Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
Lake Saltonstall Water Treatment Plant, 1 Saltonstall Parkway, East Haven, CT

AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Public Comment: Residents and customers may address the Land Use Committee regarding agenda items or other issues. Discussion is limited to the presentation of information for consideration and comment on agenda items.
3. Approval of Minutes – June 10, 2026 regular meeting
4. Water Chestnut Harvest Update: Will Henley
5. Updates on land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
6. Other land items
7. Elect Committee Chair for 2026-2027
8. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, August 12, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.
9. Adjourn

Members of the public may attend the meeting in person. In the event of rain, the meeting will be held in person at 90 Sargent Drive, New Haven. To view meeting documents, please visit https://tinyurl.com/3ffzccnu. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515 or by email to jslubowski@rwater.com.

SAFETY MOMENT

Tap Into Safety

Regional Water Authority

UV Safety Awareness

UV Safety awareness emphasizes protecting your skin and eyes from harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation to prevent skin cancer, premature aging, and eye damage.

PRACTICAL SUN SAFETY TIPS:

1. Apply sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher every day, even cloudy days
2. Wear protective clothing when in the sun
3. Limit direct sun exposure by seeking shade, especially between 10 am and 4 pm
4. Avoid tanning beds
5. Monitor your skin for unusual moles or changes and consult a dermatologist for early detection of skin cancer

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
June 10, 2026

Minutes

The regular meeting of the Land Use Committee ("Committee") of the Representative Policy Board ("RPB"), of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District ("RWA"), took place on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at the Madison Slash Wall, Route 42, Madison, Connecticut. Chair Levine presided.

Committee Members Present: M. Levine, P. Betkoski, P. DeSantis, B. Eitzer, G. Malloy, and J. Mowat Young

RPB: R. Harvey, N. Campbell, and C. Havrda

Authority: D. Borowy and C. LaMarr

Management: J. Hill, V. Benni, J. Triana, J. Tracy, and C. Cordes

Chair Levine called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

Mr. Tracy, the RWA's Forester II – Drone Manager, and Mr. Cordes, the RWA's Forester II, provided an update on the Madison Slash Wall/Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) study, initiated in the early 1980s to evaluate differences in forest harvesting methods and the influence of regeneration, stand growth, and carbon storage. Over time, the project progressed to examine additional ecological factors, including soil property dynamics and belowground carbon processes. The study continues to evolve, providing valuable insights into forest ecosystem responses and sustainable management practices.

Mr. Tracy and Mr. Cordes reported on the implementation of the slash wall in 2021, which uses logging residue to create barriers around regenerating stands to deter deer. The approach offers a low-cost alternative to fencing and protects seedlings until they grow beyond browsing height, after which the structures naturally decompose.

They highlighted that early results indicate that the slash walls are improving regeneration, with a 40% higher density of tall seedlings within protected areas after three years. These areas also show an increased presence of desirable species such as oaks and hickories, along with fewer non-native species compared to unprotected areas.

Update on *The Land We Need for the Water We Use Program* – Mr. Triana, the RWA's Real Estate Manager, reported:

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
May 31	88%	98%	93%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
May 31	2.84	6.74	3.94
Fiscal YTD (6/1/24 –	29.58	43.56	46.48

Land We Need for the Water We Use Program (Dispositions/Acquisitions)

- Madison – correspondence with property owner of 14+/- acres.
- Durham – correspondence with property owner of 6+/- acres.
- Cheshire, Fenn Rd. easement – Emailed Town Manager and others about the OSWLA grant money.
- Woodbridge, Baldwin easement – Baldwin's are in general agreement to grant an on-foot access easement to our land that is east of the Wepawaug River.
- Ansonia, 119 ½ Ford St. – Staff found Ford St. Tank site locked by the USFS. RWA Police found contact person who allowed our lock to go in sequence at the gate. Emailed two USFS contacts since it seems that they will be divesting themselves of the property. We have a 50-year easement for the tank plus an option to extend it for another 50 years. We are in year 33 of the original easement.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. – Bids were opened. Bayram's had the highest bid of $40,000.
- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Received update of the plans being negotiated between the owner's and their potential buyer.

Forestry Update

- Installed 500 tree shelters around tree seedlings planted recently in Branford.
- Attended a roundtable with Senator Chris Murphy to discuss the US Forest Service's planned reorganization and closure of Connecticut's and New England's research and outreach facilities and offices.
- Investigated sourcing mile-a-minute weevils for an infestation in Prospect.
- Inspected witch hazel harvesting and approved the removal and re-installation of timber mats at a new intermittent watercourse crossing.

Recreation

- Held forest ecology walk at Rt. 42, Bethany with 18 participants.
- Kids fishing derby was held at Maltby Lakes with 13 participants.
- The Water Wagon attended four events in May.

	May		April	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Permit Holders	5,106	4,979	5,037	4,974

Special Activity Permits

- (no permits were issued in May)

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
  - Agricultural agreements – Talked to tenant interested in the Beaver Head Rd. field. Signed amendment of agreement with tenant for the field at Downs Rd., Hamden.
  - Madison, 752 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Abutter contacted us again about permission for Eversource to run the line after the conduits were moved. We repeated that we would not authorize anything until the matter was settled. Meeting between lawyers and surveyors was not attended by Anderson.

  - North Branford, 217 Forest Rd. (NB 17) – Signed license agreement with new owner for the encroachments over the property line.
  - Bethany, Hoadley Rd. (BE 17 & 18) – Abutter said they would remove the well pipe.
  - Madison, unauthorized trails (MA 2) – Sent letters to five abutters of the Cedar Swamp property about the unauthorized trails and some objects on our land.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in North Branford and East Haven. Assisted Connecticut Butterfly Association effort to eliminate garlic mustard off of Reeds Gap Rd., Northford. Sprayed invasive plants, including mugwort and swallowwort, at the Furnace Pond shoreline restoration project area. Contractor for barberry control at Gaillard.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	0.5 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	3.4 acres

- Land Use Plan – RPB approved the LUP update.
- New Haven, Edgerton Park wall (HA 1) – City, RWA, and beekeeper coordinated with the contractor.
- Deer hunt – Lottery for hunters was run. DPH sent approval for the amended permit for the deer hunt, extending the hunt period from October 9 to December 31.

There were no other land items to report.

Chair Levine reported that next month's meeting would include the annual election of the committee chair.

The next regular meeting is Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

At 6:35 p.m., on motion made by Mr. Malloy and seconded by Mr. Betkoski, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting.

