capitalize on Our Opportunities.

Open Space Acquisitions.

New Wastewater Treatment Plant in EH

Expand with Compatible Commercial Development

4. Mitigate our Threats.

Residential Sprawl – 20 to 25% growth in the 1980's & 1990's

Fragmentation of Open Areas

Loss of Rural and Cultural Identity

Open Space Meeting Schedule

11/30/23 Public Information Meeting - Thursday – 7 pm – Meeting Rooms 1 & 2

12/6/23 Board of Selectmen Resolution – Wednesday - 7 pm – Meeting Room 1 & 2

12/11/23 Board of Finance Resolution – Monday – 7 pm Meeting Room 1 & 2

1/17/23 Town Meeting – Wednesday – 8 pm – Meeting Room 1 & 2

1/30/24 Referendum Vote