



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

January 4, 2023

4:30 P.M.

Virtual Meeting Format Only

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

1. Adoption of October 12, 2022 Minutes
2. Native Plant Policy for Municipal Landscapes
3. Recommended Mowing Practices in Simsbury Open Spaces
4. Trap Rock Ridge Enabling Legislation
5. Dark Skies

Open Space Committee
Wednesday, October 12, 2022
4:30 PM- Simsbury Town Hall
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

PRESENT: Wendy Mackstutis, Margery Winters, Kelly Kearney, Karen Cordner, and Susan Masino

ALSO PRESENT: Tom Tyburski, Director of Parks and Recreation, Caitrin Huysman, Recreation Coordinator, were also in attendance.

Absent: Anne Erickson, Erin Leavitt-Smith

Call to Order

Ms. Mackstutis called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM

1. Public Audience

2. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Cordner made a motion to amend the June 1, 2022 minutes to reflect a spelling correction of “grand” changed to “grant” and to approve the same. Ms. Winters seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

3. 2023 Regular Meeting Schedule

Mr. Tyburski shared that the big change to the meeting schedule is that the full Committee will meet just four times a year and the work group will meet the remaining months.

4. Co-Branding Opportunity with Hometown National Park

Ms. Masino shared that they wanted to put some information about Hometown National Park on the Open Space website. Simsbury has all these natural and historic resources as does the Farmington Valley, she stated that she wrote to them but they were a little bit touchy about their branding. They came up with this co-branding idea, could put their logo on our website and say we are aligned with their principles. They are excited about this because they feel like this is something other towns would adopt. Ms. Masino stated they wouldn't be committing to anything specific, it would just be saying we are aligned with these principles. Ms. Mackstutis stated it may be good to have the Town Manager's Office create a resolution on this. Mr. Kearney recommended that it be simplified on the website so it is easy to understand.

5. Trap Rock Ridge Enabling Legislation

Ms. Masino stated she has been pulling together what the special things are about Simsbury and finding documents to put on the Open Space website. She stated the Trap Rock Ridge are the mountains on either side of the valley, it is very special feature of Connecticut. Simsbury has more than any other Town. Onion Mountain is the only Trap Rock Ridge in the State that doesn't have a trail along the spine and there are all kinds of special stuff that grows in this habitat. Years ago, the State adopted enabling legislation which provided towns the opportunity to protect the top of their trap rock ridges, Simsbury hasn't adopted it yet. Ms. Masino will send everyone a link to the enabling legislation. Ms. Mackstutis asked who would be responsible for

permitting us to be part of this. Ms. Winters stated it would be Conservation and Planning and Zoning.

6. Status of Open Space Template Format and Topics

Ms. Masino shared that CT Bear Coalition is working on an update which we could adopt. The topic of light pollution/the dark sky initiative was discussed. She shared that it has wild life impacts, major health impacts and using more energy than we need to. Mr. Tyburski stated that these topics would be part of the toolbox on the website. He stated that the Board of Selectmen did approve that Open Space could have their own social media page so they will be working behind the scenes next week on this. Ms. Masino suggested creating a rotating list of photos for the social media page.

7. Schultz Park- Arboretum Status

Ms. Masino stated that she thinks they have a full blown Arboretum in Schultz but they just aren't advertising it. There is a map of the trees in the ceiling of the gazebo. Mr. Tyburski stated they recently painted the gazebo so it needs to be re-installed. Mr. Tyburski clarified that an arboretum is basically a tree museum, when that park was designed each tree was given a placard about it.

Ms. Mackstutis asked if they just declare it is an Arboretum or if they should officially do something. Ms. Masino stated that she needs to check out the map of the tree species to verify. She stated that they could just say it without doing anything else or they could have it accredited which they would need 25 species to submit that application. She stated that there are only 16 arboretums in CT and only 7 are accredited.

