



DANNEL P. MALLOY  
GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT



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## GOV. MALLOY ANNOUNCES PLAN TO PROTECT 1,000 ACRES ALONG LONG ISLAND SOUND AS OPEN SPACE

*Agreement Will Preserve the Last Remaining Large, Unprotected Coastal Forest Between  
New York and Boston*

April 25, 2014



(HARTFORD, CT) – Governor Dannel P. Malloy announced today a plan for the state to play a major role in purchasing and protecting as open space a 1,000-acre parcel along Long Island Sound known as The Preserve, which is located in the towns of Old Saybrook, Essex and Westbrook.

"We will take action to make funds available for the state's participation in the purchase of the property and to address issues concerning joint ownership and stewardship of the land with the Town of Old Saybrook, which will also be making a significant financial

contribution," said Governor Malloy. "The permanent protection of The Preserve has been a goal of the land conservation community across our state for more than 15 years and it's time to act to achieve this important goal." The Preserve is considered to be the last, large unprotected coastal forest between New York and Boston. The property is rich in natural resources, wildlife, and habitat areas and will offer hiking and other passive outdoor recreational opportunities. The Preserve, which also provides an important coastal buffer against storm waters, connects to 500 acres of existing parklands in adjoining towns and miles of hiking trails. ([Download map of The Preserve](#))

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a leader in the effort to protect The Preserve, reached an agreement with River Sound Development LLC to purchase the property in July 2013. Since that time, it has been working to secure funds needed to finalize the purchase, which is now set at \$8.09 million.

"The Preserve is one of Connecticut's special places and this support from the state will allow us to move forward and forever protect from development this land," said Alicia Sullivan, Connecticut State Director of TPL. "Our mission is to protect land for people, and I can't think of a better example of protecting land for all the people who live in Connecticut, and visit here."

Governor Malloy said that under the agreement, the State of Connecticut would be an owner of The Preserve and intends to contribute \$3.3 million toward its purchase and management, consisting of \$1.4 million from federal funds for open space acquisition and \$1.9 million for acquisition and management pending approval by the State Bond Commission.

Additional funds for the purchase are expected from the Town of Old Saybrook, which plans to contribute \$3 million, and from TPL, which will bring private funding in the range of \$2 to \$3 million for acquisition and management.

"The Town of Old Saybrook is grateful for the state's support as we move forward to protect The Preserve. We now have a chance to put to rest once and for all the question of what will happen with The Preserve," said Old Saybrook First Selectman Carl P. Fortuna, Jr. "I look forward to launching a public process in Old Saybrook that will conclude with a referendum to approve the town's financial support for this important land acquisition."

State funding may increase through a grant to the Essex Land Trust, an applicant for matching funds for the acquisition and protection of 71 acres of The Preserve that is located within the Town of Essex. This application is pending under the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition program administered by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). In addition, the Town of Westbrook is discussing options to facilitate the preservation and public use of The Preserve.

Governor Malloy said that he is asking the General Assembly to take action this session to authorize an agreement with TPL that will transfer a vast majority of The Preserve to the state and the Town of Old Saybrook for joint ownership and management of these critical lands.

"We appreciate the strong interest that the residents of Old Saybrook have in protecting this property and the willingness of the town to make funds available to help us accomplish this goal," Governor Malloy said. "The agreement we envision will allow for a positive and productive partnership between the state and the town that will provide lasting benefits for everyone."

Other parties that strongly supported the purchase and protection of The Preserve include the Old Saybrook Land Trust, the Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound, The Alliance for Sound Area Planning, Audubon Connecticut, and The Nature Conservancy.

#### **Support for Acquisition of The Preserve**

"The purchase of The Preserve will ensure that these unique and environmentally valuable and sensitive lands will be protected in perpetuity," said DEEP Commissioner Robert Klee. "Connecticut is fortunate to have an active and effective land conservation community that has played a key role in preserving thousands of acres across our state and paved the way for action on The Preserve."

