



Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts

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March 2, 2015

**To: The Honorable Beth Bye, Senate Chairman of Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Toni E. Walker, House Chairman of Appropriations Committee
All Appropriations Committee Members**

From: Denise Savageau, member of CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation and President CT Association of Conservation Districts

Re: REQUEST FOR \$600,000 TO REINSTATE FULL FUNDING FOR THE CT COUNCIL ON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION AND THE FIVE (5) CT CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.

I am Denise Savageau and currently serve as a member of the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation and as President of the CT Association of Conservation Districts. I do this as a citizen volunteer and representative of the Southwest Conservation District. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

2015 is the International Year of the Soil. Across the globe, countries are celebrating the importance of soil conservation and soil health to food supply, water quality, and national security. It is apropos, therefore, and maybe a bit ironic, that I am asking for the reinstatement of \$600,000 to fully fund CT's legislatively authorized soil and water conservation agencies, the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation and the five (5) Conservation Districts.

Connecticut's Conservation Districts, were established in the 1940's following a request of President Theodore Roosevelt that each state establish local entities to work closely with what is now the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service). The Districts and Council are part of the network of over 3,000 conservation districts and 50 state conservation agencies working hand-in-hand with USDA providing local farmers, landowners and communities with technical and financial assistance on soil and water conservation. This core partnership in each state, including CT, ensures that federal programs and resources address the local needs in each state. The federal Farm Bill specifically calls on conservation districts to coordinate and help set local priorities within their counties/regions.

Although our roots are in agriculture, the Council and Conservation Districts work on a myriad of natural resource adapting to changing needs and working directly with local governments and landowners. We recognize that "Every Acre Counts" when it comes to soil and water

conservation and work on both urban and rural lands. Indeed, because Districts work so closely with municipalities across the state, we are often seen as the bridge between farmers and local and state government. The Districts have been at the forefront of providing technical support and training to municipalities on key environmental programs including CT's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act, which defines wetlands by soil type and the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act, which the Council spearheaded. Much of our work, however, involves getting voluntary conservation measures on land. Districts are leaders in watershed management efforts throughout the CT, leveraging state and local dollars with federal and private funding to implement real conservation on ground. (See attached fact sheet). The Conservation Districts are now coordinating with the CT Dept. of Agricultural on their farmland restoration program and have recently joined the CT Department of Health as part of its Source Water Protection Collaborative in an effort to better protect our public drinking water supplies.

I can't emphasize enough how important State funding is to leveraging federal resources. The base funding provided to the Council and Districts provides the matching funds needed to bring federal resources into our state. In January 2015, the Council was awarded \$10 million from USDA-NRCS to coordinate and implement the Long Island Sound Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This is the largest grant ever awarded to Long Island Sound and is one of the largest awards made nationwide. It was awarded because of the voluntary leadership of CT's Council and Districts here and at the national level, the quality of our technical staff, and our strong core partnership with USDA. We worked closely with our Congressional delegation and other partners from the environmental community to make this happen. The \$600,000 requested to fully fund CTs soil and water conservation agencies this year will be used to match this and other federal grants, such as EPA 319 Clean Water Act. Since none of the USDA grant funds can be used for administration and coordination of the \$10 million grant, these matching dollars are critical to its success and future funding efforts.

As a state, we face many challenges. This includes ensuring that all of our residents have access to clean water and fresh, local foods. It also includes protecting the Long Island Sound, which is estimated to be worth over \$8 billion dollars annually to the locally economy. The CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation and the Conservation Districts play critical roles in meeting these challenges by protecting our soil and water resources. It is essential that they are fully funded.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise Savageau". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' at the beginning.

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cc: Districts at a Glance Fact Sheet
Core Partnership Sheet

Connecticut Conservation Districts

Providing Natural Resource Management Since 1946

2014 Accomplishments

February 2015



\$300,000 in state funds provided in FY14 has been instrumental in the recent award of a \$10 million USDA grant to the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation and the Conservation Districts to coordinate with other partners on the implementation of water quality and land protection projects within the entire Long Island Sound Watershed.