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Mark Levine, Chair

Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*) Management Update

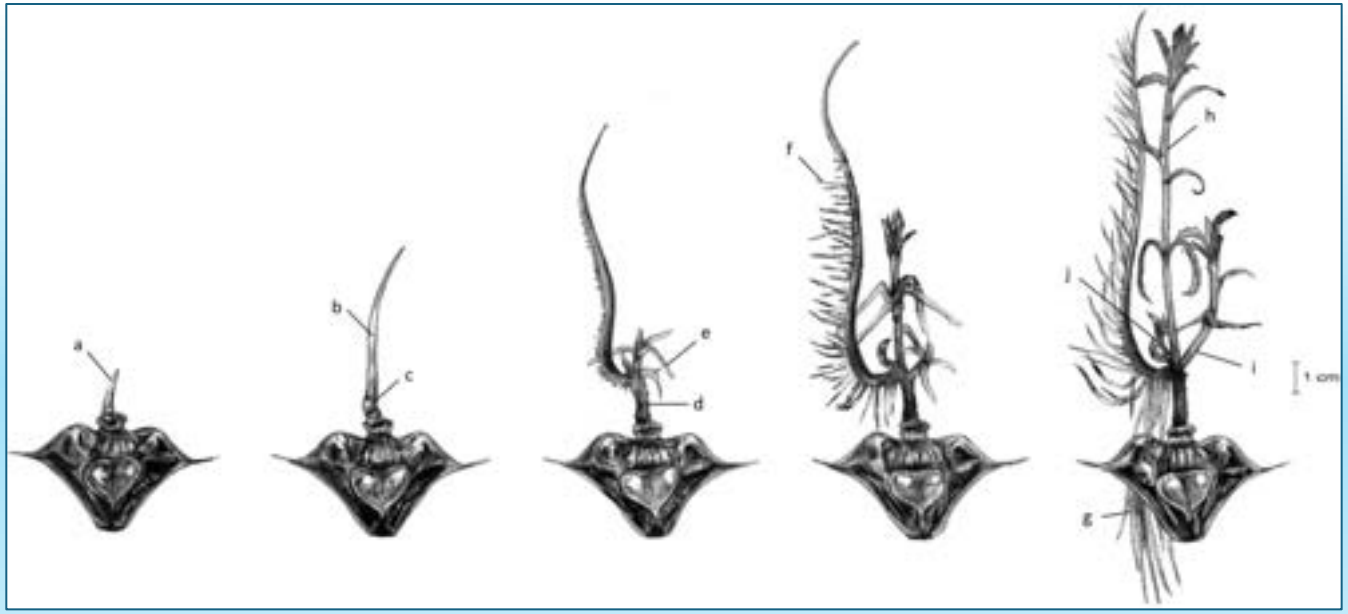
Land Use Committee February 2026

Joshua Tracy
Forester II

William Henley
Aquatic Resource Scientist

Overview

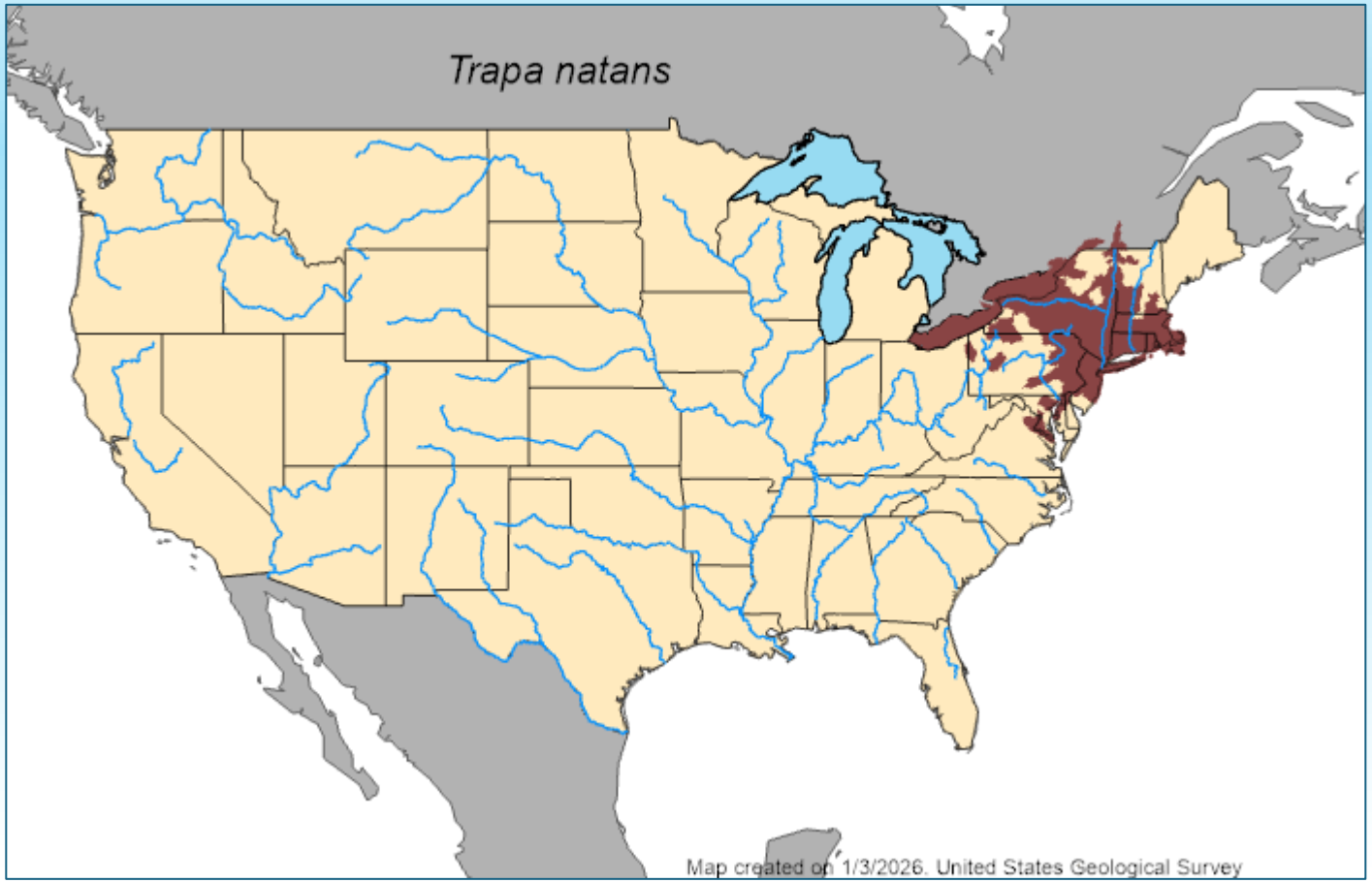
- Biology (quick)
- History (quick)
- Furnace Pond 2025
- Lake Whitney 2025
- Monitoring Efforts in 2026
- Management Efforts in 2026



Journal of Ecology, Volume: 112, Issue: 10, Pages: 2386-2420, First published: 19 July 2024, DOI: (10.1111/1365-2745.14372)

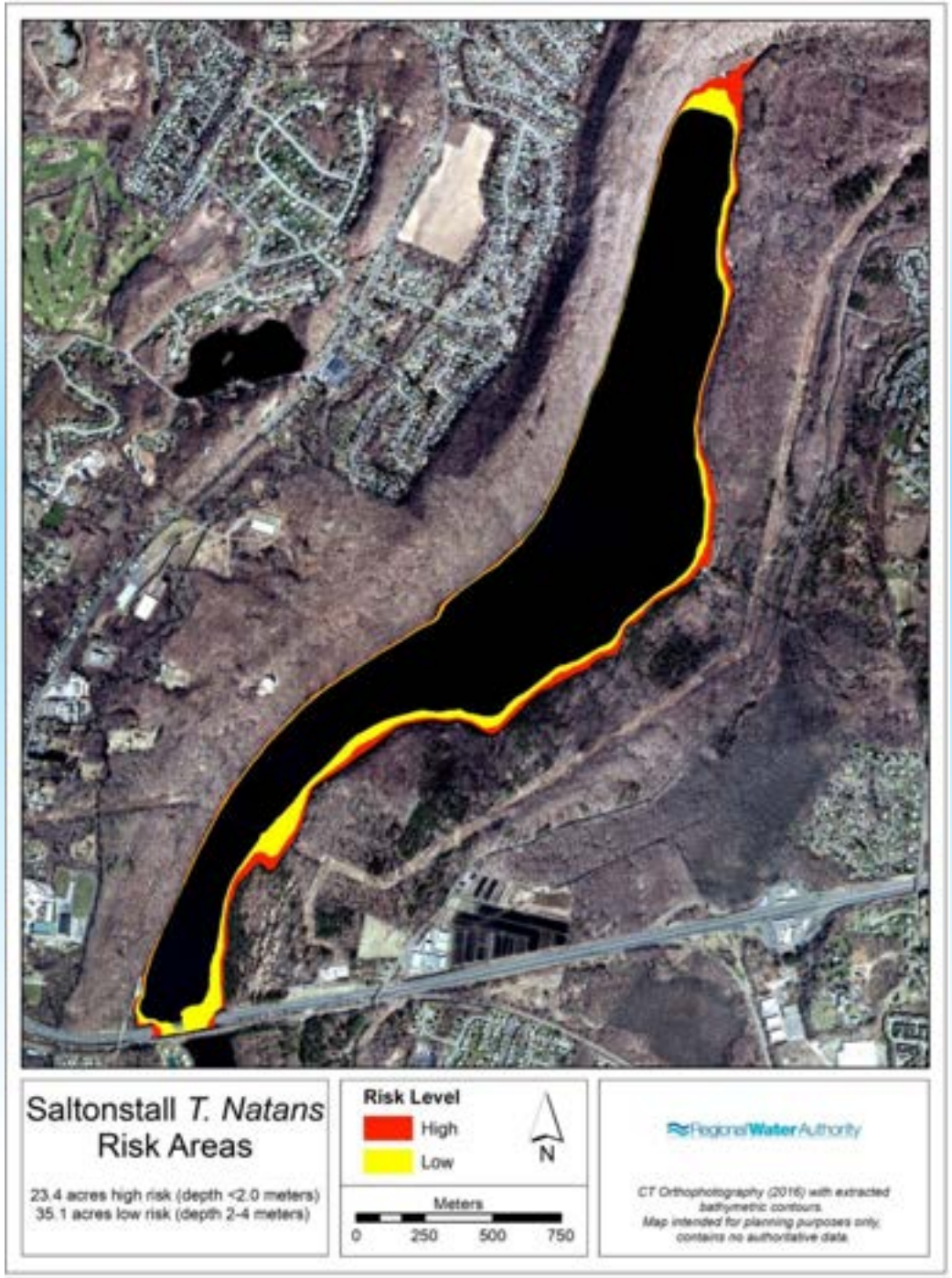
Trapa natans, Water Chestnut

- First introduced in 1870s to Potomac River
- Now found throughout the Northeast & Mid-Atlantic
- Native to Eurasia



Implications

- Aggressive invasive aquatic plant
- Reproduces exponentially due to seed & growth habit
- Grows in impenetrable mats
- Limits light reaching benthos and reduces oxygen content
- Increased waterbody sedimentation



Implications

- Extreme impairment to Furnace Pond
- Concerns about spread to nearby waterbodies; e.g., Lake Saltonstall
  - Hydrologically connected
  - Primary waterbody
  - Recreational fishery
- Trapa currently found only in small numbers

2006

2008

2010

USDA

Regional Water Authority

2010

2012

2014

USDA

Regional Water Authority

2014

2016

2018

USDA

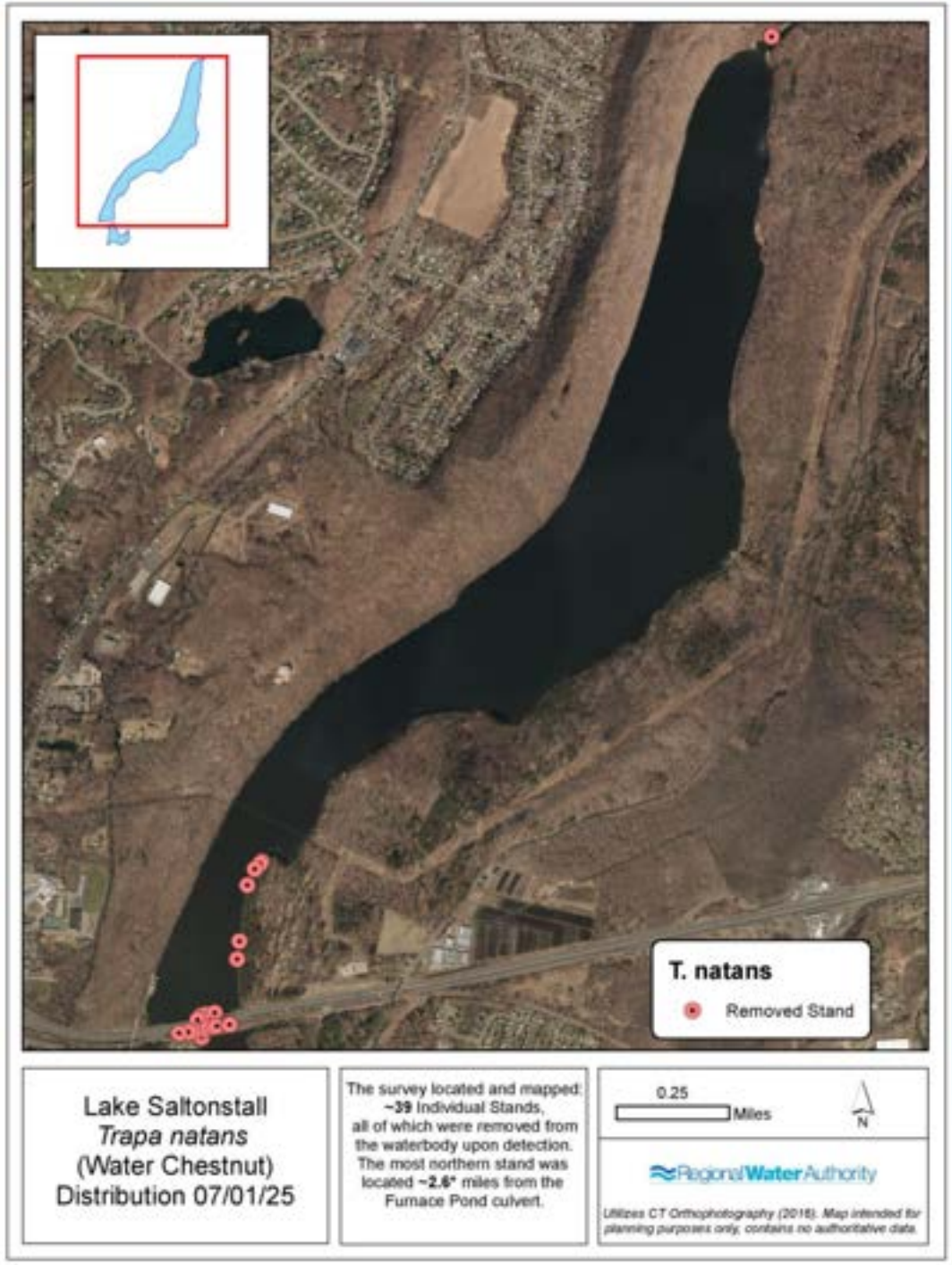
Regional Water Authority

Management Efforts

- Deployment of boom to prevent fragment spread
- Annual inspection of Lake Saltonstall to remove any individuals growing in waterbody

