

**Fourth East Haddam Environmental Roundtable**  
**January 16, 2010**  
**Minutes**

**Connecticut River Gateway Commission:** J.H. Torrance Downes, Senior Planner for the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency and Gateway Commission staff outlined the history, statutory basis, mission and activities of the Gateway Commission.

In 1973 the Connecticut General Assembly authorized formation of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission with the purpose of "...protect(ing) the scenic, historic and environmental resources of the lower river." The boundaries of the area to be protected (The Gateway Conservation Zone) run from Haddam and East Haddam at the north to Long Island Sound and from the east to the west are defined by visibility from the river, i.e. from ridge top to ridge top.

The Gateway Commission is a state-local compact. It became a reality when the eight member towns with land in the Gateway Conservation Zone each voted to implement the Gateway's purpose. The commission includes representation from each of the eight member towns, the two regional planning agencies involved (Mid-State and Connecticut River Estuary Region) and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

State statutes assign the Gateway Commission the responsibility of the scenic and ecological preservation of the Gateway area and authorize the commission to accomplish this thru:

- Land preservation by the acquisition of open space. To date the Gateway Commission has participated in the preservation/protection of over 1,000 acres of open space in the Gateway Zone.
- The creation of zoning standards to be adopted and enforced by the eight member towns and the review of changes to local zoning regulations and applications to member town's ZBAs which affect the Gateway zone.

The Commission is currently participating in efforts to secure open space protection of two parcels along the river and is considering means for improved riparian buffer protection for the river and its tributaries.

**Land Trust Collaboration in the Lower Connecticut River Valley:** Margot Burns, Environmental Planner for the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency.

The Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency is initiating an effort to explore whether the missions of the local land trusts in the lower Connecticut

River valley would benefit from collaborative efforts while still retaining their autonomy.

The possible benefits might include:

- Increased funding/grant opportunities
- Sharing experience/expertise
- The ability to have staff by sharing the costs of a staff position
- The ability to improve record keeping/maintaining data bases by sharing the cost of appropriate software

Two exploratory meetings involving representatives of the various land trusts and conservation commissions have been held. Based on these meetings, there seems to be both interest and enthusiasm for further exploration of the possibility of collaboration. There are funds available from CRERPA for a very limited number of future meetings to continue exploring this concept.

### **Reports from Participating Groups:**

1. **The East Haddam Agricultural Commission Study Committee** reported that they have submitted a report to the Board of Selectmen recommending that East Haddam form an agricultural commission. The report includes a draft ordinance establishing an agricultural commission, recommendations for priority projects and suggests that an agricultural commission, if established, seek grants to fund its work. Joan Nichols of the Connecticut Farm Bureau noted that the Farm Bureau is available for advice and assistance.
2. **The Earth Charter** announced its 6<sup>th</sup> annual Summit on March 6. Details are available on page 26 of the winter 2010 edition of the East Haddam Events magazine.
3. **The Ray Chapter of the FFA:** Students Robbie Johnson and Hanna Palmer and faculty member Heidi Pease reported that they are seeking to secure grants that would finance a program of environmental studies utilizing a parcel of East Haddam open space. Among the proposed study areas are stewardship practices, trail maintenance and water quality testing. They are collaborating with the Conservation Commission in this effort.
4. **Economic Development Commission:** Reported that they are working on an updated and improved municipal website. An extensive description of the activities of the commission and the town's Economic Development Coordinator can be found on pages 5 – 7 of the winter edition of the East Haddam Events magazine.
5. **East Haddam Lakes Association:** Sponsored a public meeting at which the Chatham Health District discussed and answered questions about the newly enacted Wastewater Pumping and Permit to Discharge (“septic pump out”) regulation. The Lakes Association has also prepared a report about the economic value of East Haddam's lakes. The properties surrounding the lakes account for 18.6% of the town's grand list. Because

of this, the lakes are valuable assets to the town and the Lakes Association is working with town government to find ways of protecting and preserving these economic assets.

6. **Eightmile River:** Patricia Young is the new Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Management Committee staff person. Property owners in the watershed are encouraged to take the River Smart pledge and to implement the environmental practices outlined in the pledge.
7. **East Haddam Land Trust:** Reported that they are working with the CT River Gateway Commission to assume ownership of 17+/- acres above the river in East Haddam Village (the Duncan property) which was purchased earlier by the Gateway Commission. The Land Trust plans to hold a Farm Dinner fund raiser in mid-June.
8. **Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission:** The commission is seeking members.
9. **The Green Committee:** Will be making reusable grocery bags (the East Haddam Green Bag) available and is running a contest for a logo for the bag. The use of one reusable bag helps eliminate the need for approximately 1,000 plastic bags over its lifetime.
10. **Planning & Zoning Commission:** Reported that bound, hard copies of the Plan of Conservation and Development have been printed, distributed to the chairpersons of town boards and commissions and reference copies are available in at the Moodus Public and Rathbun libraries.
11. **The Nature Conservancy:** Reported that they are working with East Haddam and the eight other towns in the Salmon River watershed to identify what needs to be done to protect the Salmon River. This includes implementing low impact development practices, limiting impervious surfaces and conservation of stream side forest cover. The ultimate, long-term goal is to seek wild and scenic status for the river.

The next East Haddam Environmental Roundtable is planned for late summer, 2010.