

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of January 9, 2017 at 7:00 pm
Meeting Room #3, Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

These Minutes are Subject to Approval by the Conservation Commission

Present: Jim Ryan, Tom Philbrick, Cindy Joyce, Karlyn Sturmer, Chris Smith, Holly Kocet

Also Present: Mary Wilson and Dotty Evans, High Meadow Study Group

Absent: Mark Boland

Staff: Robert Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning & Land Use, Dawn Fried, Clerk

Mr. Ryan opened the meeting at 7:02 pm.

Mr. Ryan welcomed Ms. Kocet to the Conservation Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR December 12, 2016

Change "Ms. Sturmer requested a motion to appoint Holly Kocet" to "Ms. Sturmer made a motion to nominate Holly Kocet". Mr. Ryan motioned to approve the amended minutes from December 12, 2016. Mr. Philbrick seconded. All in favor. The minutes from December 12, 2016 were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Sibley spoke about his attendance at an Eagle Scout presentation regarding a Halfway River project which included Eagle Scout, Zach DeMeglio. Mr. DeMeglio created a trail and will build and install a kiosk in the spring. Mr. Ryan suggested that when Mr. DeMeglio completes his project he would like to invite him to a CC meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

Stone Bridge Contractor Selection

The Commission had a lengthy discussion on the Stone Bridge project. Mr. Ryan and Mr. Sibley explained the bidding process to the Commission. Due to the terminology of the "Invitation to Bid" proposal and the fact that Don Moon Logging was the highest bidder, the Finance Department determined Don Moon Logging be awarded the harvest contract. Mr. Sibley explained the difference between a "Quote" and a "Bid". Mr. Ryan read a letter for the record from Jeremy Clark, Clark Forestry Services. Mr. Clark recommended Don Moon Logging (document attached). Mr. Ryan made a motion to

Mr. Ryan made a motion to select Don Moon Logging to complete work as stated on the Clark Forestry Services Bid Response Form for Standing Timber dated November 18, 2016. Ms. Sturmer seconded. All in favor.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission – Mr. Ryan stated the SHPMC is moving along with SAC field and the survey will be done next week.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

High Meadow Study Group

Ms. Wilson and Ms. Evans updated the Commissioners on the progress of the High Meadow Study Group. They distributed and reviewed a document addressed to "The Newtown Conservation Commission, dated January 6, 2017 regarding High Meadow Restoration Update" (document attached). Ms. Wilson explained to the Commission that she and Holly Kocet met with George Benson on December 12, 2016, "to explore the possibility of developing the site near the trails." Mr. Benson requested letters from three experts agreeing with this suggestion. Ms. Wilson will reschedule a meeting with Mr. Benson after the letters are completed and after Mr. Benson has had an opportunity to speak with the First Selectmen, Pat Llodra, on this matter.

Ms. Wilson and Ms. Evans explained to the Commission the benefits of changing the location to this more preferable 6-acre parcel. Some of the benefits are being closer in proximity to the public, better area for pollinators, better area for bird study and does not have hard edges for predators. Other benefits are listed in attached report.

Mr. Ryan suggested discussing costs and budget items at the next CC meeting. Hoping to have an answer by then regarding the switching of "Site A" to "Site B".

Ms. Wilson, Ms. Evans and the Commission continued to have a discussion on the remaining contents of the report regarding mowing, education, seeding, wildlife opportunities, public awareness, signage and publicity.

Mr. Ryan thanked Ms. Wilson and Ms. Evans for attending the meeting.

Stone Bridge Management

Mr. Ryan will invite Jeremy Clark to the next CC meeting on January 24, 2017 to discuss the next steps.

Web Page

Ms. Joyce presented a draft outline of the web page. She would like feedback from the Commission by the next CC meeting on January 24th so she can start posting on the website. The Commission discussed the outline and agreed information should be posted about the Stone Bridge project before the trees are cut.

Mr. Sibley discussed that one of the goals for the Conservation website is that it should be coordinated with the current Newtown website. For instance the Mission Statements should be the same. Also, Mr. Sibley suggested confirming that the links on the CC website are legitimate organizations.

Misc.

Mr. Sibley gave an overview of the Board of Selectman's decision to amend their Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) process regarding the Proproski conservation easement. Mr. Sibley explained that there is \$250,000 in the CIP budget every year.

