



Lords Cove

Tom Walsh, Shoreline Aerial Photography

## Connecticut River Gateway Commission

# What do you love about the Connecticut River Valley?

Connecticut's lands and waters are essential to our sense of place, history and wellbeing. For many, it's the scenic views, clean waters, trails and water access, local farms and historic sites that make living in the lower Connecticut River Valley wonderful.

We hold local nature dear—eagles and osprey, American shad, clouds of swallows in September plummeting to nest on islands, the vibrant reds and yellows of Fall foliage.

Yet development pressure continues, and the pace of land conservation isn't keeping up. Land along rivers and streams is being lost to development, and forests are cleared daily.

Connecticut is falling short of its goal of preserving 21% of its land, and lags behind other New England states.

Investing in land protection offers benefits to all of us—rich wildlife habitats, outdoor recreation that also boosts our economy, safe drinking water, flood control, an effective means to combat

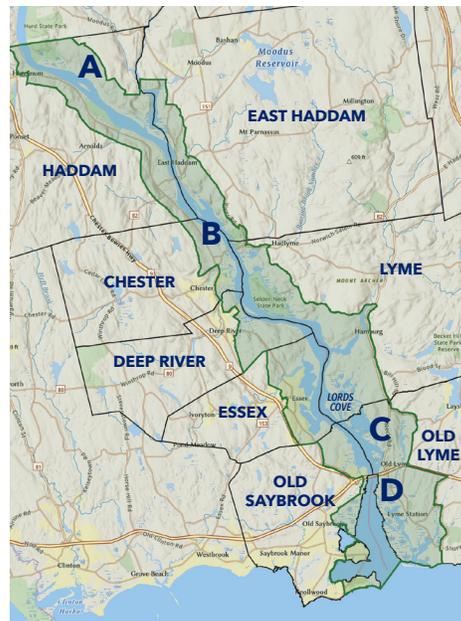
climate change, and a preservation of our past.

The Connecticut River Gateway Commission was created by state law, in part, to preserve land within the eight regional towns that make up the Gateway Conservation Zone (the Zone).

As this brochure illustrates, the Gateway Commission has a long history of partnering with nonprofits, towns, and private landowners to protect ecologically important lands.

The Commission is available to offer insights for protection strategies and even tangible assistance.

We look forward to working together to preserve the land we all love—for today and as a legacy for tomorrow's generations.



Project highlights within the Connecticut River Gateway Commission's eight town conservation area.

## Brainerd Quarry Preserve

**50 Acres • Haddam Neck**

**PARTNERS:**

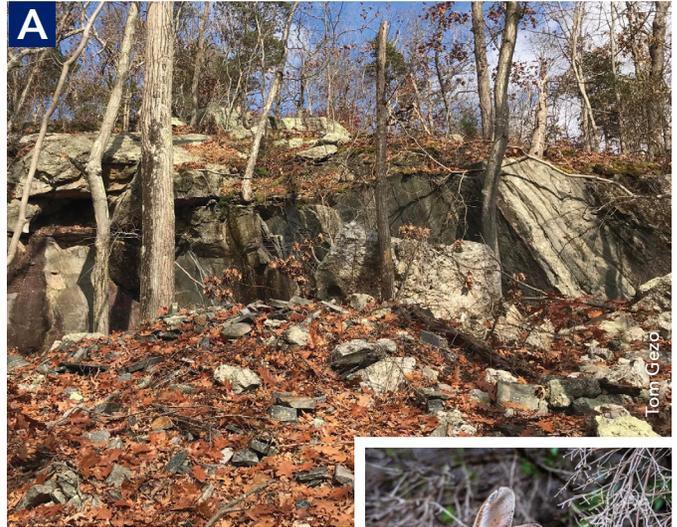
**Middlesex Land Trust**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

The Brainerd Quarry Preserve is part of the federal Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Known for its dramatic views of the Connecticut River and for its historical use as a rock quarry, this 50-acre parcel was at risk of being developed.

The region includes important wildlife habitat for eagles and the protected New England Cottontail rabbit. A historic quarry operated on this site for more than 150 years, shipping stone downriver to New York and as far south as New Orleans. The land is considered ideal as an outdoor classroom for studies in local history, geology, mining, early American industry, the Industrial Revolution in Connecticut, and other topics.

The property was preserved through a creative plan. The Gateway Commission advanced funds to the Middlesex Land Trust to buy the property, with an agreement that it was to be later purchased by the federal government. The trust returned the sales



Tom Gezo



**New England  
cottontail rabbit**

proceeds to the Commission so the process could be used to preserve other prominent Haddam Neck hillside properties.

Brainerd Quarry today is owned by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for wildlife habitat, historical education, and public recreation including trails and overlooks.

