

Restore bonding for Connecticut's Recreational Trails & Greenways Program

The CT Recreational Trails & Greenways Program has put \$7 million since 2016 into 41 municipal and nonprofit grants and multiple State Park and Forest projects in more than half of all communities across the state.

However, bonding must be restored or DEEP will have no more matching grants available for creating, improving, or maintaining recreational trails.

There is still significant need for these grants, with a large remaining backlog of requests. More than \$9.4 million in funding requests could not be granted in the last grants round, including more than \$1.7 million in shovel-ready, highly-ranked project proposals.

Why is restoring bonding so important?

- Recreational trails are one of the best ways that bond funds can be invested. Recreational trails for hiking, running, biking, equestrian, and other uses attract and sustain families and businesses, create healthy communities, and foster a high quality of life.
- In Connecticut, outdoor recreation generates \$6.9 billion in consumer spending, \$2.2 billion in wages and salaries in the private sector, \$502 million in state and local tax revenues, and supports 71,000 Connecticut jobs and much of this outdoor recreation is associated with using trails.
- Connecticut's recently updated State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) commissioned statewide surveys that ranked recreational trails at the very top of community assets and needs for the future.
- If restored, this bonding would be the *only* source of funding available in 2018 that could be invested in a wide variety of recreational trail projects around the state. Crucially, these funds can go where federal dollars cannot – such as planning, design, and smaller but critical connections to various state trails networks.

To ensure Connecticut will remain a trails leader, this important and economically significant investment in Connecticut's quality of life must be renewed in 2018. We recommend a bond authorization of \$7 million for 2018-19.

For questions or a list of funded projects, contact Eric Hammerling at the Connecticut Forest & Park Association via ehammerling@ctwoodlands.org or 860/346-TREE.