Mr. Ryan suggested to the Commissioners that if they want anything added to the agenda to email him a few days prior to the meeting.

Ms. Kocet asked about the Native Plant Policy mentioned on the agenda. Mr. Ryan explained that "Tracking Topics" are items that the Commission would like to stay apprised on and are Commission priorities. Ms. Sturmer explained the history of the Native Plant Policy and a draft that was started because of the concerns of the Fruit Trail.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Philbrick motioned to adjourn the CC meeting. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Fried, Clerk

James Ryan

From: Jeremy Clark <jeremyclark755@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 09, 2017 10:03 AM
To: James Ryan
Subject: RE: Stone Bridge Harvest Project

Hi Jim,

Pleasure speaking with you this morning.

As we discussed, the Finance department has determined that the high bidder, Don Moon of Don Moon Logging, LLC, will be awarded the harvest contract for the Stone Bridge Property.

I believe this will work out just fine and that Don is capable of completing the project per work requirements included within the inherent Forest products sale agreement. Pending weather and ground conditions on the site, he may even be able to start the job sooner than J&J Log and Lumber company.

Don has worked on numerous jobs for the CT DEEP Division of Forestry and MDC water company. Although he is a one man crew, he has fully mechanized equipment that will complete the work in a desired manner and timeframe.

Once the work has begun, I will be visiting the property as time allows and have at least two other foresters that I will sub-contract to visit the site at least once a week, and more often if necessary to ensure compliance with harvest contract.

Please contact me should you or any of the Commissioners have any questions.

Thank you and happy new year to you all!

Best,

Jeremy Clark
CT Forester #F-0993
CT NRCS TSP #13-9073

Clark Forestry Services
PO Box 2243
Middletown, CT 06457
860-834-2151

On Dec 30, 2016 10:30 AM, "James Ryan" <jar30@earthlink.net> wrote:

Thank you.

CC mtg.
1/9/17
DJ

January 6, 2017

To: The Newtown Conservation Commission

From: Mary Wilson, Chairman, Study Group for High Meadow Restoration

Re: Update

This is to bring you up-do-date on progress of the Study Group for the High Meadow Restoration Project.

To date we have met with and walked the site with the following meadow experts:

- October 21, 2016, **Peter Picone** (Wildlife Biologist, Habitat Management, DEEP)
- November 4, 2016, **Leslie Kane** (Bent of the River Audubon)
- December 2, 2016, **Patrick Comins**, (Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon) and **Leslie Kane** (Bent of the River Audubon)
- December 6, 2016, **Mary Ellen LeMay**, (Fairfield County Regional Conservation Coordinator).
- December 21, 2016, a second walk with **Peter Picone** (Wildlife Biologist, Habitat Management, DEEP)

After these meetings it became evident to us that a better plan could be developed by focusing on improved habitat along the trail. Map of proposed area is attached. This change developed from our evaluation of the maps and conversations with the above experts. Our thoughts involve the following points:

- 1) Recognition that the HM is part of a larger significant bird habitat stretching across Wasserman Way through Governor's Field and the fields owned by the state and the town along Deep Brook and up to Queen Street.
- 2) The five-acre parcel as originally proposed is part of this continuous swath of bird and wildlife habitat. As such, we would like to see it, and the entire meadow, managed with a mowing schedule which is amenable to nesting birds and also which will allow for the greatest number of native grasses and forbs to develop. A mowing in mid-August or later is strongly advised.
- 3) Seeding of the area designated on the map along the trails has a number benefits:
 - a. Increased diversity of plant life will benefit bees, butterflies, beneficial insects, birds and other wildlife whose natural habitats are disappearing due to development, succession and fragmentation.
 - b. This increase in diversity of both plant and animal species will support a healthier and more sustainable ecosystem.

CC mtg.
1/9/17
07

- c. Trail walkers/joggers will enjoy the beauty of a wildflower meadow with 3-season bloom and butterfly activity near the main trail.
- d. Such a meadow will also be visible from the Fairfield Hills campus including the Municipal Center, the Newtown Youth Academy, parking areas and at baseball games by spectators.
- e. Visitors would not benefit from a pollinator habitat on the original five-acre parcel because the area is only partly visible from the main trail.
- f. Interactions with the public can be encouraged through signage, publicity and resident involvement (i.e. Boy scouts, volunteers, etc.).
- g. Although different in selected plantings, such a meadow is consistent with some goals of the Fruit Trail, already established on the West Meadow.
- h. Not taking the offer by the State (Truax and personnel) would be a lost opportunity that may not be on the table in the future.
- i. Frequent visits to the site will be done to track changes in vegetation and also bird sightings which will be tracked using Ebirds.org.