"For years, this fight was a long and lonely one, a seeming endless uphill battle for citizen activists dedicated to preserving this true treasure," Senator Richard Blumenthal said. "Governor Malloy is demonstrating a strong commitment to protecting pristine, environmentally significant land in Connecticut. I have fought development of The Preserve for many years and commend the state's aggressive action to permanently stop any development of this unique asset."

"While walking along The Preserve land yesterday with members of the Old Saybrook community, it couldn't have been more clear that this breathtaking open space needs to be protected for our future generations," said Senator Chris Murphy. "This forest land is the ideal place to spend an afternoon hiking, exploring, and observing Connecticut's natural beauty. I've been committed to open space protection issues since my days as a state official and I know how committed the land preservation community has been to protecting The Preserve. Today's announcement is a huge win for the Old Saybrook community, and I commend all those who worked to make this possible."

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, Co-Chair of the Long Island Sound Caucus, said, "The Long Island Sound is a regional and a national treasure and protecting The Preserve will ensure this pristine and vibrant ecosystem is available for future Americans to enjoy. I applaud the Town of Old Saybrook and Governor Malloy for prioritizing the future of this beautiful area."

Attorney General George Jepsen said, "Open space preservation not only conserves critical habitat and environmental features, it also contributes to the character of our state. The Preserve is an important and unique area of our state, and I commend Governor Malloy and all the partners involved for crafting a proposal to protect it for future generations."

"After a long battle to protect The Preserve, it's heartening to see the pieces falling into place to finally conserve this extraordinary resource once and for all," said Don Strait, President of Connecticut Fund for the Environment. "An opportunity like this comes along once in a generation. This state funding will join with support from citizens who value The Preserve's miles of woodland trail and the habitats it provides to bobcats, hawks, and rare amphibians. It's an amazing example of what ordinary people can do when they band together to protect the land they love."

Bill Arnold, President of the Kent Land Trust, said, "I thank Governor Malloy and commend him for his commitment to protecting The Preserve. As the Governor well knows, this is a unique natural area with a long list of features which are important to conserve. Acquiring it for public benefit will help protect habitat and water quality as well as provide excellent outdoor recreation opportunities for all Connecticut residents."

#### **Background on The Preserve**

The Preserve consists of approximately 1,000 acres of land along Long Island Sound in three towns: 926 acres in Old Saybrook; 71 acres in Essex; and four acres in Westbrook.

The Preserve was the subject of development proposals dating back to 1998, including plans to build more than 200 homes and an 18-hole golf course. These plans met with strong opposition and lawsuits from conservation groups and residents. Over the years, multiple attempts were made to acquire the land for conservation, but an agreement was never reached and efforts to develop the property continued.

The Preserve includes 38 vernal pools, 114 acres of wetlands, more than 3,100 linear feet of watercourses, high quality coastal forest, and an Atlantic White Cedar swamp. The dense canopy of forest and the Pequot Swamp Pond act as a critical refueling stop for many migratory birds, and the many freshwater seeps on the property are home to amphibian species such as the northern dusky salamander, spotted turtles, and box turtles. In all, more than 100 species of amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds thrive on this property, some of which are state-listed species of special concern and others of which are declining in other areas of the state.

In addition to its recreational and habitat resources, The Preserve provides important water quality benefits to residents. Surface waters on the property drain to three different watersheds: the Oyster River, Mud River and Trout Brook, as they make their way to Long Island Sound. The protection of The Preserve will ensure that stormwater on the site is recharged to local aquifers. An aquifer protection area is located just east of the Preserve and supplies an average of 200,000 gallons per day of drinking water to Old Saybrook and surrounding communities.

The Preserve also offers benefits for coastal resiliency in the face of climate change, and conservation of it will ensure lessened stormwater impacts from hurricanes and other intense storms. It is located in the area designated by FEMA's Hurricane Sandy Impact Analysis as having experienced "high impact" from Superstorm Sandy. The Preserve acts as a sponge for stormwater, releasing it slowly into the tributaries and rivers that lead to the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound, protecting downstream property owners from flooding.