

## **SECTION 3. National Priorities**

As part of the required five-year review of the Forest Action Plan in 2015 was the addition of a new section titled “National Priorities”. This section aimed to describe actions and success stories contributing to each of the three national priorities identified by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill. The three national priorities are:

- Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses
- Protect Forests from Threats
- Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

### **Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses**

#### ***State Lands Management***

##### Accomplishment: Purchased The Preserve State Forest

Protected in spring 2015 after many years of conservation efforts, The Preserve is a 963 acre forest located in the towns of Old Saybrook, Essex, and Westbrook. Many conservation organizations recognized this property as the largest remaining unprotected coastal forest between Boston and New York before its acquisition for conservation. Situated between Long Island Sound and the mouth of the Connecticut River, it is part of a relatively intact forest block of more than 6,000 acres and protects the drinking water supply for two towns.

Seventy acres in Essex are owned and managed by the Essex Land Trust ([www.essexlandtrust.org](http://www.essexlandtrust.org)), with the majority of the remaining acreage jointly owned by the state of Connecticut and the town of Old Saybrook. The property is managed as part of the State Forest system and open to the public for passive recreation.

##### Accomplishment: Purchased new state forest land

DEEP purchased an additional 1,019 acres of State Forest land, primarily inholdings, abutting properties, or lands adjacent to existing state forest land between fiscal years 2010-2015. Much of this land was purchased through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program which was established in 1986 to preserve Connecticut’s natural heritage and is DEEP’s primary program for acquiring land.

##### Accomplishment: Hired two durational foresters for the State Lands Management Program

Using funds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), two temporary “durational” foresters were hired by DEEP in 2011 to manage state forests. In less than two years they produced 10,000 acres worth of forest management plans and generated 530 acres of forest product sales projected to earn \$240,000 for the State. At the same time, these activities produce significant jobs and economic activity for Connecticut’s private sector industry while enhancing wildlife habitat and other ecological benefits these forests produce.

They have also assisted other foresters while training to prepare over 900 acres of harvests contributing to over \$400,000 in revenue. They have also marked 64 miles of boundary, suppressed several wildland fires covering 290 acres, classified 1,566 acres of state forest land under PA 490, and performed delimiting survey work for Emerald Ash Borer detection. They have participated in Connecticut Envirothon training and No Child Left Inside events impacting

approximately 1,000 people, many of them children. Both are Connecticut certified foresters, PA 490 qualified foresters, Interstate fire crew qualified, and technologically adept with GIS and GPS. Their hiring was the result of a DEEP LEAN event to improve state forest management planning.

Accomplishment: Established the Timber Revolving Fund

The Timber Sale Revolving Account (PA 11-192) was established by the Connecticut Legislature on July 13, 2011. The fund allows the State Lands Program to address the mission of the State Lands Management Program (SLM) as described in the Forest Action Plan. These funds have been used to create access to support utilization and marketing as a management tool for locally grown traditional and non-traditional forest products, for invasive plant control to provide favorable conditions to regenerate forest stands and a healthy ecosystem of native plants, to support information management and increase field staff’s ability to collect, compile, store, and disseminate data for management planning and improving public information.

Revenues from timber harvesting on State Land have also been used fund 4-5 seasonal resource assistant positions per year to assist field foresters with associated work duties.

SLM Completed Treatments FY 2010 to 2015

1st shelterwood	561 acres
2nd shelterwood	212 acres
clear cut	71 acres
final shelterwood	624 acres
irregular shelterwood	1,476 acres
salvage	180 acres
selection harvest	856 acres
thin	739 acres
timber stand improvement	7 acres

Accomplishment: Completed silvicultural treatments on over 4,700 acres

Between 2010 and 2015 approximately 4,725 acres of state lands received some form of silvicultural treatment. Irregular shelterwood was completed on the most acres followed by selection harvest, thinning, final shelterwood, and first shelterwood.