Having made this change in our goals, Holly and I met with George Benson on December 12 to explore the possibility of developing the site near the trails. George agreed that the plan has merits and will speak to Pat Llodra about it. He will also speak to the farmer about a revised mowing schedule.

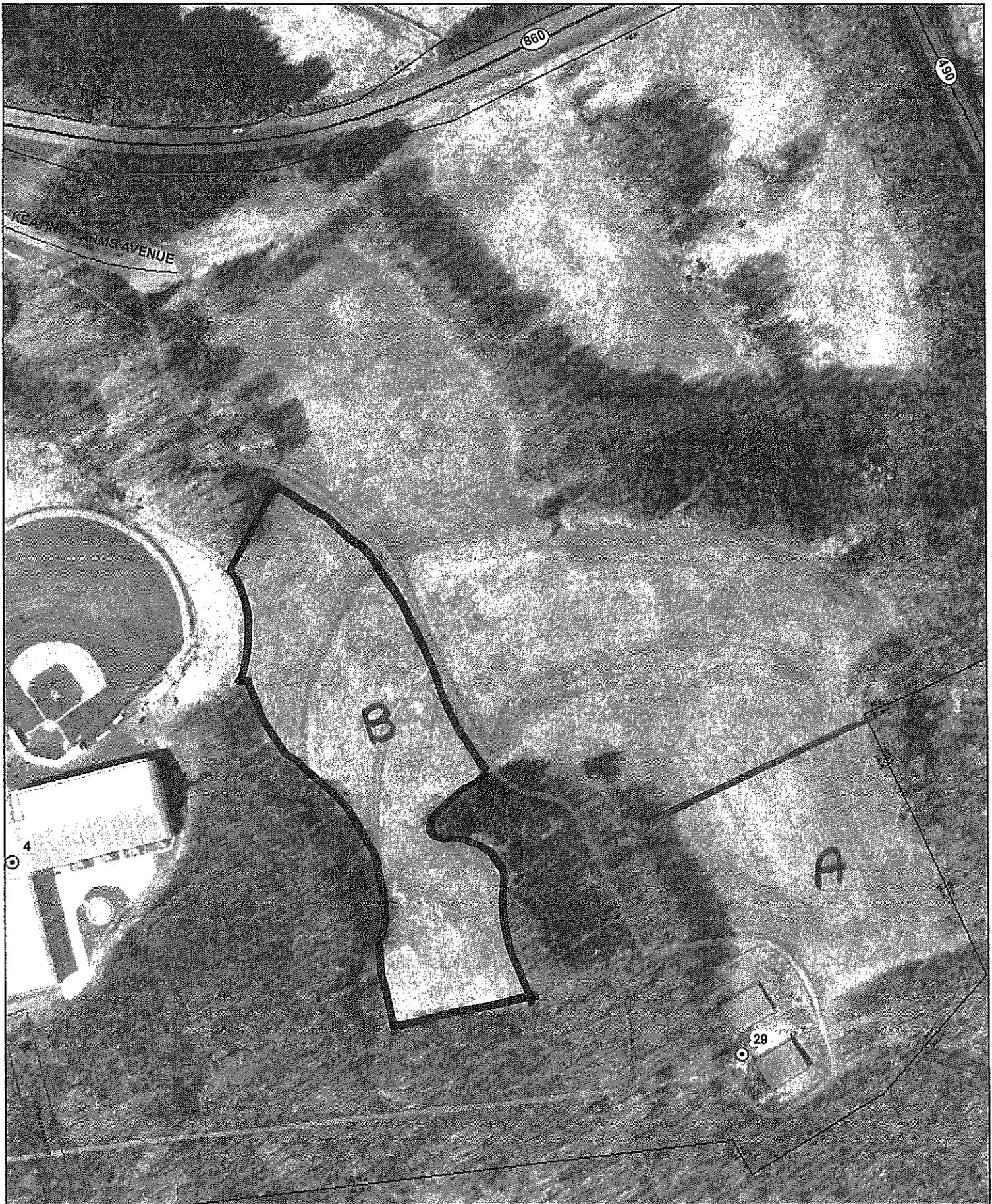
George Benson requested that we obtain letters from several of the experts who walked the site to affirm our new plan. That is in process.