Ms. Corder asked what the process is when they see a potential property for the Town to acquire. Mr. Tyburski stated that there is a criteria for open space acquisition on the website which was approved last year. He stated it is usually the land owner who approaches the Town, the biggest things they are looking at right now is if it is connected to another open space parcel. Ms. Mackstutis stated that there is a budget process usually executive session at a Board of Selectmen meeting.

ADJOURN

Ms. Corder made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Masino. All voted in favor. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 5:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Taylor
Committee Clerk



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET ~ SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

TOWN OF SIMSBURY

Native Plant Policy for Municipal Landscapes

Culture, Parks and Recreation Departmental Procedure adopted on Month, Day, Year

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish minimum standards for the use of native plants in the Town of Simsbury for municipal properties. A native plant is defined as one that lives or grows naturally in a particular region without direct or indirect human intervention. It is part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds of thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem, (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service). For a tree, shrub, herbaceous perennial or ornamental grass to be considered native to our region, it must be indigenous to the Northeast. The Town recognizes the necessity to maximize the use of native vegetation to protect and restore natural habitats and a healthy ecosystem.

2. Effective Date

This policy shall be effective immediately and shall remain in effect until revised or rescinded.

3. Definitions

- A. Straight species or wild-type native plant** is a plant that occurs naturally in a particular region. It has not been cultivated by human intervention. These plants have co-evolved over time to develop complex and essential relationships with pollinators, birds, and other wildlife species in a given ecological community. Every effort should be made to use straight species of native plants that are local ecotypes.

Non-native plants, also called exotic or alien plants, are not naturally found in our local area. Many are imported from similar climates in Europe and Asia. They have been introduced by human intervention (intentionally or accidentally) and include agricultural crops, ornamental plants, naturalized plants (including invasive species). A naturalized plant thrives without human intervention but can never be considered “native” since it has not evolved to provide the same benefit here as it would in its own country of origin.

While many non-native plants are benign for aggressive spread, they dominate our landscapes. As development increasingly encroaches on our wild places, our native flora is being replaced by exotic plants and lawns. Loss of native flora threatens healthy ecosystems, a balance essential for all life including our own.

- B. Invasive plants** are non-native plants recorded on the CT Invasive Plant List. The list includes plants prohibited by state statute, plants having potential for invasive spread, and invasive species with cultivars yet to be evaluated for invasive characteristics. Invasive plants are able to establish on many sites, grow quickly, and spread to the point of disrupting plant communities or ecosystems.

- C. Native cultivars or nativars** can be hybrids, (products of two or more plants intentionally selected by breeders and crossed to create certain traits), or they may be clonally-produced copies of one particular wild-type plant. While these are technically the same species as wild-types, they may represent only a fraction of the natural diversity of the species.

When plants are selectively bred for a particular trait(s), (changing flower or foliage color, weeping form or creating double flowers), the result is often cultivars that have lost what made them attractive to important pollinators and beneficial insects and may even lack the nutrition needed to sustain them.

4. INTENT

It is the intent of this policy is to maximize the use of appropriate native plants on municipal properties to help mitigate the effects of habitat loss and fragmentation from development and the proliferation of non-native/exotic plantings in our town landscapes. Native plants are important for maintaining healthy ecosystems. In observing this policy, we acknowledge that:

- A.** The native plant policy is consistent with the 2017 Simsbury Plan of Conservation and Development.
- B.** Native wildlife has coevolved with native plants which are essential to the health of our local ecosystems.
- C.** Native plants are critical for the life cycles of many native insects which are the base of the local food web.
- D.** Native plants are critical to the health and survival of native pollinators and songbirds.
- E.** All native plants must be protected to preserve the genetic diversity that evolved in our region.
- F.** Use of native plants in developed landscapes will help create pathways between our developed landscapes and open space areas
- G.** Native plants promote healthy watersheds by filtering pollutants, stabilizing banks and providing food for macroinvertebrates that in turn feed fish and other aquatic species.
- H.** In addition to being adapted to our environmental conditions, native plants contribute to a “sense of place” and connect us to our land's heritage.
- I.** We must educate residents on native plants and their importance to native pollinators and other wildlife in our ecosystem.
- J.** We have a responsibility to future generations to support, maintain, and improve our natural environment.

5. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

This policy will be a minimum standard and will apply to all new plantings of trees, shrubs and other plants planted on municipal properties. It also applies to seeds used in place of plants. The policy applies to any replacement plantings, including but not limited to trees, shrubs, and perennials felled by storms, disease, redevelopment/expansion, or other reasons.

A. Trees

Due to the high wildlife value of native trees, 100% of new and replacement tree plantings on municipal properties will be native to the Northeast. Many trees, when not harmed by storms, disease, injuries from equipment, etc., can live for hundreds of years. They should be considered permanent parts of a landscape. Many native trees support hundreds of insects and the birds and wildlife species that consume those insects. Non-native trees do not support this diversity.

B. Shrubs

New and replacement shrubs will be a minimum of 85% native for municipal properties. There are a great variety of native shrubs to fit all growing conditions and aesthetic desires. Every effort should be made to select native shrubs. Native shrubs also support a high number of insects and many produce berries or other fruit that are important fall and winter food for birds.

C. Grasses

New and replacement grass plantings will be 100% native for municipal properties. Due to the large number of seeds grasses produce and potential to spread by wind, only native grasses may be planted. Some ornamental non-native grasses that were commonly planted are believed to be detrimental to our ecosystems. Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*). for example, is an emerging invasive threat in some areas.

D. Groundcovers

New and replacement plants intended as groundcovers will be 100% native for municipal properties. These low-growing plants spread quickly and form a dense cover.

E. Herbaceous Perennials

New and replacement herbaceous perennials will be a minimum of 75% native for municipal properties. There are a great variety of native perennials to fit all growing conditions and aesthetic desires. Every effort should be made to select native perennials. Every effort should be made to select and plant straight-species of native plants that are local ecotypes.

Care should be taken to source plants and seeds that have not been treated with neonicotinoids. These pesticides are deadly to pollinators.

There are native trees and plants for every site condition. The Connecticut Native Plant and Sustainable Landscaping Guide <https://nofa.organiclandcare.net/connecticut-native-plant-and-sustainable-landscaping-guide/> provides a list of suitable plants. Other planting suggestions for Connecticut may be found on these websites: [National Wildlife Federation Native Plant Finder](https://www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder/), <https://www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder/>; Native Plant list for CT at <https://www.plantnative.org/rpl-nes.htm>. These and other such sites contain comprehensive lists of native plants for different uses and includes resources and more information on native plants.

EXCEPTIONS

This policy does not apply to plants grown for food, lawns, green roofs, or other applications that have a clear reason to use non-native plants. This policy does not apply to annual plants since they complete their life cycle within one growing season. Existing trees and other plants will remain unaffected by this policy. For any trees or plants replaced for damage or any other reason, replacements must be native species as specified in policy requirements. Existing Invasive tree species on the CT Invasive Plant List will require a plan for removal.



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET ~ SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

TOWN OF SIMSBURY

Recommended Mowing Practices in Simsbury Open Spaces

Culture, Parks and Recreation Departmental Procedure adopted on Month, Day, Year

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish recommended mowing practices for Simsbury Open Spaces. This policy is for open space parcels only and is not intended for Simsbury parks and athletic fields.

2. Effective Date

This policy shall be effective immediately and shall remain in effect until revised or rescinded.

3. Grassland Bird Habitat Recommendations

It is recommended that larger (non-athletic) fields in Town be designated for grassland bird habitat. Large fields are important because these birds will regularly nest away from “edges” caused by adjacent forest land, development, roads, tall trees in hedgerows, etc. Generally, fields 20-25 acres square to circular in shape (not long and narrow) provide good habitat for grassland birds. Many grassland birds are “area-sensitive”, meaning they seldom nest in fields smaller than 10 acres, or with a minimum width of less than 600 feet. (See https://www.massaudubon.org/content/download/19413/274073/file/Best-Management-Practices_Grasslands.pdf)

In Simsbury the largest Town-owned field suitable for grassland birds is the Meadowood and Barndoor Hill triangle.

