



Save the Sound[®]
Action for our region's environment.

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Contact:

Kathy Czepiel, Save the Sound, kczepiel@savethesound.org, 203-506-3707

Dan Meaney, Connecticut Water Company, daniel.meaney@ctwater.com, 860-664-6016

Over 82 acres of Connecticut Water Company property in Naugatuck, Killingworth, Bethany, and Prospect headed toward permanent conservation

NEW HAVEN AND CLINTON, CT— Connecticut Water Company has finalized memoranda of agreement (MOAs) with the Borough of Naugatuck, the Town of Prospect, the Killingworth Land Conservation Trust, and the Bethany Land Trust to transfer a total of six parcels which are no longer needed for water supply purposes to be permanently preserved as open space. The parcels, which range in size from eight to 19 acres for a total of approximately 82 acres, are intended to provide for passive public recreation including hiking, running, snowshoeing, and birding depending on the location.

“Connecticut Water is pleased to continue our longstanding practice of partnering with municipalities and local land trusts to permanently preserve water company lands that are no longer needed for public water supply purposes,” **said Maureen Westbrook, President of Connecticut Water.** “Since 2000, more than 1,200 acres of Connecticut Water’s Class III land has been permanently protected as open space reflecting our commitment to environmental stewardship and efforts to make these precious resources available for passive recreation.”

“We commend Connecticut Water for their commitment to work with these towns and land trusts to forge deals that ensure permanent conservation, public access, and passive recreation, while also providing benefits for the Company and its customers,” **said Kat Fiedler, staff attorney for Save the Sound.** “Without careful consideration, these smaller Class III parcels that are often located on the edges of large tracts of open space may be sold and developed for private use. Once they’re gone, they’re gone.”

In 1999, Save the Sound (then Connecticut Fund for the Environment) and Connecticut Water worked together with other parties on state laws which created greater opportunities for permanent protection of water company lands which may be identified for disposal. The law provides tax benefits for companies that donate or sell land to eligible entities at a discount relative to fair market value and encourages land conservation sales, to help facilitate transactions such as these. The state law also requires notice to the state, municipalities, other water utilities, and land trusts when water company properties are identified for disposal. Those receiving the notice have 90 days to assess whether they’re interested in making a purchase. In that time, water companies cannot notify or negotiate with other potential buyers, such as private developers. Existing statutes prevent water utilities from disposing of watershed or aquifer protection area lands to protect the quality of public water supply sources.

While the company did not have plans to dispose of its properties, when Connecticut Water was combining with SJW Group in 2018, the Company reached out to Save the Sound to discuss ways to

provide additional environmental safeguards regarding water company lands to encourage protection for open space and recreation. Together, they developed a Memorandum of Agreement that was reflected in the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority's (PURA's) approval of the combination with SJW Group which secured an extended, three-year process, supplementing the statutory timeline, to give towns and land trusts that might be interested in property purchases more time for exchange of information, site visits, fundraising, and evaluation by local decision-makers.

By 2020, Connecticut Water had notified 11 Connecticut towns, state agencies, and several private nonprofit land conservation organizations of 21 parcels of land, totaling approximately 470 acres, that could be available for purchase for open space preservation. Four towns and land trusts chose to follow through on purchases.

“More than 20 years ago, the Borough partnered with Connecticut Water to preserve 105 acres of open space in Naugatuck. It was the first open space donation in Connecticut under Public Act 00-203,” **Naugatuck Mayor Pete Hess stated.** “The quality of life enjoyed by the citizens of Naugatuck will again be strengthened through the preservation of water company land that will be open for passive recreation and protected from development. We commend Connecticut Water and Save the Sound for their partnership in preserving this land for the community.”

The company has also agreed to consider expanding passive recreation for the public on certain water company lands, under another part of the 2018 agreement with Save the Sound. Working with Save the Sound, Connecticut Forest & Park Association, and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the company identified potential recreation projects using metrics including bus routes, population density, existing trails, current open space, state-designated Environmental Justice communities, and impacts on water company infrastructure. The group mapped potential projects, and Connecticut Water identified seven areas across the state it will further evaluate for potential partnerships to allow for public recreational use, provided it can be done while still protecting the quality of the public drinking water supply and public safety. The company filed a report of those potential project areas with PURA last December.

Connecticut Water is a public water utility that provides drinking water to over 360,000 people in 60 communities in the state. Connecticut Water is dedicated to the communities it serves and strives to deliver life-sustaining, high-quality water and exceptional service while protecting the environment, enhancing our communities and providing a fair return to shareholders.

The mission of Save the Sound is to protect and improve the land, air, and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound. The 4,200-member organization uses legal and scientific expertise and brings people together to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.

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