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Chester
Deep River
East Haddam
Essex
Haddam
Lyme
Old Lyme
Old Saybrook

Annual Report, Connecticut River Gateway Commission
Fiscal Year 2016-2017

The Lower Connecticut River Valley was recognized by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1973 as one of the State's most important natural, recreational and scenic areas. In 1974, the Commission was established and became operational with membership from eight towns, two regional agencies and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

The Gateway Conservation Zone is 30 miles long and includes portions of its eight member towns (Chester, Deep River, East Haddam, Essex, Haddam, Lyme, Old Lyme and Old Saybrook, including the Borough of Fenwick) within view of the river. The Nature Conservancy has designated the lower Connecticut River as one of its "Last Great Places"; the river's tidelands were recognized as an "internationally significant" habitat for waterfowl under the terms of the international Ramsar Convention; the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior has recognized the Lower Connecticut River Valley as "one of the most important ecological landscapes" in the United States; and in 1999, the River was designated as one of 14 American Heritage Rivers by the President of the United States.

The Gateway Commission concentrates most of its attention on the protection of the valley's scenic qualities. Since its inception, the Commission has worked with others to acquire over 1,100 acres of land through purchase or donation of scenic easements, development rights and fee simple titles. The Commission continues to work on preserving land through acquisition with partners and is currently working on such preservation in the Haddam Neck area of the Gateway Conservation Zone. One such acquisition has resulted in the establishment of the 50-acre Brainerd Quarry Preserve in Haddam Neck which was purchased in partnership with the Middlesex County Land Trust.

The Commission is also empowered to adopt common zoning standards for height, setback and lot coverage, which member towns adopt and enforce within the Gateway Conservation Zone. An updated set of standards is set for adoption by the end of 2017. The Commission reviews and acts on zone changes, regulations changes and variance applications affecting land within the Conservation Zone referred to it by local boards and commissions. No zone change or change in regulations affecting land within the Conservation Zone can become effective without the Commission's approval.

Members as of June 30, 2016 include: Margaret Wilson and Erroll Horner of Chester; Nancy Fischbach and Kate Cotton of Deep River; Harvey Thomas and Crary Brownell of East Haddam; Claire Matthews and Jerri MacMillian of Essex; Susan R. Bement of Haddam, J. Melvin Woody and Wendy Hill of Lyme; Peter Cable and Suzanne Thompson of Old Lyme; Madeline Fish and Belinda Ahern of Old Saybrook; Raul de Brigard of RiverCOG; and David Blatt of the Connecticut DEEP (Commissioner's Representative). Fenwick Borough has been designated an ad hoc member and is represented by Borough Warden Fran Adams.

For more information, contact River COG Senior Planner and Gateway staff J. H. Torrance Downes at (860) 581-8554 or at tdownes@rivercog.org . Contact information can also be found on the web at www.ctrivergateway.org.

Protecting the River Since 1973