**Grand Total 4,725 acres**

***Urban Forestry***

Accomplishment: Helped municipalities, professionals, and the public manage urban forests

While this theme is usually interpreted as being most applicable to working rural forests, no forests are harder working in terms of direct benefits to society than urban forests. A highly effective urban forestry program knits together the efforts of many actors and for many purposes. Connecticut has created a network of individuals from a variety of professional backgrounds and in a variety of roles that is highly influential in terms of promoting and helping implement urban forestry. As a result, Connecticut is highly aware of its urban forest, is pro-active in its management, and has sought to institutionalize the long-term recognition and care of this forest. The percentage of tree canopy cover in urban areas in this state leads the country.

***Private and Municipal Lands***

Accomplishment: Formed collaborative to increase impact on stewardship in Connecticut

A robust collaborative was formed between DEEP, NRCS, and UConn in 2010 with the goal of significantly increasing the group’s collective impact on forest stewardship in Connecticut. Efforts of the collaborative led to an unprecedented rise in financial assistance to landowners (Connecticut NRCS EQIP budget spent on forest planning and practices rose from 0.25 to 14.6 percent annually), the active recruitment and training of private foresters as TSP’s and the

education and recruitment of landowners. In addition to a recent rise in forest stewardship plans recorded an additional 3,500 to 5,000 acres of NRCS Conservation Action Plan (CAP) 106 plans are now being written annually.

Accomplishment: Amended the 10 Mill current use forest tax program law

Forest and conservation advocates joined together to work toward successfully amending the law governing the 10 Mill program. Their efforts headed off a crisis that would have had a significant negative financial impact on the owners of 14,000 acres thereby placing the future of these lands as forest at risk. The 10 Mill program is the state's oldest current use forest land tax program.

Accomplishment: Amended the PA 490 current use forest tax program law

Forest and conservation advocates also joined together to work toward successfully amending PA 490, the state's most recent current use forest land tax program. The amendment served to clarify and improve language so its application by assessors, landowners, and forestry professionals is more uniform. Approximately 484,000 acres of all forest land (2015) in Connecticut is currently classified under PA490.

Accomplishment: Assisted forest landowners affected by Hurricane Sandy

The Division of Forestry, US Forest Service, and Farm Services Agency partnered to assist landowners whose forests were damaged by Hurricane Sandy. Restoration of damaged forests was made possible using financial assistance through the Emergency Forest Restoration Program.

Accomplishment: Refocused programmatic efforts to more closely align with landowner needs

The study Understanding Connecticut Woodland Owners by Mary Tyrell of Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies was published. The results of this significant work have permitted DEEP Forestry and its partners to refocus their programmatic efforts to more closely align with the wants and desires of Connecticut's landowners.

Accomplishment: Provided training materials regarding forest practices and wetlands

DEEP and its partners have provided brochures, video, training, training materials and workshops to municipalities, professional loggers, landowners and the general public on statutes and regulations regarding forest practices and wetlands. The greater understanding allows for greater operational efficiency and better outcomes with regards to forest practices and environmental impacts.

Accomplishment: Provided assistance and educational materials and record stewardship plans

Each year from 2010 through 2015 the Division of Forestry averaged:

- 415 technical assists to forest landowners
- Provided educational materials to more than 1,560 forest landowners
- Recorded more than 10,000 acres in new or revised forest stewardship plans

***Forest Legacy***

Accomplishment: Protected working forests with the Forest Legacy Program

In 2011, the State of Connecticut, along with the Town of Simsbury, and the Simsbury Land Trust, Inc. used the Forest Legacy Program to acquire a conservation easement on 73 acres of working forest that was the last unprotected part of a 260 acre family farm in Simsbury, a Hartford suburb under significant development pressure.

Accomplishment: Completed surveys/baseline documents for previous Forest Legacy projects  
In 2015, DEEP Division of Forestry completed three boundary surveys and three baseline documents for Forest Legacy Projects completed before 2009 that had used stewardship plans as the baseline documents. These documents were needed to comply with the Forest Legacy Program which has protected over 8,000 acres in Connecticut since the beginning of the program.

Accomplishment: Monitored more than 8,000 acres under conservation easements  
Each year, DEEP service foresters and trained third-party personnel monitor more than 8,000 acres which are under conservation easements as part of the Forest Legacy Program. This annual monitoring ensures that the properties/landowners are complying with the terms of the conservation easements and the Forest Legacy Program.