As for having a plan in place by the January 9 meeting of the CC, I doubt that we will be ready at that point due to changes in direction and the intervening holidays. We will be happy to attend that meeting however and update the CC on our progress and get feedback from the commissioners. I think that by the following meeting we should have a final plan to present.

We understand that there was discussion at the recent CC meeting about an evaluative process for the project. Our plans were to document bird sightings regularly, (using Ebirds.org).I and to note changes in plant life less frequently. If something more than that is required, we need to know your thoughts. From the experts we have consulted, a scientific study is not usually part of a meadow development plan which is considered to be applied science. But as always, we welcome your thoughts and questions.

We think it would be valuable for all commissioners to walk the site and we are happy to be available for such walks. Please feel free to contact me, 203-417-1109, or email, mhgwilson@sbcglobal.net, at any point.

Mary Wilson



TOWN OF NEWTOWN, CT
GIS GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Data shown on this map were derived from a variety of sources at different scales. This is not a survey and no field verification was performed. This map shall not be used for the transfer of property. Please review the Town of Newtown access policy if you have any questions. By viewing, copying, or otherwise using this map you agree to follow the terms of use. If you feel that you cannot follow this policy contact the GIS Technician for the Town of Newtown.

0 135 270 540
Foot





Grasslands: Connecticut's Most Threatened Habitat

Grasslands are among the most threatened and rare habitats in Connecticut. As a result, nine species of songbirds and four species of raptors that make use of grasslands as their primary breeding habitat are listed as threatened, endangered, or of special concern in the state. Increasing development pressures on two of Connecticut's most important grassland habitats—Rentschler Field in East Hartford and Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks—exacerbates this situation.

Grasslands have been a part of the natural landscape of Connecticut for thousands of years. Prior to colonial settlement, as much as 20% of the state was grassland habitat. However, changes in agricultural land use and the simultaneous increase in urbanization in some areas and reforestation in other areas of the state have taken a toll on grassland habitats and the species that depend upon them. Today there is less grassland habitat in Connecticut than at any other time in history, threatening further species loss and reducing Connecticut's biodiversity. This is consistent with a nationwide decrease in grassland habitat.

Managing for grassland species is challenging. Many grassland species have strict and differing habitat and area requirements. Contiguous habitat blocks of 200 acres or greater are required for some to nest successfully. Additionally, grasslands require maintenance to prevent natural succession from rendering them unsuitable for species that require this habitat. To combat the decline in grassland habitats Audubon CT is working with farmers, land trusts, and state and municipal land owners to protect and expand shrub and grassland areas across Connecticut.

Owners and managers of grasslands need assistance to manage them effectively. Audubon CT's Bent of the River sanctuary, which features extensive old field habitat, is an important testing ground for shrub and field management techniques, identifying best practices that other land owners can implement on their own properties. By modeling best practices in habitat management, Audubon is creating a blueprint for the effective, long-term stewardship of these unique habitats and the birds and other wildlife that depend on them.

Grassland Birds

Bobolink **

Savannah Sparrow **

Grasshopper Sparrow * **

Eastern Meadowlark **

Upland Sandpiper * **

Horned Lark *

Sedge Wren *

* Indicates birds that are at highest risk in CT due to lack of availability of needed large grassland habitat for breeding.

** Vulnerable to haying practices during nesting/fledging developmental stages.

Pollinator Populations Are Significantly in Decline

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/pollinators-un-report-1.3465373>

Bees, butterflies and other pollinators face extinction: UN

Climate change, pesticide use and modern farming techniques to blame for rapid population decline



Butterflies and other pollinating critters are at risk of extinction, says a United Nations mega-report.

“Many species of wild bees, butterflies and other critters that pollinate plants are shrinking toward extinction, and the world needs to do something about it before our **food supply suffers**, a new United Nations scientific mega-report warns.”

“**Wild pollinators especially do well on grasslands**, which are usually more than just grass, and 97 per cent of Europe's grasslands have disappeared since the Second World War, Potts said.”