## Bonamomi Property

**24 Acres • Chester**

**PARTNERS:**

**State of Connecticut**

**Private Family**

Local landowners and families often recognize the importance of the Connecticut River, as well as the conservation challenges it faces.

One such family is the Bonanomis. Given their love of the land, and the importance of their land for wildlife habitat, river protection, and the area's rural character, the Bonanomis approached the Gateway Commission to help conserve their land. The Commission, in turn, worked with the State of Connecticut to facilitate a conservation agreement (conservation easement) that met the needs of the family and their conservation goals.

The land remains in private ownership, stays on the tax rolls, and can be sold, donated, or bequeathed according to terms of the conservation agreement.

Landowners who conserve their land often qualify for state and federal income tax benefits. Thanks to their vision and generosity, the view from the river now will permanently retain its scenic character for all to enjoy.



**Great blue heron**



**North American river otter**

Tanishac Bergeron



Cooper's hawk



American bittern

## Roger Tory Peterson Area

**56 Acres • Old Lyme**

**PARTNERS:**

**The Nature Conservancy**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

What better tribute to a world-renowned bird expert, author, artist, and wildlife conservationist than to forever protect his land for migratory birds.

Roger Tory Peterson, a longtime resident of Old Lyme, brought the magic of birds to life through his extensive observations and drawings — much of which was accomplished on his property near the Lieutenant River, within the Connecticut River watershed.

The property serves as a migratory bird stopover and nesting habitat as part of the Connecticut River flyway corridor. Purchased by The Nature Conservancy, with significant funding from the Gateway Commission, the property is now part of the larger Silvio O. Conte Fish & Wildlife Refuge.

The preserve offers beautiful views of the area and is open to the public for nature enjoyment.

## Watch Rock Preserve

**25 Acres • Old Lyme**

**PARTNERS:**

**Old Lyme Conservation Trust**

**Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection**

This beautiful property was almost sold for development. Thanks to the quick thinking and generosity of the people of Old Lyme, and the former Old Lyme Conservation Trust, the property is now a preserve.

The Gateway Commission facilitated negotiations and provided bridge funding, leading to the State's purchase of the development rights. The Old Lyme Land Trust parcel is located on the Duck River, a tributary of the Connecticut River.

Officially known as the Elizabeth B. Karter Watch Rock Preserve, the name "Watch Rock" comes from the use of the raised bluff by First Nations Peoples to observe river activity while feasting on shellfish.

The property is open to the public and includes hiking trails and great spots for fishing and crabbing.



Kathleen DeMeo

More partnership examples can be found on our website [ctrivergateway.org](http://ctrivergateway.org).



**Expansion of Deep River's Smyth Sanctuary.** The Gateway Commission provided \$30,000 in matching funds for a CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Open Space Grant. With Gateway's contribution, community donations, and the \$104,000 state award, 7.2 acres of land connecting to the existing preserve was acquired. Together these lands protect critical habitat above Post and Pratt Coves.

## Other ways the Gateway can help

The Connecticut River Gateway Commission provides a variety of planning and zoning services, as well as design recommendations, to protect the scenic and ecological integrity of the Conservation Zone in partnership with the eight-town region.

### Planning & Zoning Assistance

Gateway Commission staff and town appointees meet with local planning and zoning commissions at their request to provide guidance and suggestions.

- Discuss regulations and design concepts with local planning and zoning commissions related to the visible river landscape.
- Assist land use staff with local application processes and the interpretation of Commission standards.
- Advise property owners, and their architects and engineers, on development strategies to

meet their desired goals while respecting the natural and scenic Zone environment.

### Ecological & Recreation

- Develop design standards to protect and enhance the Zone's riverside landscape.
- Identify means to balance development and conserve scenic views as seen by the public.
- Share information with landowners and towns on how best to protect lands and waters within the Zone.

For more information, visit the Connecticut River Gateway Commission website: [ctrivergateway.org](http://ctrivergateway.org).



### Connecticut River Gateway Commission

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## Ways to get involved

- **Create screened or filtered property views.** Limb up trees rather than remove them. This helps retain your privacy as well, stabilize soils, and preserve the area's rural character.
- **Keep natural vegetation if possible.** Maintain a buffer of shrubs and plants at the water's edge, instead of mowed lawns, to help reduce erosion, stabilize streambanks and slow rain runoff.
- **Reduce property fertilizer and pesticide use.** Our streams, the river, and ponds can be contaminated by these nutrients and chemicals so please reduce their use on your property, especially near water.
- **Explore if land protection is possible.** Conserving your land has many financial and family benefits. You can continue to own your land, or sell, gift, or bequeath your property.

Contact your local land trust, visit the Connecticut Land Conservation Council's website, and check out more options on the CT River Gateway Commission website [ctrivergateway.org](http://ctrivergateway.org).