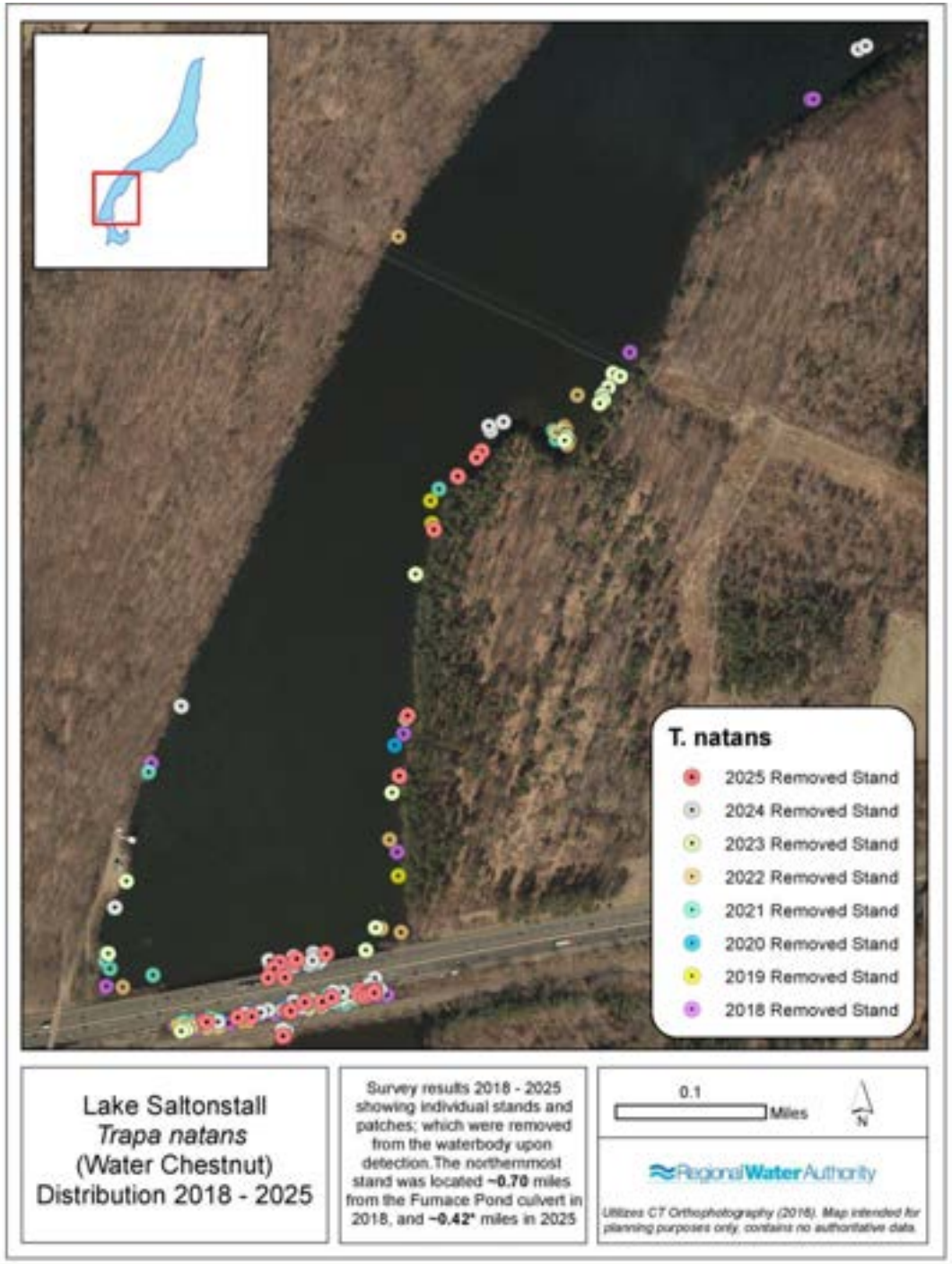
Management Efforts

- Annual mechanical harvesting efforts at Furnace Pond
- Aerial mapping efforts
  - UAS mapping of Furnace Pond to track management
  - UAS mapping of Pages Mill Pond (upstream) to assist watershed group with management efforts



2025 Monitoring Efforts

- 39 individual plants or small groups of plants removed from Lake Saltonstall
- One individual at northern end of waterbody
  - Birds?
  - Diversion?



2025 Monitoring Efforts

- At southern end of waterbody, reduction in distribution and density of plants over prior years
- Secondary inspection later in July to ensure removal of all individuals

2025 Monitoring Efforts

Invasive Chestnut Control Locations 2025 Farm River, CT

1a. **Page's Mill Pond** (motherload)
1b. 1 Mile of Farm River below Page's Pond
2. Dean Heath Farm Pond
3. Foxon Pond
4. Vaiuso Farm Irrigation Ditches
5. Farm River at Rte. 1

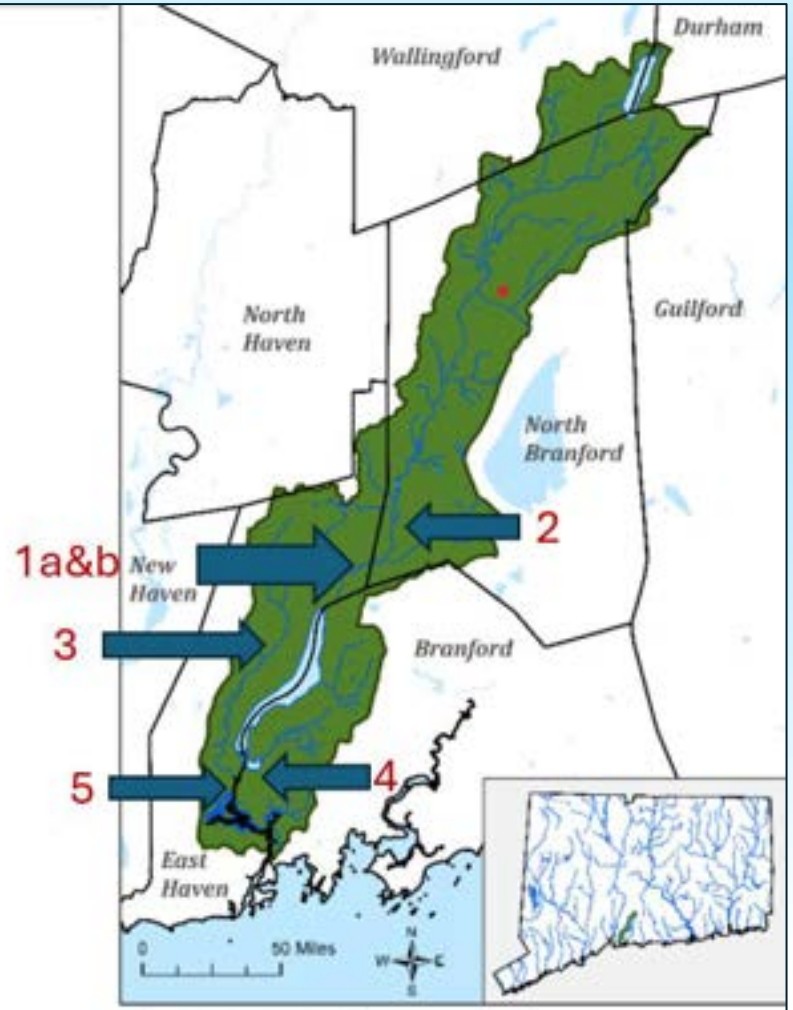


Figure 1-1. Farm River watershed

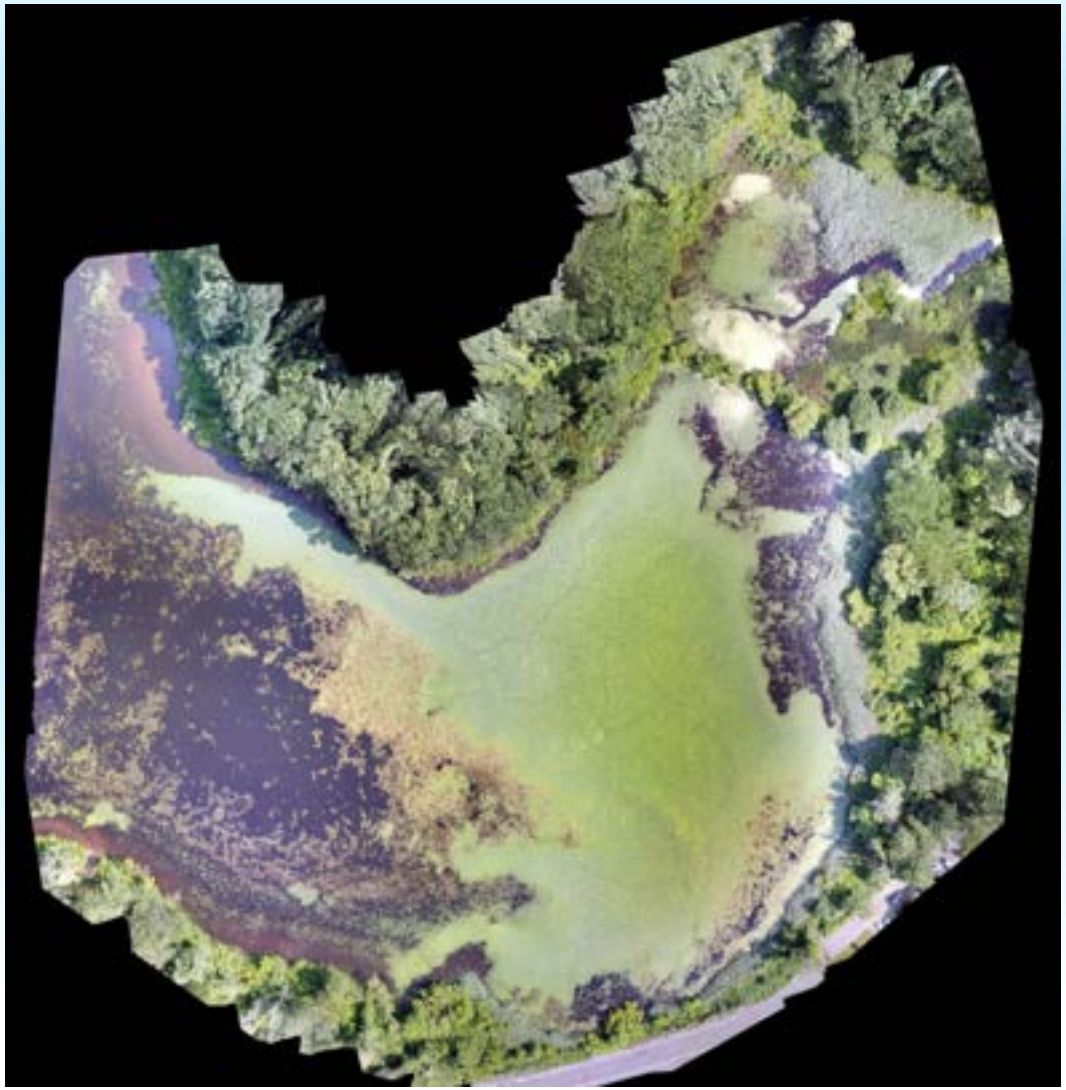
- Friends of the Farm River
- Conducting inspections and hand pulling across watershed
- Above and below Lake Saltonstall
- Report with findings shared by President
- RWA participation in mapping/inspection efforts