For Connecticut information:

From DEEP

http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&Q=567260&deepNav_GID=1655#bees

“In 2016, Public Act 16-17 was passed restricting the use of pesticides that cause serious harm to bees and other pollinators. It reduces the spraying of neonicotinoid pesticides, establishes a program to develop model pollinator habitat, and helps identify opportunities to conserve, protect, and enhance pollinator habitat.”

From Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station

<http://www.ct.gov/caes/cwp/view.asp?a=2826&q=578322&caesNav=|>

“Important losses in species diversity of bumble bees have been documented here in Connecticut, across North America, and around the world. In Connecticut, two bumble bee species are considered likely to have been extirpated from the state and another is considered threatened, according to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Because other species of bees have not been as intensively monitored, their current status is unknown.”

RECOMMENDED WILDFLOWER/GRASS MIX

HIGH MEADOW RESTORATION PROJECT - January 1, 2017

Common Name	Botanical Name	Category	Flower Color	Bloom	Soil Type	Light req.	Foliage	Height	Wildlife Benefit	Deer Resist.	Native to CT
Wingstem (Crownbeard) (Yellow Ironweed)	Verbesina alternifolia	Perennial	Yellow	Aug - Sept	Moist	Sun -Part Sun	Alternate & simply toothed Bitter taste	3 - 8'	Bumble bees Other Native bees Honeybees Seeds for Birds	Yes	Friendly neighbor
Partridge Pea (Sensitive Pea)	Chamaecrista fasciculata	Annual	Yellow	Summer	Dry - Moist Well-drained Adaptable	Sun -Part Sun	Leaflets fold in when touched	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Halictid bees Halictid bees Honeybees Butterflies Larval host plant Flies, wasps Seeds to songbirds & gamebirds	Yes	Yes
Ohio Spiderwort (Smooth spiderwort)	Tradescantia ohiensis	Perennial	Blue, Purple	May - July	Well-drained Rich, Moist Average Adaptable	Part Sun	Grass-like	1 -3'	Bumble bees Halictid bees Syrphid flies Butterflies Other pollinators Mammals Box turtles Cottontail Rabbit	No	Yes
Anise (Lavender) Hyssop	Agastache foeniculum	Perennial	Purple	Late summer	Well-drained Rich, Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Anise scent	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Digger bees Halictid bees Leaf-cutting bees Masked bees Honeybees Butterflies Skippers, Moths Syrphid & bee flies Hummingbirds	Yes	Yes

Common Name	Botanical Name	Category	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Soil Conditions	Light Req.	Foliage	Height	Wildlife Benefit	Deer Resist.	Native to CT
Common Milkweed	Asclepias syriaca	Perennial	Pink	Summer	Moist, Dry	Full Sun	Large & thick Reddish-veined light green color	4 - 6'	Monarch butterfly & larval host plant Butterflies Skippers, Moths Short-tongued bees Long-tongued bees Plant bugs, Flies Predatory Wasps	Yes	Yes
Blue False Indigo	Baptisia australis	Perennial	Blue	June - July	Well-drained Rich, Dry Average Adaptable Very drought tolerant	Full Sun	Bluish-green leaflets	4 - 6'	Bumble bees Butterflies Other pollinators	Yes	Yes
Lance-leaved Tickseed (Lanceleaf Coreopsis)	Coreopsis lanceolata	Perennial	Yellow	Late spring - early summer	Well-drained Sandy, Dry Average Adaptable Drought resistant	Full Sun	Lance-shaped Pinnately lobed	1 - 3'	Butterflies Other pollinators	Yes	Yes
Boneset (Common Boneset)	Eupatorium perfoliatum	Perennial	White	Late summer	Wet, Rich, Moist Average Adaptable	Full -Part Sun Part Shade	Lance-shaped Medium green	1 - 3'	Butterflies Other pollinators Birds	Yes	Yes
Wild Bergamot (Bee Balm)	Monarda fistulosa	Perennial	Lavender	May - July	Well-drained Rich, Dry Average Adaptable	Full -Part Sun	Fragrant Toothed & oblong Grayish-green color	1 - 3'	Butterflies Other pollinators Birds	Yes	Yes
Little Bluestem 'Camper'	Schizachyrium scoparium	Grass	Purplish- bronze to silvery-white	Fall	Well-drained Dry	Full Sun	Blue-tinged base Bronze-orange in fall	1 - 3'	Seeds for songbirds & gamebirds Cover protection	Yes	Yes