Restoring funding at the prior \$600,000 level is integral to carrying out District and Council responsibilities to administer and manage implementation of the \$10 million grant, and providing required match

Conservation Districts were created by the Connecticut Legislature and are mandated to assist the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) in identifying and solving problems associated with soil and water conservation. Conservation Districts are established under Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-315.

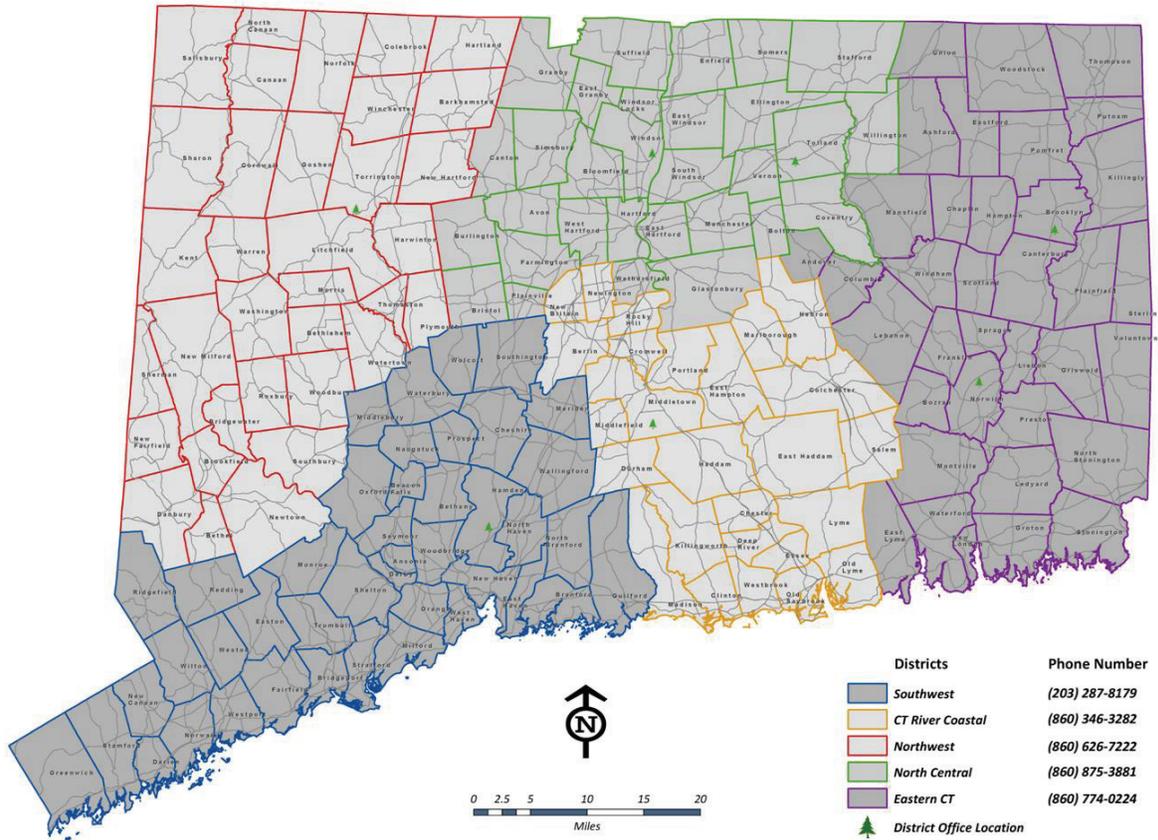
In 2014, with \$300,000 of DEEP funds under the current line item, CT Conservation Districts were able to secure an additional \$700,000 in grant funds to address the following conservation priorities, as well as respond quickly to storm related issues:

- ✓ Flooding and erosion problems from storm events
 - ✓ Agricultural management practices that enhance farm viability, conserve soil, and protect water quality
 - ✓ Stormwater wetland retrofits and pretreatments
 - ✓ Soil nutrient testing for the agricultural community
 - ✓ Stream bank stabilization projects
 - ✓ Soil erosion and sediment control inspections at problem construction sites
 - ✓ Municipal Wetland Commission training and wetland delineation services
 - ✓ Migratory fish passage projects
 - ✓ Water quality assessment and watershed management
- Conservation Districts provide a broad array of valuable environmental services that complement DEEP efforts and address statewide conservation goals. Districts accomplish a great deal with minimal staff and other resources; our lean, efficient and productive operations align well with the principles of DEEP's *LEAN Initiative*.
- As nonprofit organizations, Conservation Districts can use State funding to match private foundation grants in addition to Municipal and Federal sources; dollars received grow to fund conservation work that would otherwise be underfunded.
- State funding helps provide the operating capacity Districts need to attract federal funding, leverage additional resources, and provide services to the agricultural community and municipalities while managing projects throughout the State. Grant funds cannot be used for operations, or managerial and administrative functions.

Contact Suellen Kozey McCuin for more information at 860-767-9594. *Thank you!*



State of Connecticut Conservation Districts



Where We Work

Eastern Connecticut Conservation District
Dan Mullins, Executive Director, 860-887-4163 x402
 Andover-Ashford-Bozrah-Brooklyn-Canterbury-Chaplin-Columbia-Eastford-East Lyme-Franklin-Griswold-Groton-Hampton-Killingly-Lebanon-Ledyard-Lisbon-Mansfield-Montville-New London-North Stonington-Norwich-Plainfield-Pomfret-Preston-Putnam-Scotland-Sprague-Sterling-Stonington-Thompson-Union-Voluntown-Waterford-Windham-Woodstock

North Central Conservation District
David Askew, Executive Director, 860-875-3881 x2
 Avon-Bloomfield-Bolton-Bristol-Burlington-Canton-Coventry-East Granby-East Hartford-East Windsor-Ellington-Enfield-Farmington-Glastonbury-Granby-Hartford-Manchester-Plainville-Simsbury-Somers-South Windsor-Stafford-Suffield-Tolland-Vernon-West Hartford-Wethersfield-Willington-Windsor-Windsor Locks