UAS Monitoring for Pages Mill Pond

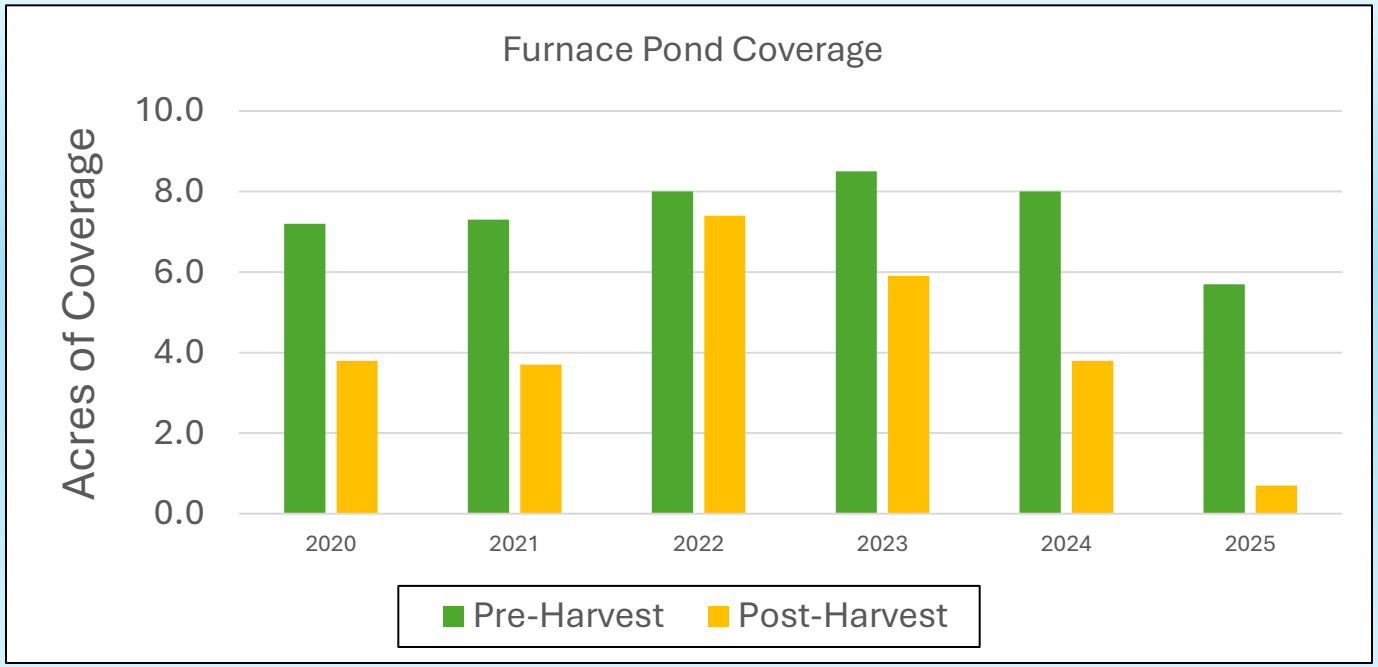
- Assistance to Friends of the Farm River
- Conducting active management to Pages Mill Pond
- Hand removal at other sites

2025 Harvesting Efforts

2023 Baseline (“maximum”)



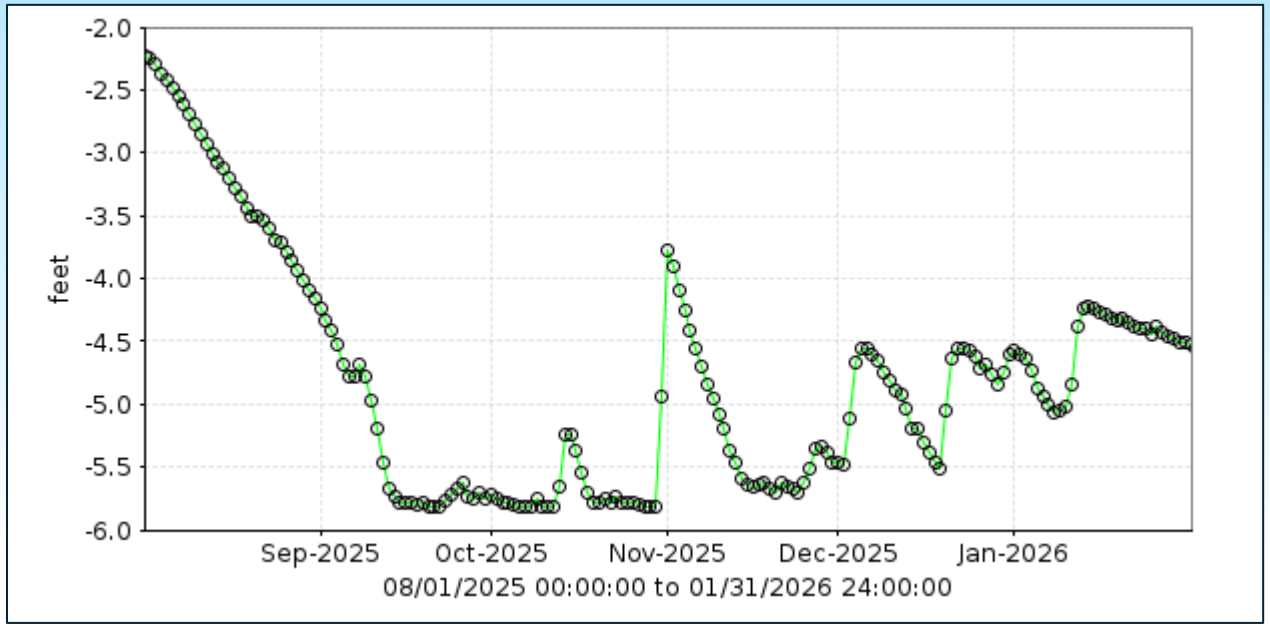
Project Progression



	Pre-Harvest	Post-Harvest
2020	7.2	3.8
2021	7.3	3.7
2022	8.0	7.4
2023	8.5	5.9
2024	8.0	3.8
2025	5.7	0.7

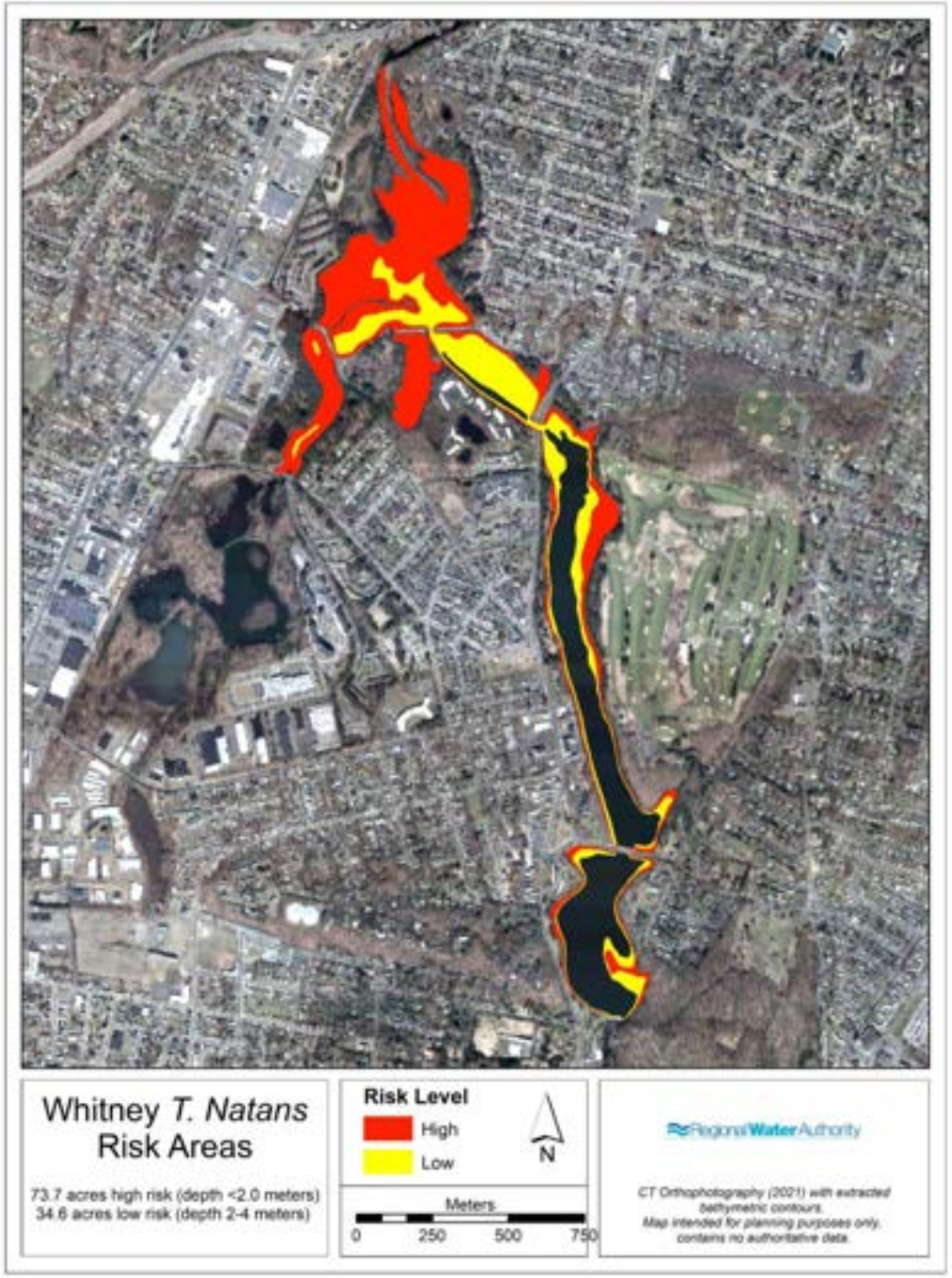
Optimistic 2026 Season

- Effective harvesting efforts in 2025 - most removal to date
- Extreme cold coupled with waterbody drawdown
- Dry conditions could hamper harvesting if they persist