Common Name	Botanical Name	Category	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Soil Conditions	Light Req.	Foliage	Height	Wildlife Benefit	Deer Resist.	Native to CT
Showy Goldenrod	Solidago speciosa	Perennial	Yellow	June -October	Well-drained Dry, Average Adaptable Drought tolerant	Full Sun	Narrow-leaved	1 - 3'	Butterflies Other pollinators Birds Seeds for Goldfinch	Yes	Yes
New England Aster	Symphoricarum novae-angliae (Aster n.a.)	Perennial	Purple	Late summer- Fall	Wet, Well-drained Rich, Moist Average Adaptable Drought tolerant	Full Sun	Rough & hairy Lance-shaped	4 - 6'	Bumble bees Honeybees Miner bees Leaf-cutter bees Short tongued bees Long tongued bees Bee & syrphid flies Butterflies, skippers Migrant Monarchs Moth larval host Seeds for turkey	Yes	Yes
Narrow-leaved Mountain Mint (Slender M. Mint)	Pycnanthemum tenuifolium	Perennial	White	Summer	Well-drained Rich, Moist, Dry Average Adaptable	Full -Part Sun	Fragrant Needle-like	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Honeybees Butterflies Other pollinators Seeds for wildlife	Yes	Yes
Blazing Star (Marsh/Dense B. Star) (Spiked Gayfeather)	Liatris spicata	Perennial	White, Purple	June - July	Wet, Well-drained Rich, Moist Average Adaptable Drought tolerant	Full Sun	Narrow & grass-like Medium green color	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Butterflies Other pollinators Hummingbirds Seeds for birds	No	Yes
Purple Coneflower	Echinacea purpurea	Perennial	Pink	Summer	Well-drained Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Ovate to broad- lanceolate Dark green color	2-5'	Butterflies Other pollinators Birds Seeds for Goldfinch	No	Yes

RECOMMENDED WARM SEASON GRASS MIX

Common Name	Botanical Name	Category	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Soil Conditions	Light Req.	Foliage	Height	Wildlife Benefit	Deer Resist.	Native to CT
Switch Grass 'Cave-In-Rock' (Tall Panic Grass)	Panicum virgatum	Grass	Pink-tinged panicles	Summer	Sandy, Moist - dry Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Medium green Yellow w/orange tint in fall	4 - 6'	Birds	Yes	Yes
Big Bluestem 'Southlow'	Andropogon gerardii	Grass	Purplish-red clusters	Summer	Well-drained Dry, Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Red-tinged turns orange-yellow in fall & bronze after first frost	4 - 8'	Birds Mammals	Yes	Yes
Indian Grass	Sorghastrum nutans	Grass	Brown panicles highlighted w/ yellow stamens	Summer - Fall	Well-drained Dry, Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Blue-green turns orange-yellow in fall	4 - 6'	Birds	Yes	Yes
Oats, Common Oat	Avena sativa	Annual	Yellow	Late spring	Adaptable	Sun	Winter interest	2'		Yes	Yes
Little Bluestem 'Camper'	Schizachrium scoparium	Grass	Purplish-bronze to silvery-white	Fall	Well-drained Dry	Full Sun	Blue-tinged base Bronze-orange in fall	1 - 3'	Seeds for songbirds & gamebirds Cover protection	Yes	Yes

Grassland Birds Calendar

A chart designed to convey seasonal migratory and nesting patterns for common grassland birds.

Color Chart:

- Absent from CT grasslands
- Migration*
- Present/Overwintering**
- Nesting/Fledge

Month:	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Species:					HARVEST RISK							
Bobolink												
Grasshopper Sparrow												
Savannah Sparrow												
Upland Sand Piper												
Eastern Meadowlark												
Horned Lark												

*Migration- The period in which the birds begin to arrive in early spring or depart in late summer from CT grasslands. **Are capable of flight.**

Nesting- The period in which a bird gathers and builds a nest to the birth and first flight of its offspring. **Vulnerable to haying.**

Fledge- The period in which it takes a hatching to develop proper flight feathers. **Vulnerable to haying.**

Overwintering- To remain present in a certain area during the winter months. **Are capable of flight