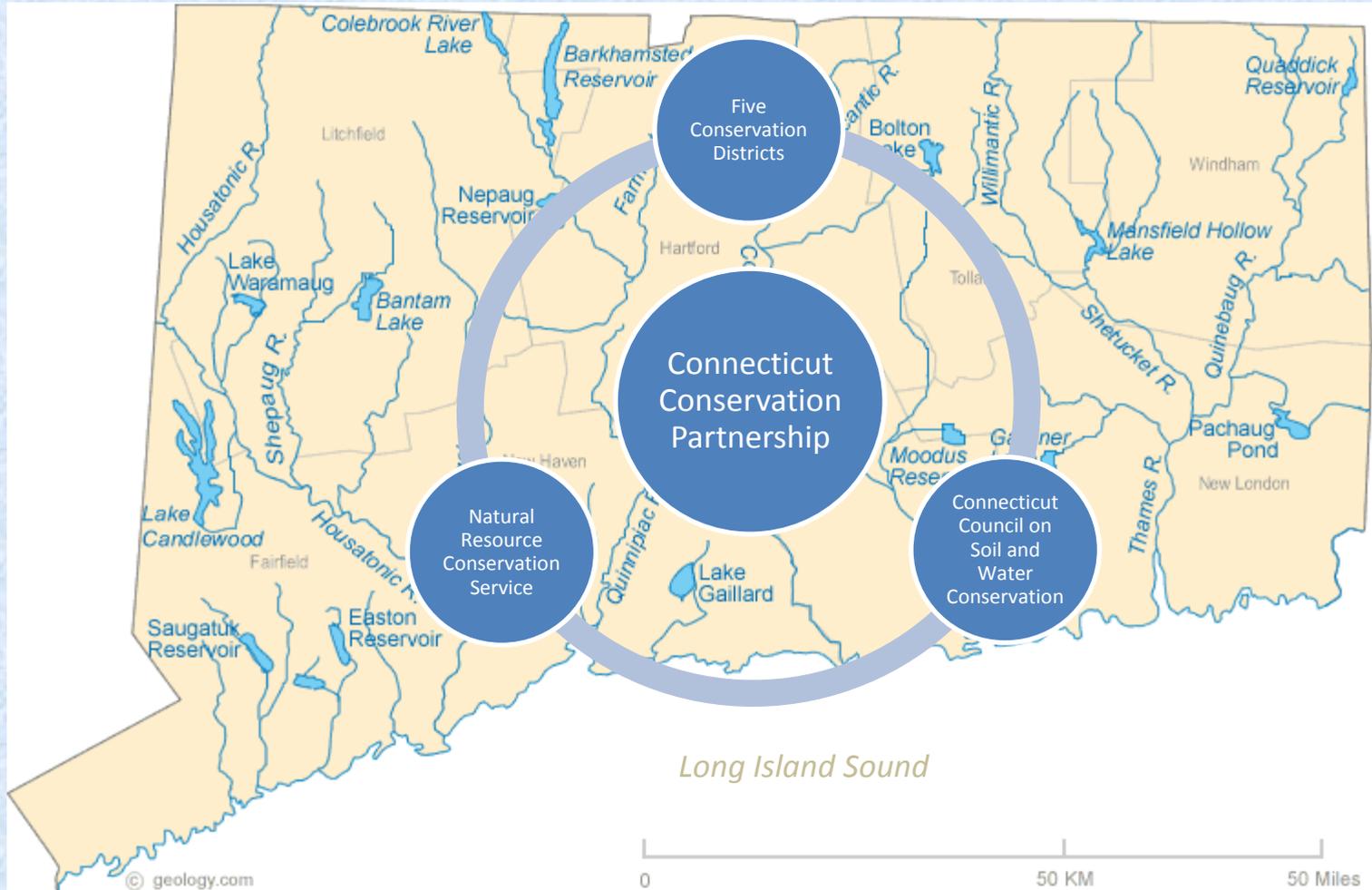
Northwest Conservation District
Sean Hayden, Executive Director, 860-626-7222
 Barkhamsted-Bethel-Bethlehem-Bridgewater-Brookfield-Canaan-Colebrook-Cornwall-Danbury-Goshen-Hartland-Harwinton-Kent-Litchfield-Morris-New Fairfield-New Hartford-New Milford-Newton-Norfolk-North Canaan-Plymouth-Roxbury-Salisbury-Sharon-Sherman-Southbury-Thomaston-Torrington-Warren-Washington-Watertown-Winchester-Woodbury

Southwest Conservation District
Roman Mrozinski, Executive Director, 203-287-8038
 Ansonia-Beacon Falls-Bethany-Branford-Bridgeport-Cheshire-Darien-Derby-East Haven-Easton-Fairfield-Greenwich-Guilford-Hamden-Meriden-Middlebury-Milford-Monroe-Naugatuck-New Canaan-New Haven-North Branford-North Haven-Norwalk-Orange-Oxford-Prospect-Redding-Ridgefield-Seymour-Shelton-Southington-Stamford-Stratford-Trumbull-Wallingford-Waterbury-West Haven-Weston-Westport-Wilton-Wolcott-Woodbridge

Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District
Jane Brawerman, Executive Director, 860-346-3282
 Berlin-Chester-Clinton-Colchester-Cromwell-Deep River-Durham-East Haddam-East Hampton-Essex-Haddam-Hebron-Killingworth-Lyme-Madison-Marlborough-Middlefield-Middletown-Newington-New Britain-Old Lyme-Old Saybrook-Portland-Rocky Hill-Salem-Westbrook



Connecticut Conservation Partnership



Five (5) Conservation Districts

Serving 169 municipalities
Set up under State statute
20+ staff
3 Districts co-located with NRCS
Leveraged over \$700,00 in non-state funded grants

CT Conservation Partnership

Established following dust bowl era to work on soil and water conservation
Federal – State – Local
Voluntary Conservation on the Ground
Almost 80 years of technical assistance to farmers, landowners, and communities.

Natural Resource Conservation Service in CT

49 NRCS Staff FTE
5 NRCS field offices plus state office
Over \$15 million FA and TA
Leveraged an additional \$8 million

CT Council on Soil and Water

Set up under State statute
1 part-time contractual employee
January 2015 awarded \$10 million from USDA for Long Island Sound Watershed