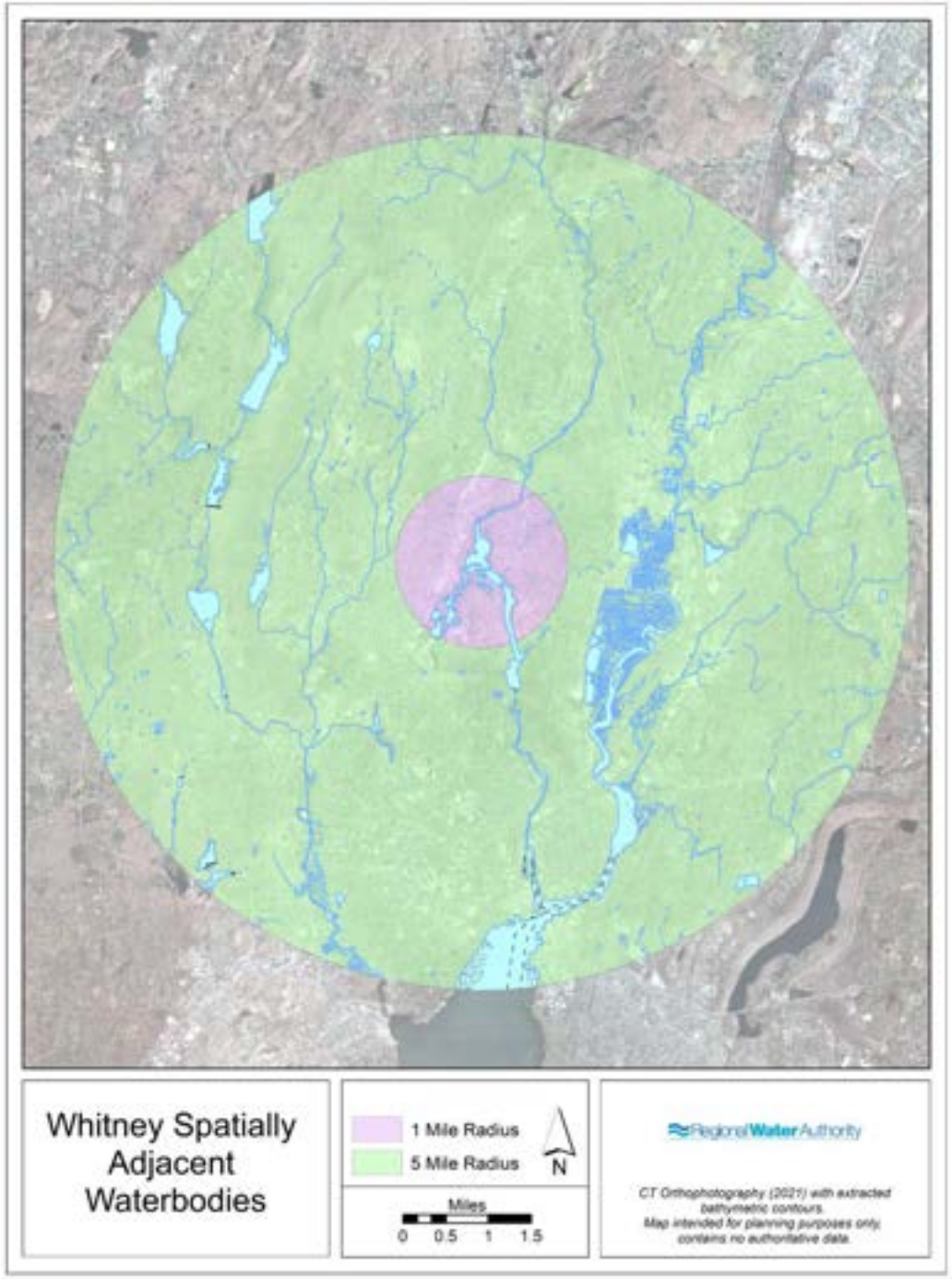
2025 Discovery in Lake Whitney

- Discovered on October 1st, 2025
- Upper basin accessible due to drawdown of ~2.0 feet
- Population size assessed and UAS mission conducted October 6th



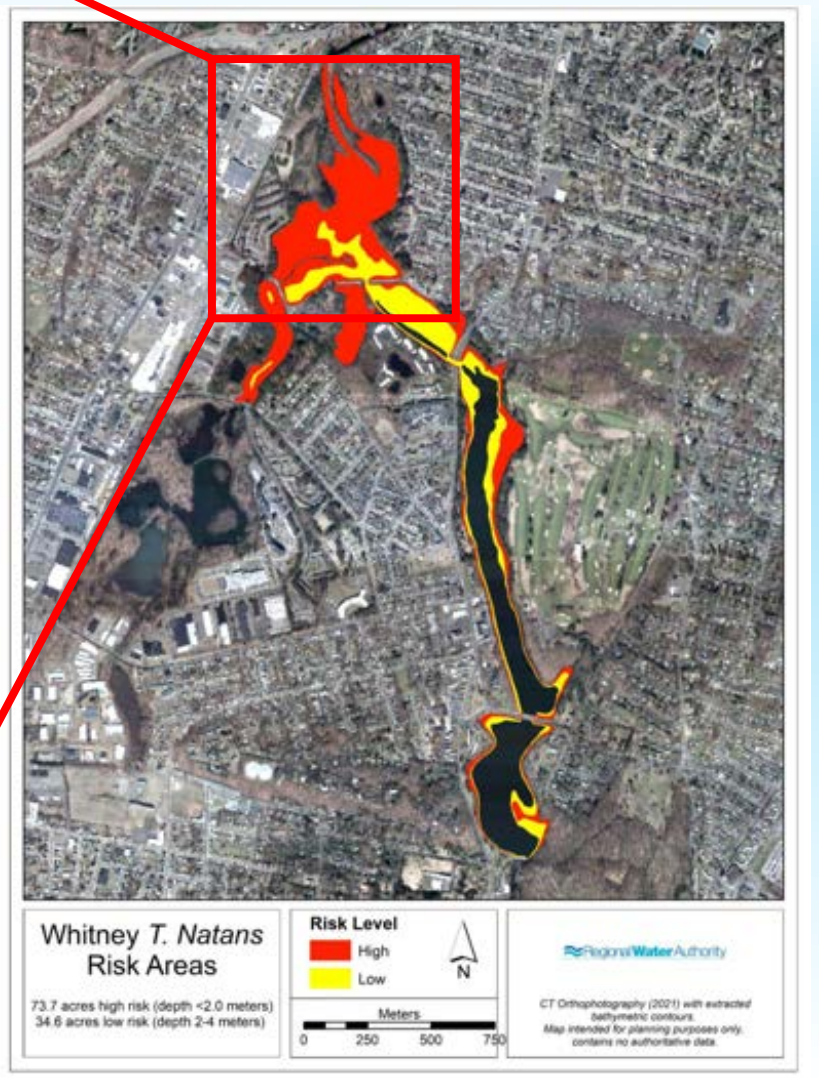
Implications

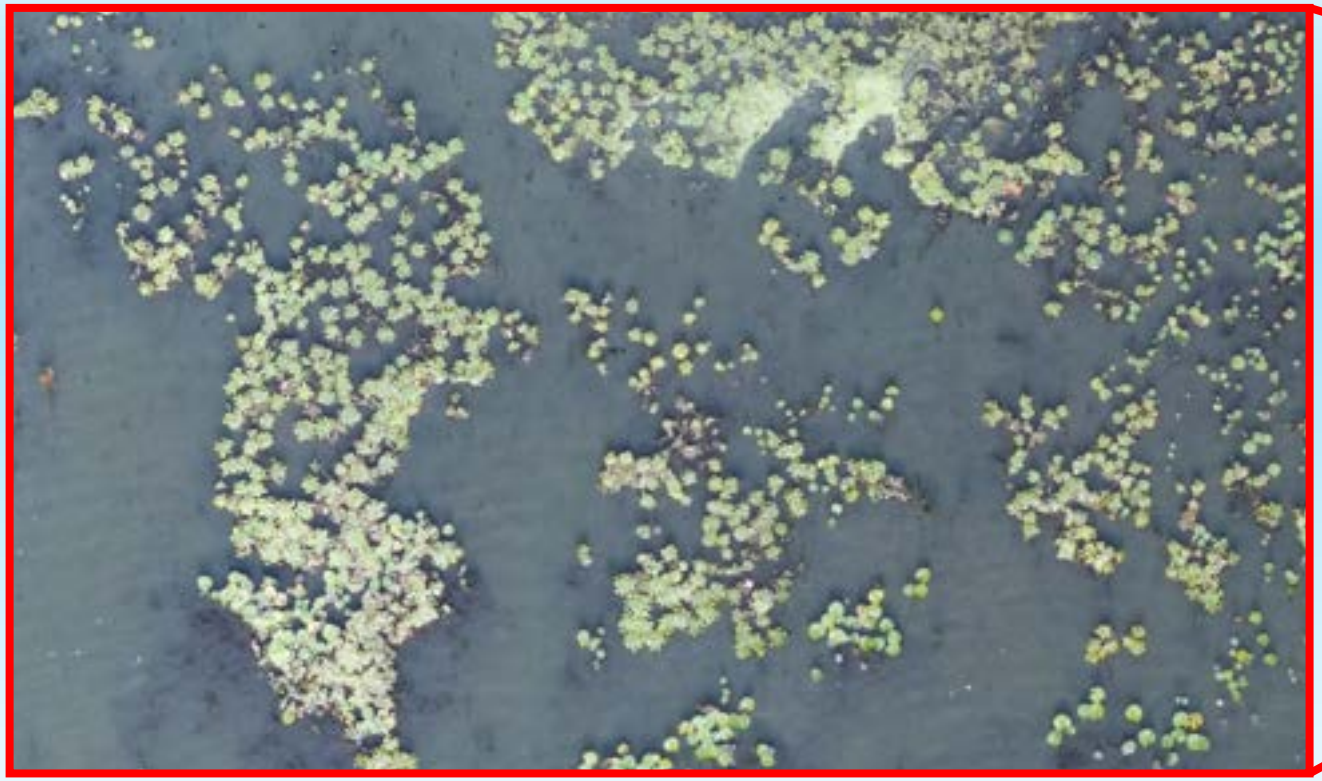
- Significant portion of waterbody is “littoral” or shallow zone
- Flow through system promotes migration of plants to lower reaches
- Possibility for explosive expansion