## **Protect Forests from Threats**

### ***State Lands Management***

Accomplishment: Developed an Emerald Ash Borer Management Guide  
The State Lands Program has developed a guide, *Managing Connecticut's DEEP Lands Threatened by Emerald Ash Borer* as a resource for land managers working on DEEP-owned State Land. Three objectives were identified;

1. Conserve Economic Value
2. Maintain Ash as a component in our forests
3. Eliminate hazard trees from potential targets

Accomplishment: Assisted CAES with emerald ash borer and southern pine beetle detection  
State Lands foresters and the Division of Forestry have worked closely with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station during the EAB delimiting survey work and early southern pine beetle detection work.

### ***Forest Protection***

Accomplishment: Maintained a rigorous high quality wildland firefighter training program  
Train an average of 21 new people a year and recertify another 65 people a year for our Connecticut Interstate Fire Crew under National Wildfire Coordinating Group standards. Train an average of 80 DEEP personnel for "in state" fire response. Specialty training given includes but is not limited to S-131 (Fire Fighting Training Type 1), S-211 (Portable Pumps and Water Use), S-212 (Wildland Fire Chain Saws), and L-280 (Followership to Leadership). For those specialty trainings that we do not provide, we send our wildland fire fighters to appropriate trainings nationwide. The Forest Protection Program trains an average of 45 Volunteer Fire Departments a year with an average of 25 firefighters per department. We also train an average of 60 cadets a year. Over the last few years we have improved Volunteer Fire Department trainings by producing and distributing two DVD's on handline construction and dry hydrant installation. Staff has also organized two dry hydrant installation workshops and four International Standards Organizations (ISO) rural water supply workshops to assist towns in achieving lower fire related insurance premiums. We have worked to improve in-state Incident Management Team experience and capabilities through both simulations and real time incidents

(3 total). Additionally, we both provide trainers, and participate as trainees, at various Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Compact trainings.

Accomplishment: Maintained/improved wildfire response equipment

Over the past few years, the program vehicle fleet has improved with the purchase of two new Type 6 engines, one Type 4 engine and two new Utility Task Vehicles (UTV's), with most vehicles replacing existing aging vehicles. In addition, we have purchased three new patrol trucks to replace aging fleet, and four small portable pumps. These improvements have allowed for more efficiency and better service from the program.

Accomplishment: Support national mobilizations for wildfire and other emergency response

Connecticut has provided ample support having mobilized 8 crews for national mobilizations over the past five years (to MN, VA, MT, CA, and ID), in addition to 2 mobilizations to Canada (QC). In addition, numerous single resources have been mobilized as well across the nation. Connecticut maintains one Type 2 Incident Commander that oversees the Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Compact Incident Management Team (IMT). This IMT has been on two national mobilizations since 2010.

Accomplishment: Improve relationships with partners and non-governmental organizations

New relationships were developed with Connecticut Audubon through collaborative work on a 17 acre prescribed burn at Stratford Point in Stratford. Relationships with Yale University expanded and improved through assistance on prescribed burns on University property. The University of Connecticut has become a more involved partner through various joint projects including a weather station project, a dry hydrant training project, and potential prescribed burn projects. The Forest Protection Program has also succeeded in creating a better working relationship with the Air Bureau in our own agency, to better inform and address compliance concerns associated with permitting for prescribed burning.

Accomplishment: Change the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) requirements to allow for larger prescribed burns on State Forests

Prescribed burns on state lands are no longer limited to 20 acres. A process is put in place for proposed burns over 20 acres to address any potential concerns.

Accomplishment: Improve ability to get precipitation data for fire weather predictions

We have been able to purchase two new weather stations for data collection. One is currently installed; the other is in the process of installation.

Accomplishment: Maintain an active Rural Fire Council to advise the Forest Protection Program

The Rural Fire Council continues to meet periodically, charged with identifying rural fire issues, reviewing DEEP Fire programs for relevance to current issues, making suggestions on program changes when necessary, and acting as a conduit from the Chiefs to DEEP Forestry.

