

Meeting Summary

The Lower Connecticut River and Coastal Region Land Trust Exchange

March 29th, 2017 / 7:00 – 9:00pm

Lower CT River Valley Council of Governments, 145 Dennison Rd., Essex, CT

Agenda items for the March 29th, 2017 meeting of the Lower Connecticut River and Coastal Region Land Trust Exchange (LTE) included: An update on the RiverCOG Nonprofit bylaws and land trust update; a property tax assessment survey ; consideration of adding Audubon’s Important Bird Areas to the LTE Conservation Plan; and a review of the survey taken concerning last meetings selected criteria for review as factors for the funding guide/matrix for the LTE funding plan; and an update on financial shared services.

The draft bylaws are continuing to be simplified and revised and the thought is to have this phase of the nonprofit creation be between Gateway and RiverCOG and to save bylaw changes for the LTE Committee to be between RiverCOG and the LTE. The environmental protection mission of the nonprofit must remain as well as possibly the name. There was still concern on the part of the LTE members of having the CEO’s be the majority of the board of directors for the to be formed RiverCOG nonprofit and there was also interest in ensuring that a new adequate name is chosen .

Discussion continued as to the connection of the Important Bird Area data to the *Connect the Connecticut* project (<http://connecttheconnecticut.org/>) and maps were reviewed. Margot will still touch base with Audubon concerning the data set.

Four land trusts have decided to take the next step in securing shared financial services: East Haddam; Haddam; Chester; and Salem. Paula will be reviewing their financial records in the next few months. Only East Haddam was interested in possibly participating in a Tom Curren’s fund raising workshops/coaching.

The group viewed the area in Lyme, Salem, and Old Lyme that has been designated by Audubon Connecticut as an Important Bird Area for inclusion in the LTE conservation plan. A primary rule of the conservation plan is that any data layer used must have been assessed for the entire region. The question is whether or not the whole region has been analyzed by Audubon. Margot will be contacting Audubon for clarification of how the analysis and determination was made.

We reviewed the former meeting’s criteria and survey results to create a project funding guide/ matrix and selected further guiding factors for the LTE members to discuss with their boards for the next LTE meeting as to whether or not they think the factors should be considered or not in relation to the LTE conservation plan.

A survey was sent to poll the results prior to the meeting for both funding priorities and matrix criteria inclusion. Funding priorities included land acquisition, stewardship, and capacity building. Land acquisition ranked the highest and capacity building the lowest.

	High	Medium	Low		
Land Acquisition	83.33%	0.00%	16.67%		
Stewardship	14.29%	71.43%	14.29%		
Capacity Building	16.67%	33.33%	50.00%		

All listed matrix criteria were accepted as remaining for consideration.

Q4. At the last meeting we began looking at land acquisition priorities to inform a project guide/matrix for land acquisition projects that are a combination of the LTE conservation plan priorities and CT DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program criteria. Please indicate if you think each one should or should not be included. Please be familiar with the LTE conservation plan to answer.

answer	Yes	No	Total
Land within a primary or connecting corridor.	100.00 %	0.00% 0	7
Index score of primary or connecting large natural area.	100.00 %	0.00% 0	7
Connected to existing open space.	85.71% 6	14.29 %	7
Size of parcel.	71.43% 5	28.57 %	7
Number of local criteria contained on parcel (core forest, hydrology/wetlands, early successional habitat, NDDB area, critical habitat).	100.00 %	0.00% 0	7
Area of local criteria contained on parcel (core forest, hydrology/wetlands, early successional habitat, NDDB area, critical habitat).	85.71% 6	14.29 %	7
Does it contain critical habitat?	85.71% 6	14.29 %	7
Does it contain an NDDB area / endangered species or species of greatest concern?	85.71% 6	14.29 %	7
Is it in a State Designated Greenway?	71.43% 5	28.57 %	7

Through group discussion the following were added to the list for consideration. The LTE representatives were asked to take them back to their boards for discussion and another survey would be sent prior to the next meeting. They include:

- Historic significance;
- Accessibility for the public;
- Status of development application/approvals;
- Viewsheds both in and out;
- Prime Agricultural Soils;
- Is it a multi-town project;
- Cost;
- Does it overlap with town plans for open space;
- Is it suitable for education or scientific purposes;
- Are there any site concerns from historic property usage Ex. – Brownfield concerns.

The next meeting of the LTE is scheduled for May 17th, 7pm-9pm, RiverCOG office.