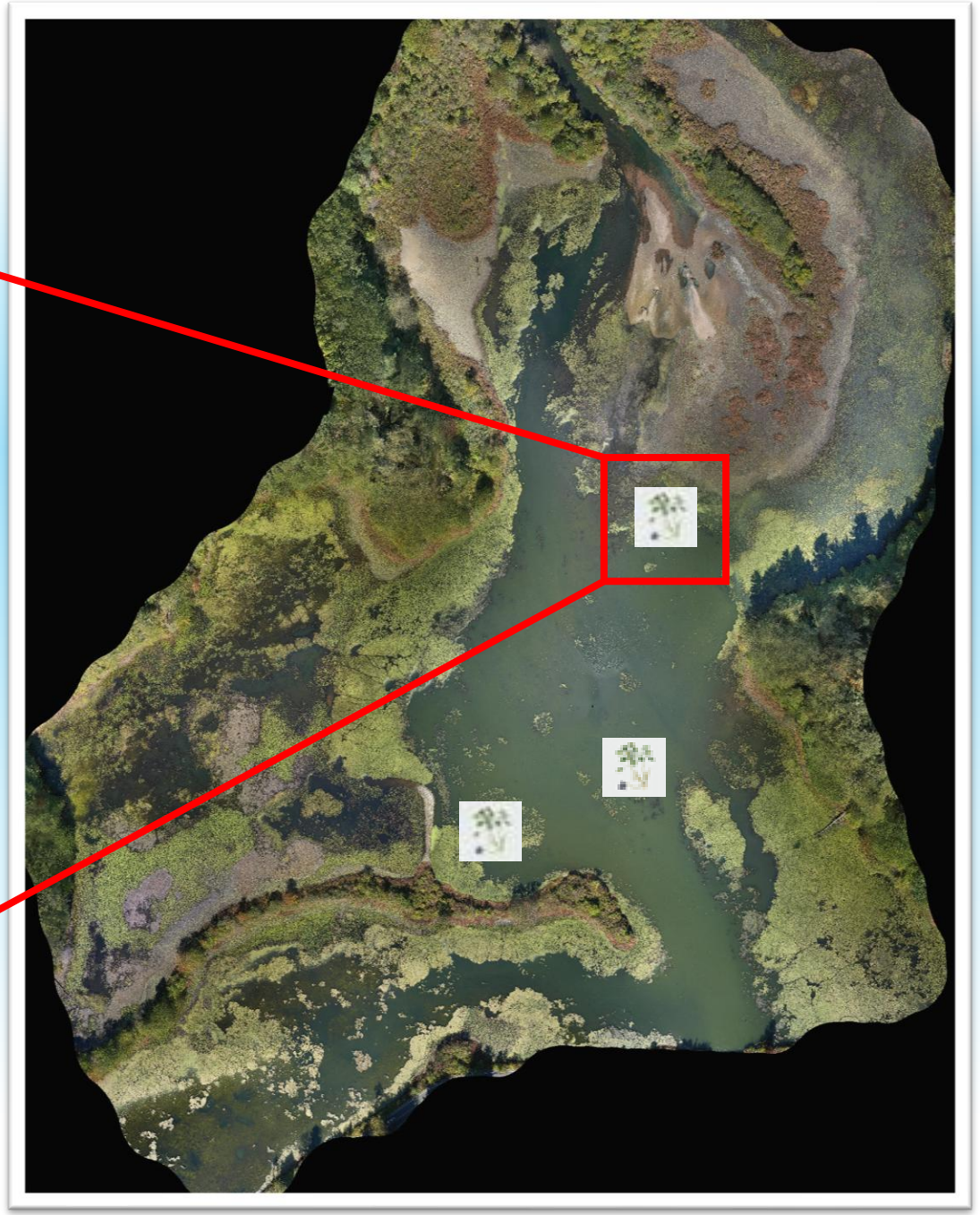


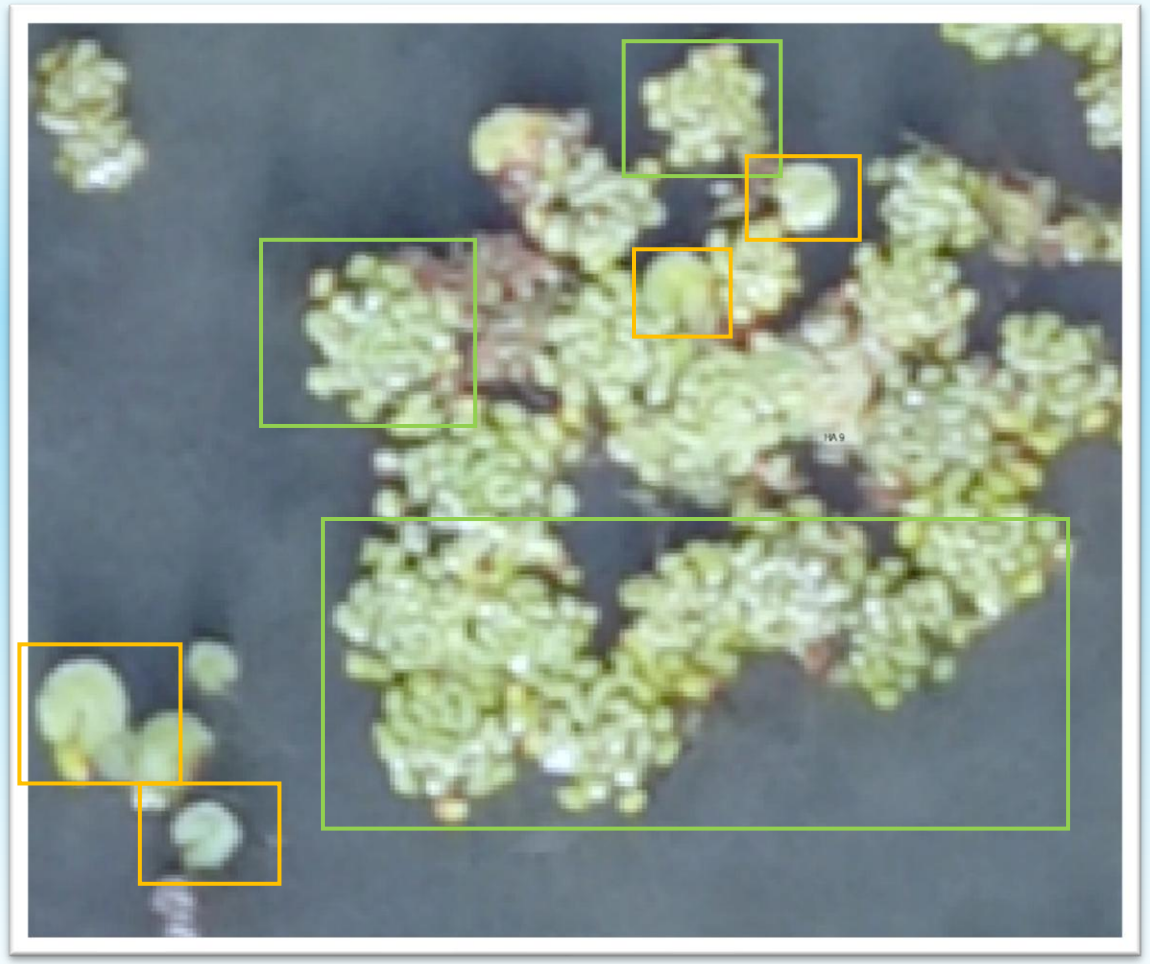
Implications

- Numerous nearby waterbodies, including several stewarded by SCCRWA
- 21 waterbodies within 1 mile of detection site (~195 acres)
- 316 waterbodies within 5 miles of detection site (~1,100 acres)


Whitney T. Natans
Risk Areas
73.7 acres high risk (depth <2.0 meters)
34.6 acres low risk (depth 2-4 meters)
Risk Level
High
Low
N
Meters
0
250
500
750
RegionalWaterAuthority
CT Orthophotography (2021) with extracted bathymetric contours.
Map intended for planning purposes only.
contains no authoritative data.







Esri Image Analyst tool

- The Deep Learning toolset contains tools that detect specific features in an image and classify pixels in a raster dataset.
- The classification and pattern recognition tools perform regression analysis and prepare segmented rasters for use in creating classified raster datasets.

Management Planning

- Prepare boat launch on Lake Whitney Upper Basin
- Conduct UAS mapping for targeted removal
- More native biomass than Furnace Pond
- GOOD – not fully established yet

Management Plan

- Perform targeted mechanical harvesting
- Anticipate only a few days to remove all plants
- More expansive than can be “hand pulled” but not extensive
- Utilize amphibious vehicle due to shallow nature of upper basin


Thank you!
Questions?

June 10, 2026
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
June 30	81%	93%	88%	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
June 30	2.80	1.07	3.68
Fiscal YTD (6/1/26 – 6/30/26)	2.80	1.07	3.68

Land We Need for the Water We Use Program (Dispositions/Acquisitions)

- Durham – correspondence with property owner of 6+/- acres.
- Cheshire, Fenn Rd. easement – Continued to correspond with DEEP staff about the OSWA grant with the town.
- Woodbridge, Baldwin easement – Authorized surveyor to start working on the mapping for the easement. Murtha ordered a title report of the property.

Rental houses:

- Hamden, 233 Skiff St. – Executed the purchase and sale agreement with the winning bidder.

Forestry Update

- Established herbicide strips within the rows of Christmas trees recently planted to limit mowing and weed whacking damage.
- Reviewed NRCS comments on RWA proposed activities and treatment methods in preparation for the NEFF grant-funded activities.
- Expanded Fish Dock slashwall harvest area to accommodate a nutrient-cycling research project, and finished marking the trees.
- Worked with a Natural Resource Specialist to design and draft a brochure about the firewood program at events.

Recreation

- Trails Day hike had 9 participants.
- Butterfly walk hosted by the Connecticut Butterfly Association had 30 participants.
- One kids event was held at Maltby Lakes with 23 participants.
- One bass tournament was held at Lake Saltonstall with 37 participants.
- Cleared trails at Lake Chamberlain, Lake Bethany, and Sugarloaf.
- Received permit renewal from DPH for Chamberlain hiking and fishing and Mattabasset Trail hiking.
- The Water Wagon attended five events in June.

	June		May	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Permit Holders	4,989	4,916	5,016	4,979

Special Activity Permits

- Mississippi State University (Connor Kurz) – in partners with CTDEEP to study the population of black bears in Western Connecticut, map locations 41.40745, -72.96811; 41.43445, -72.96726; 41.38044, -72.96895; Rt. 69 near Lake Watrous, Wooding Hill Rd., Rt. 69 near Lake Bethany (6/1/26 – 8/31/2026).
- United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (Geraldine Vega Pizarro) – take soil surface samples from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station forest plots to compare fungi communities in the forest soils of Connecticut, North Madison (7/1/2026 – 7/31/2026).
- Quinnipiac University (Jeffrey Lombardo) - two research projects: beach leaf disease and microstegium grass-impact of invasive plants and tree disease on eastern forests. Maltby Lakes and along the Mill River near the Quinnipiac University campus (7/1/2026 – 11/30/2026).
- Connecticut Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation-(Mr. Jack Swatt) flowering chestnut trees on RWA property to harvest nuts to plant in their Germplasm Conservation Orchards to preserve genetic diversity of the species; Seymour Slash Wall, RT 79 Durham, Genesee Tract, Menunkatuck, Bethany Tract 13, Lake Saltonstall (6/30/2026 – 12/30/2026).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
    - Madison, 752 Summer Hill Rd. (MA 9) – Continued correspondence with abutter.
    - Bethany, Hoadley Rd. (BE 17 & 18) – Abutter removed the well pipe from our property.
    - Madison, unauthorized trails (MA 2) – Two of the abutters who received letters responded. Grosso will remove the patio furniture and move the slide from the playset. Another said she doesn't use the trail, but others in the neighborhood do.
    - Madison, Dead Hill Rd. (MA 4 and MA 4A) – Sent letter to abutters about brush pile near their property. They called back and said the pile was not from him.
    - Orange, Pine Crest Rd. (OR 3) – Abutter noted that the batting cage was removed. We will send them an amendment to the agreement to lower the fee.