Accomplishment: Assisted with creation of firewood regulations

DEEP assisted CAES, with help from APHIS, in developing firewood regulations in response to emerald ash borer. While CAES is the lead agency regarding quarantines, DEEP provides assistance with field personnel and development of quarantine areas restricting the movement of firewood and ash logs.

## ***Urban Forestry***

### Accomplishment: Formation of the State Vegetation Management Task Force

In Connecticut, the threat of damage from storms, storm resilience, and the role of utilities have become major points of focus. In the 2010 Forest Action Plan, the regular occurrence of storms, including major storms such as ice storms and hurricanes, was only acknowledged tangentially and mostly in reference to the damage storms cause to the trees themselves, the maintenance response needed, and the havoc major storms can create for existing street tree inventories. This changed with the storms of 2011 (Tropical Storm Irene and the October snowstorm). Since those storms the impact of trees on infrastructure, including on roadways and electrical distribution hardware, has become a major issue. This led to the formation of the State Vegetation Management Task Force (SVMTF). The recommendations of the SVMTF are now entrenched in urban forestry discussions and have been the basis of significant changes in how roadside trees are managed.

### Accomplishment: Provide outreach materials to towns regarding invasive species

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is probably the highest profile current threat to Connecticut's urban forests, and perhaps its forests overall. At this point, the charge is not so much to protect the forests from EAB but to mitigate the impact from this insect, while maintaining vigilance regarding other exotic pests such as the Asian longhorned beetle. As of July 2015, EAB information displays have been given to 31 towns.

Invasive exotic plants are also of concern, especially as so many enter into the more native environment through roadsides and urban plantings of a variety of sorts. The Urban Forestry Program encourages planting native species.

## **Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests**

### ***State Lands Management***

#### Accomplishment: Rectify boundary line issues and create boundary geo-database

Over the past 5 years, State Land Foresters have identified and reported 20 boundary line issues and 25 encroachments to the Division of Land Acquisition and Management which have been resolved. In 2014, The State Lands Program developed a boundary geo-database to manage and track boundary line maintenance, encroachments, and hazardous trees on state lands. The process has improved staffs abilities to identify maintenance needs and share site specific information to other Divisions to address public safety or encroachment issues.

### ***Urban Forestry***

#### Accomplishment: Encourage a more comprehensive view of urban ecosystems

Several key leaders in urban forestry, including within the USDA Forest Service, are actively encouraging the idea that urban forestry is much more than street trees and park trees and is, in fact, part of what is best described as the urban ecosystem. In a related manner, there has been a growing emphasis placed on recognizing the ecosystem benefits provided by urban trees. This way of thinking was incorporated in the urban forestry vision recorded in Connecticut's 2010 Forest Action Plan.

Accomplishment: Continue to use improving technologies, especially i-Tree

The prior emphasis on public trees was due in part to the sparseness of good information on urban trees prior to about 2005, outside of that which could be gathered from street tree inventories. That began to change with the adaptation of forestry sampling methods to urban forestry (through i-Tree UFORE) and then got a huge boost with the introduction of UTC – urban tree canopy cover – analysis based on high resolution aerial photography. In Connecticut, we have a UFORE project from 2007 and several UTC projects, with the first ones initiated in 2008.

Accomplishment: Assist non-forestry professionals in understanding urban ecosystems

The role of trees and of the importance of urban ecosystem awareness is becoming important to managers with other primary interests, such as those in public health, those who manage storm water, air quality and “urban resilience”, and those in economic development who hope to attract people and money to a specific municipality or location. For a long while people, including many researchers, managers, tree professionals and lay observers, have felt that urban trees provide a unique value to cities and towns, but have only been able to state those impressions in qualitative and anecdotal terms – that is, until recently. The investigations of engineers, scientists, epidemiologists, and others are increasingly pointing out, in quantitative terms, the types of real environmental, social, and economic value that urban trees provide. As many of these researchers and practitioners are not urban foresters, their primary concerns are not the health or existence of the trees. Rather, their interest is in the significance of the benefit that comes from these trees, such as improved public health or reduced peak storm water flow. For them, trees are simply a means to an end. This makes their assessment of the role of trees that much more credible.