- Invasive plants – Treated or documented invasive plant populations in East Haven, North Branford and Guilford. Conducted drone mission at Lake Whitney to map the water chestnut population. Used steam weeder to continue burning vegetation surrounding at Lake Gaillard. Met with contractor about removing barberry by Beech St. Implemented an invasive brush control study along Saltonstall Ridge Road.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	1.4 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	1.3 acres

- New Haven, Sachem St. easement – Executed easement agreement with Yale for the water main below the discontinued portion of Sachem St. Filed on the land records.
- Orange, Trout Brook (OR 6) – Met GreenVest and state staff at Trout Brook to show them the potential site for work through a grant.
- Deer hunt – This year we have 103 participants at Gaillard, 22 at Bethany, 20 at Prospect and 8 at Seymour/Ansonia.
- Drone flights - Conducted drone flight at Lake Chamberlain with the multispectral sensor to look for over saturated areas along the earthen dam.

Attachments

- June 5, 2026 - Connecticut brush fire risk remains high Friday, state officials say – NH Register
- June 23, 2026 - CT approaches goal of protecting 21% of its land as open space with new conservation funds – CT Public Radio
- June 11, 2026 - Connecticut real estate agent says 'title pirates' tried to sell his Manchester land – NH Register
- June 25, 2026 - Hamden residents have waited 40 years for Six Lakes cleanup. Now they face at least eight more – NH Register
- June 3, 2026 - Scientists are injecting elm trees with a killer fungus to save them – VT Public Radio
- June 24, 2026 - North Branford Awarded $611K Open Space, Watershed Land Acquisition Grant: Gov. Lamont – Patch.com

Upcoming Agenda Items:
August 2026 – ????

Connecticut brush fire risk remains high Friday, state officials say

By Peter Yankowski, NHR - Staff Writer - June 5, 2026

The risk of brush fires is high statewide again on Friday, according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's daily Forest Fire Danger report.

The report noted there is "enhanced ignition potential forecast" for Friday.

The high risk of fire means that brush burning permits that residents obtained from local officials are no longer valid, if the burning is within 100 feet of grassland or woodland.

The wildfire risk also was high on Thursday, according to DEEP.

Friday's forecast calls for light winds only up to around 12 mph. But the air will be very dry, with relative humidity values of less than 25% in the capitol region.

Dry air increases the risk of wildfires because it can suck the moisture of fuels, making them more likely to burn.

Connecticut is in the midst of the summer fire season, which runs from mid-May through September. Past rainfall is critical during the season, according to DEEP.

Currently most of the state is considered to be abnormally dry, with parts of southwestern and southeastern Connecticut in moderate drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

CT approaches goal of protecting 21% of its land as open space with new conservation funds

Connecticut Public Radio | By Chris Polansky - Published June 23, 2026

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont on Tuesday announced $9.4 million in state funding meant to preserve and protect more than 1,200 acres of open space across the state.

“Open space provides benefits to residents across Connecticut and makes our state a great place to live,” Lamont said.

At a press conference at Great River Park in East Hartford, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Katie Dykes agreed with the governor.

“We know that open space provides tremendous benefits, both recreational and environmental, for residents and ecosystems,” Dykes said.

Dykes said the state has “a statutory target of protecting 21% of the state's land base as open space.”

“Between DEEP and our partners, we have preserved almost 80% of the 21% goal,” Dykes said. “So we're making enormous progress, and we're making a huge step towards that goal today with this latest grant round.”

Parcels being preserved in the latest round of grant funding span 15 towns across Connecticut. The largest is the 312-acre Ilewicz Property in Killingly, and the smallest is the 15.84-acre Plummer Addition in Wilton and Weston.

Lamont and Dykes also announced an additional $2.4 million meant to improve 15 urban green spaces and community gardens in municipalities including New Haven, Bridgeport and Waterbury.

“Open space access is really important in our rural areas,” Dykes said. “It's also really important in our cities.”

Connecticut real estate agent says 'title pirates' tried to sell his Manchester land

By Peter Yankowski, Staff Writer - Updated June 11, 2026

MANCHESTER — It was the Saturday before Memorial Day when Mark Massaro got a message he wasn't expecting.

A vacant plot of land in Manchester that the 53-year-old real estate agent had purchased a few years ago had been listed for sale online. However, Massaro said he never listed the land for sale, having held onto the plot on Hackmatack Street with plans to build a house on it.

The incident appears to have been an attempt at what's known as title fraud, also called as deed fraud — in which a person illegally transfers a property's title without the owner's consent.

The National Association of Realtors said perpetrators, sometimes called "title pirates," often use fake IDs or forged documents to make it appear that they're the legitimate owner. One incident detailed by a lawyer interviewed for this story even involved a forged ID with a picture of someone who may have been incarcerated.

After learning about the listing, Massaro said he contacted the real estate agent on the fraudulent listing and quickly was able to get it taken down.

"It was only on the market for two hours," he said in a phone interview.

Massaro said the fraudulent seller used a fake picture ID and a phone number that appeared as though the call was coming from Massaro. The person apparently also set up the listing using a Zoom call, "which is a huge red flag in our business," he said.

Massaro, who is a real estate agent in Connecticut and Florida, said this was the first time anything like this had happened to him.

“Unfortunately it seems to be a common occurrence," he said.

He said he got the Manchester police involved in the matter. A Manchester police spokesperson, Lt. Nick Reinert, confirmed the incident was under investigation. He said no arrests have been made.

Growing threat of title fraud

The National Association of Realtors noted in an article on its website that parcels of vacant land often are targeted by scammers because they may go unmonitored. A survey by the NAR found that 62% of cases involved vacant land.

Massaro noted property records list his land under his Florida address. He described another attempted fraud in which one of his clients who was trying to sell a home under construction found the property listed online for sale by a different owner. Massaro said the client also had a Florida address.

Carolyn Futtner, a real estate attorney and partner at Mancini, Provenzano & Futtner, said that since 2024 she's dealt with about four to five "vacant land scams" each year. She said those were just the ones she had encountered.

"They're usually pretty easy to spot," Futtner said in a phone interview Monday.

Futtner said the first attempted fraudulent deal she encountered involved a fraudulent seller who was in a rush to close in two weeks, "which is super fast." The Realtor reported they hadn't met with the seller in person, Futtner said.

When asked for ID, the supposed seller sent a Connecticut driver's license with the owner's address, date of birth and other personal information, Futtner said. "The only thing different is the picture," she added.

When she ran the photo by police, the collar of the clothing the supposed seller was wearing caught their attention. It resembled the standard issue garb of people incarcerated by the state of Alabama, they told her.

Futtner said the real owner of the property purportedly up for sale only learned of the fraud when she mailed him a letter to the address to which the town sent his tax bill.

Fraudulent sales have happened before

There have been a few other fraudulent land sales in Connecticut over the years that have drawn public attention.

In 2021, Eugene Tortorici purchased an uninhabited home along the shoreline of Lake Zoar in Newtown for $65,000. He later found out the seller had not been the property's owner at all, but rather someone whose name closely resembled the home's true owner.

The sale only raised suspicions for investigators after the real owner called Newtown police and told them he believed his identity had been stolen, according to court papers.

"He duped two law firms," Tortorici said of the fraudulent seller, in an interview at the time.

Newtown police eventually charged the fraudulent seller, Edwin Robert Lewis III, of Willington. He pleaded guilty in 2023 to first-degree larceny and identity theft and was sentenced to probation, court records show.

Tortorici said he eventually was able to get his money back — and then bought the property from the real owner.

In 2023, the owners of the Cobb's Mill Inn said the Weston property wrongly was listed for sale. The couple learned of the listing after a friend reached out with a screenshot of the listing, and asked whether the price was negotiable.

That same year, residents of Sky Top Terrace in Fairfield learned that a home being built on long-vacant lot was the subject of a lawsuit alleging the land had been sold fraudulently.

The lot's legal owner, Dr. Daniel Kenigsberg, grew up in the neighborhood but lived elsewhere and maintained ownership of the vacant property. Kenigsberg said in an interview that he was shocked to find out a house was being built on his property. He said he learned about the construction during a phone call from someone who informed him a friend was in hospice.

Property records appeared to show the lot was sold by a scammer using Kenigsberg's name, and who gave his place of residence as South Africa.

Kenigsberg had sought to have the land returned to its original condition. In a settlement reached in 2024, however, the home built on the property sold to the same couple who originally agreed to buy it. Kenigsberg received an undisclosed sum.

Futtner, the real estate attorney, said the Fairfield fraud is the "one we all refer to" when explaining extra security steps they make people go through for real estate deals.

Futtner said her practice now uses a service called Closinglock that requires people to upload a government-issued ID and take a three-sided photo to ensure the picture matches.

"Not only are we signing documents, we're responsible to make sure it's who it's supposed to be," Futtner said. "I'm certainly not wiring" money to anyone "unless I know you're a real person," she added. "There's a duty to protect not just myself but my client's funds."

Protecting yourself from title fraud

Futtner said there's a list of questions she asks any time vacant land deals come up, including how the client met the person they're dealing with, how they verified their identity, and whether they've done business with them before.

Another step for which she and Massaro both advocated is getting title insurance, which protects buyers if an issue arises with the title to the property after the sale.

Massaro said some towns also have an alert system for property owners. A service offered free by the city of Milford, for example, allows property owners to be notified any time documents are recorded under their name. Massaro said he also does everything he can to vet someone when they call him to list a property.

Futtner said the scams are always changing.

"It keeps you up at night," she said. "You wake up at 2 o'clock in the morning wondering what the fraudsters are going to do next."

Hamden residents have waited 40 years for Six Lakes cleanup. Now they face at least eight more

By Austin Mirmina, NHR - Staff Writer Updated June 25, 2026

Four decades after first agreeing to clean up the heavily contaminated Six Lakes property in southern Hamden, its owner now has at least eight more years to finish the job.

Full remediation of the 102.5-acre parcel — which many residents hope will eventually become a state park — must be completed by July 2034, according to a project schedule approved last week by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The property's owner, Missouri-based Olin Corp., has until July 2029 to determine the full extent of contamination at the site, where officials have already identified at least seven "areas of concern," according to DEEP. The company must then submit a detailed cleanup plan to DEEP and complete the work by the 2034 deadline.

But Olin can seek an extension if it shows it is making "best efforts" to meet its obligations, DEEP said in its June 16 approval letter. The agency can approve, reject or modify any revised schedule put forth by Olin.

The updated timeline has frustrated several Hamden residents and officials, who say the cleanup has dragged on for too long and who question whether the state will hold Olin to its decades-old promise to restore the property, also known as Pine Swamp and Olin Powder Farm.

"Too long! It's been 40 years!" one resident shouted Wednesday night as DEEP staff presented the project timeline during a community meeting at the Keefe Community Center. Hamden Mayor Adam Sendroff and state Reps. Laurie Sweet, D-Hamden, and Steve Winter, D-New Haven, also attended.

DEEP officials defended the new timeline as "reasonably aggressive," citing the extensive testing and remediation work still ahead. The officials said they are "serious" about getting the property cleaned up after years of delays and vowed to take legal action if Olin fails to comply.

"We understand that this neighborhood deserves to have this property cleaned up," said Raymond Frigon, director of DEEP's Remediation Division. "We're here now. We are pushing Olin. If they don't live up to this end of the bargain, we will take them to court."

Olin did not respond to multiple requests for comment on Thursday.

In a May 18 letter to DEEP, the company proposed a project schedule outlining the next phases of cleanup, including a period of "three to four years" for environmental testing at the site. In its response, DEEP said that work must be done within three years or less.

Olin said it has performed "significant" work at Six Lakes since taking legal responsibility for the cleanup in the 1980s.

"Olin is committed to continuing to work cooperatively with CTDEEP on this important project," wrote Elizabeth Bowen, an environmental remediation principal at Olin.

DEEP's approval letter gave Olin 45 days — until July 31 — to submit a plan outlining the work it intends to complete by the end of this year, Frigon said. If the company misses that deadline, "I'm telling you right now, we got a problem," he said.

Storage area for Winchester's ammunition

Six Lakes, located in Hamden's Newhall neighborhood near the New Haven border, is a heavily wooded property with a diverse mix of wetlands, wildlife habitat and other infrastructure. It takes its name from the six lakes on the site.

Winchester Repeating Arms, a defunct New Haven gun manufacturer, used the property to store gunpowder and ammunition in concrete bunkers during the early and mid-1900s. It later became a dumping ground for industrial waste.

In 1986, Olin, which had acquired the Winchester rifle company, signed a consent order with the then-Department of Environmental Protection agreeing to clean up Six Lakes.

But the project has faced repeated delays, including from DEEP staffing shortages and competing cleanup priorities.

In the early 1990s, the agency paused work at Six Lakes to focus on the 34-acre Raymark Industries site in Stratford, where manufacturing waste dumped across town contaminated dozens of properties.

"There was basically a decade plus or minus where there really wasn't any activity on Pine Swamp, really, quite honestly, because there was a lack of staff at Connecticut DEEP," Frigon said.

Six Lakes' cleanup was put on hold again around 2005, as Olin and DEEP turned their attention to contaminated soil in Newhall, which was considered a more urgent threat due to its potential effects on human health. That work is still ongoing.

Around 2014, DEEP told Olin it needed to resume work at Six Lakes, but the company responded with what Frigon described as a “half-hearted effort.” Several years later, he said, the agency ordered Olin back to the site, warning that further inaction could amount to a breach of the consent order.

The two parties reconvened in 2021, according to the company’s recent letter, and environmental testing resumed and has continued over the past several years.

“They have stepped up from the agency’s perspective,” Frigon said.

Last year’s work involved inspecting the sites of all 30 bunkers that once stored gunpowder but were removed by 1975, according to John Duff, an environmental analyst with DEEP. Nothing of environmental concern was found, he said.

Interviews that Olin conducted with former employees who worked at the site suggested that two of the bunkers might have stored “nuclear material,” Duff said, though follow-up radiological screening found “no impacts.”

Officials said they do not believe the local drinking water supply is affected. Several surface water samples taken by Olin last year met the state’s drinking water standards, according to Duff. Water sampling needs to be done more regularly to ensure the water remains safe year-round, he said.

'Determine where the pollution is'

One of Olin’s biggest challenges has been accessing the property, whose dense forests, uneven terrain and aging roads and bridges have made it difficult to get equipment on site, DEEP officials said.

“For this particular property, throwing more money, more people at it is not necessarily the solution to moving it faster,” Frigon said. “The entire process here is to determine where the pollution is and where the pollution is not. It is an iterative process that does take some time.”

The cleanup has been further complicated by Olin’s reluctance to work directly with town officials and local stakeholders, according to DEEP. Frigon said he urged the company to call Sendroff after a meeting with town officials last month. But Olin had not reached out as of Wednesday night, he said.

During Wednesday’s meeting, residents pressed DEEP with questions about why the agency did not push back harder against Olin’s proposed schedule and what would happen if the company misses deadlines. The site sits in Hamden’s Newhall neighborhood, an environmental justice community that has historically faced higher levels of pollution and industrial hazards, adding to calls for the cleanup to be treated as a higher priority.

Justin Farmer, a former Hamden Legislative Council member and lead organizer of the Six Lakes Park Coalition, criticized the updated schedule.

“I am making clear to ya’ll, that timeline doesn’t exist to me,” he said.

Frigon said DEEP has made clear to Olin that “time is of the essence” and that if there’s a chance to accelerate the cleanup timeline, “we expect them to do that.”

Many residents have called for Six Lakes to eventually become a state park, though DEEP officials said creating new parks from privately owned land is rare.

The two most recent examples are Auerfarm State Park Scenic Reserve in Bloomfield in 2014 and Sunrise State Park in East Haddam in 2009, according to DEEP.

Scientists are injecting elm trees with a killer fungus to save them

Vermont Public | By Abagael Giles - Published June 3, 2026

A mature surviving American elm tree stands above 5,200 saplings planted in Benson. Walking down into the floodplain at the Nature Conservancy's preserve in Benson is like walking into a sea of American elm saplings. The trees criss-cross about 30 acres on the valley floor in tight rows.

"American elm is a foundation tree species in floodplain forests," says Leila Wilson, an ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service. "These are systems which are facing severe threats from non-native pests and pathogens, but we also know from other impacts, right? Land use change, conversion to agriculture, now climate change, and changing precipitation and temperature patterns. So these are systems that are in peril."

Wilson knows these trees well. Each one comes from a seed she harvested from a tree whose flowers she isolated with little plastic bags, then hand-fertilized using pollen collected in the lab. That pollen came from big old elms scattered across the Northeast. Mature American elm trees like the one to the left here can live to be hundreds of years old. After all that care, Wilson is in Benson to pump these baby trees full of a fungus that's likely to kill about a third of them.

"We're going to be infecting them with the Dutch elm disease fungus. So drilling a little hole into each tree, and then injecting a solution that contains 100,000 spores of the fungus into each tree," she says as she drills the first hole. It's bittersweet, she says. "I feel like we should warn them and apologize to them," she says wistfully as she works. "Because we're torturing them. And it's not nice. I don't like that part." Big, old elms are rare these days. But that wasn't always the case. Leila Wilson, an ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service, holds up a syringe full of spores of the fungus that causes Dutch elm disease, next to a sapling she's preparing to inject with them.

If you took a walk along the banks of a river in Vermont a hundred years ago, you'd likely find yourself looking up mostly at towering American elm trees. About 50 years ago, Dutch elm disease wiped out most of these trees, but a few survived. Now, scientists like Wilson want to use these survivor trees to bring American elms back.

The disease is caused by a fungus that's spread by beetles that feed on elm twigs. From there, the fungus infiltrates the tree's vascular system, clogging up vessels called xylem that carry water up into the leaves, a little like arteries. As the fungus spreads, the tree cauterizes the vessels in an effort to stop it. This makes the disease snowball, until the leaves and the tree's canopy die. It's a little reminiscent of heart disease in humans.

Scientists aren't entirely sure why, but some trees appear to be more resistant than others. It could be that they have more resilient vessels. It could also be that the beetles have a preference for certain kinds of trees. Regardless, scientists hope that by identifying and then breeding these resistant individuals, they can bring more big American elms back to the landscape of the East Coast. American elms in a hedgerow along a neighboring field.

Wilson is hopeful that many, if not most, of the saplings at this site in Benson will survive this test. She and her colleagues will look for survivor trees by rating the lushness of their canopies. All in all, it will take about two years to know for certain which trees made it and which ones succumbed. The ones that survive will have their seeds harvested to be used to grow a nursery stock that can be planted as part of floodplain restoration projects around the region.

American elms are of particular interest to scientists because they are big, long-lived trees with roots that can survive being underwater for weeks at a time. Mature elms slow down floodwaters and filter out sediment. They thrive along flood-prone rivers, in ecosystems scientists say are increasingly important to protect as human-caused climate change consolidates rain into more extreme deluges across the region.

When elms are killed by Dutch elm disease, they lose their canopy like this one in Benson. When elms died, green ash moved in to replace the role they filled. But those trees are increasingly under threat from emerald ash borer, and are dying en masse. A 2022 University of Vermont study found that planting trees like elms in floodplains could save Vermont $1 billion over the next century and cut flooding damage by almost 20%.

Gus Goodwin is a scientist with the Nature Conservancy who is caring for the elms in Benson. From the nursery, he points out an adult elm that was killed by Dutch elm disease, on the border of the neighboring hayfield. The top of the tree is curled up and bare, like a witch's broom. Goodwin says losing an iconic tree like the American elm has a human cost as well as an ecological one. "I think because it's such a beloved piece of our cultural history and planted throughout so many towns and so many of our civic spaces, there's that kind of like community loss too," he said.

Just over the fence from the nursery, he points out a big, healthy American elm. This one could be hundreds of years old. Shaped like an overflowing vase, it towers over the saplings the scientists are inoculating with spores, and serves as a reminder of what used to be. "There's just something special about walking into a big forest with big trees, that's messy, that has all this kind of complexity and diversity," Goodwin said. "And you can't get that without big trees."

Scientists hope with this work in Benson, they can bring a little of that carbon-rich mess back to New England's river banks.

North Branford Awarded $611K Open Space, Watershed Land Acquisition Grant: Gov. Lamont

Funding is for the former Amatrudo Farm, near Farm River headwaters, a vital ecological, recreational, and public health asset: Gov. Lamont.

Ellyn Santiago, Patch Staff - Wed, Jun 24, 2026

NORTH BRANFORD, CT — Tuesday, Gov. Ned Lamont announced that his administration is awarding $9.4 million in state grants to support the purchase and protection of more than 1,243 acres of open space through 14 properties in 15 communities.

Additionally, $2.4 million is being awarded to support the improvement of 15 urban green and community garden spaces.

North Branford is one of the communities that's been awarded a grant.

Funding is provided through the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program and the Urban Green and Community Gardens Grant Program, both of which are administered by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

The grants awarded Tuesday, are the 28th grant round under both programs. The application period for the 29th grant round of both programs is now open.

Applications for OSWA and OSWA appraisals will be due by November 6, 2026, and OSWA appraisal reviews and UGCG applications will be due by December 4, 2026.

For application materials and instructions, visit portal.ct.gov/deep/open-space/open-space.

North Branford was awarded an Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant.

Project Name: Farm River Open Space

Sponsor:Trust for Public Land (TPL) and North Branford Land Conservation Trust (NBLCT)

Location:Southeast side of Middletown Avenue and west side of Farmington Drive, North Branford

Grant Amount: $611,000.00

Size:25.81 Acres

Description: This parcel, formerly known as Amatrudo Farm, is near the Farm River headwaters and is a vital ecological, recreational and public health asset in a critical riverine corridor. Much of the watershed in this area of south-central Connecticut faces growing threats from nutrient runoff, aging wastewater systems, and habitat fragmentation. This purchase represents a key opportunity to preserve a continuous green corridor in an increasingly developed landscape. The parcel is surrounded by open space, water company lands, and Ceccarelli Farm, which is protected through the state’s Farmland Preservation Program. This unique property contains a confluence of ecosystem types, from mixed hardwood forest to riparian and grassland habitats. The property supports a diversity of key native species including the wood turtle, northern long-eared bat, and native fish populations. The Farm River feeds into Lake Saltonstall, a public water source for the South-Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, highlighting the critical nature of its protection. This acquisition will unlock public access to the Farm River for kayaking, hiking, birding, and fishing.