Accomplishment: Assisted municipalities in obtaining assessments and grants

Currently, the state has four Urban Tree Canopy Analyses, each of which is being used productively by the communities assessed. It has 18 Tree City USA’s and has had two communities (Bridgeport and Hartford) recognized through the receipt of monetary awards from Green Streets program, jointly sponsored by TD Bank and the Arbor Day Foundation. Hartford has also received support from American Forests, while New Haven is regularly recognized for its leadership in urban forestry on a local and regional level. From 2010 through 2013 the Urban Forestry Program has awarded more than \$286,000 in America the Beautiful (ATB) grants to 47 different projects with funding from the USDA Forest Service and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Another \$98,000+ has been approved for current projects.

Accomplishment: Outreach to public

With respect to its Community Accomplishment Reporting System (CARS) reports, Connecticut has consistently shown itself able to reach over 98% of its population through its urban forestry program.

Accomplishment: Continue high standards for regulating tree wardens and arborists

The state’s statutes regarding tree wardens and arborists places the state in a leadership role with respect to its standards regarding both public and private tree care. The state’s tree warden program took a major step forward in 2013 with the requirement that all tree wardens need to be qualified being added to the already existing requirement that all municipalities must have a tree warden. There is now a standard for what it takes for an individual to be considered as qualified as a tree warden.

### ***Private and Municipal Lands***

Accomplishment: Provide educational outreach to forest landowners and the public

DEEP and all of its collaborators provided significant educational outreach to forest landowners and the public including, but not limited to, one on one site visits, meetings with groups, serving as advising forester to landowner groups or local environmentally oriented boards and the creation and distribution of publications, brochures, website and workshops. Examples include, but are not limited to, Coverts Project, Project Learning Tree forestry tour, Tree Farm, No Child Left Inside (Great Park Pursuit), Envirothon, sawmill workshops, and publications such as Thinking about Selling Timber, the Woodland Owner Packet and the Directory of Certified Forest Practitioners.

### ***Forest Practices Act***

Accomplishment: Continue to license and educate forest practitioners

More than 500 loggers and foresters are certified pursuant to the Forest Practices Act. Certification is primarily achieved through examination. The Division of Forestry approved more than 500 continuing education workshops over the past 5 years and certified practitioners logged in more than 19,000 hours of continuing education (3,800 hours annually) on subjects such as safety, harvesting techniques, best management practices, silviculture, business practices, forest health, and laws affecting forest practices.

### ***Utilization and Marketing***

Accomplishment: Develop publications on the economic importance of the forest industry

Several publications were developed and released that for the first time quantified the full impact the forest industry, including forestry based tourism, has on Connecticut's economy. The publications, *The Economic Impact of Connecticut's Agricultural Industry* and *The Economic Importance of Connecticut's Forest Based Economy* give forestry advocates the critical tools they previously lacked to advise policy makers and the public on important economic matters involving forestry.

Accomplishment: Expanded the Connecticut Grown Program to include forest products

The Division of Forestry partnered with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to expand their Connecticut Grown program to include forest products. The program is a celebration of locally produced forest products that allows consumers to purchase knowing the wood was locally grown, harvested sustainably and produced locally. Approximately 50% of the state's primary timber production capacity has joined the Connecticut Grown forest products program. The Connecticut Grown Forest Products program has achieved significant media attention since its inception in 2010. An interactive map and primary processor directory helps connect wood producers with market prospects.

Accomplishment: Assist in connecting low-grade material suppliers and producers

Over the past five years the in-state demand for low-grade woody material has improved significantly. Several large scale biomass users have now become established such as the Plainfield Renewable Energy in Plainfield and Scotts Company in Lebanon and many established operations have grown in scale. Also gaining in strength are nearby out-of-state biomass markets. The current forest action plan noted that there never has been a pulpwood

market in Connecticut. That has now changed with a successful pulpwood chipping facility being established in Enfield.