A. Mowing Practices for Grassland Habitat

Annual mowing is necessary to prevent the growth of woody vegetation and to repress the growth of herbaceous, flowering, non-grass vegetation (forbs). Timing of this mowing is critical to the success of nesting birds and to keep the meadow as grass. Several factors can help maximize the successful breeding of grassland birds. Managers can actively enhance grassland bird breeding habitat by following these best practices:

- i. Investigate which grassland birds are present or could potentially occur on parcel.
- ii. Identify grassland bird priorities for fields.
 - a) If several species are present on property, consider if Town wants to actively encourage grassland birds or to simply support those already present.
 - b) Focus management attention on priority species (endangered or threatened species).
- iii. Avoid mowing the meadow during bird nesting season to prevent injury to young nesting ground birds.
 - a) Cease mowing by the end of April and refrain from mowing May 15 – August 15.
 - b) Reduce disturbance during the breeding season
 - c) Use pruners or a string trimmer to address individual weeds during the “nesting” season.

- iv. Remove build-up of shrubs, forbs, or small trees.
 - a) Mow fields every year, either in late winter or early spring before the next year's growth begins. If compacted soils and wet field conditions are a concern in early spring, the final mowing can be done in late fall or early winter. However, a late fall mowing is less preferred than mowing in late winter or early spring as it prematurely removes protective winter habitat and available food for wildlife that might reside in the meadow during the winter months.
 - b) Restoration of abandoned fields may require fall mowing with brushhog.
 - c) Reclaim field edges and enlarge fields where possible
- v. Control invasive plants as much as possible
- vi. Coordinate management practices with neighbors with open fields

4. Pollinator Habitat Recommendations

Smaller, non-forested properties should be managed to support pollinator species. These properties may include edges of recreational fields, road sides, and other underused grass areas.

A. Mowing Practices for Pollinator Habitat

Mowing is necessary to prevent the growth of woody vegetation while encouraging the growth of herbaceous, flowering, non-grass vegetation (forbs). The timing of this mowing is critical to the success of the growth of these forbs.

- i. Mow fields once every two years. So as not to mow all the pollinator fields at once, identify all mowing areas by number. Mow even numbered fields in even years, odd numbered fields in odd years. Larger fields can be divided into sections and mowed alternate years.
- ii. Mow meadows preferably in early spring before the next year's growth begins. If compacted soils and wet field conditions are a concern in early spring, the final mowing can be done in late fall or early winter. However, a late fall mowing is less preferred than mowing in late winter or early spring as it destroys pollinators hibernating in the vegetation and prematurely removes protective winter habitat and available food for wildlife that might reside in the meadow during the winter months.
- iii. In established meadows, a periodic weed/invasive plant inspection and removal will be necessary.
- iv. More detailed management recommendations are provided in the referenced material below.

5. Recruitment of Volunteers

The Open Space Committee shall actively recruit volunteers to assist in the periodic weed/invasive plant inspection and removal.



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE & WORK GROUP

1. **Title of Submission:** Traprock Ridge Legislation Research
2. **Date of Board Meeting:** November 2, 2022
3. **Individual or Entity Making the Submission:**
Franklyn Barrueco, Town Manager Intern
4. **Action Requested:**
No motions are in order.
5. **Summary of Submission:**

After reviewing the Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes from 1994 to 1999, the Simsbury Zoning Regulations, Simsbury Subdivision Regulations, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from 1994 to 2005, Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes from 1994 to 2005 and the Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes from 1994 to 1998, it appears to me that the Town has made no explicit mention concerning PA 95-239 AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTION OF RIDGELINES.

I did not research the B.O.S. Meeting Minutes from 1999 onwards or the Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes from 1998 onwards in the interest of time. Simsbury mentions ridgelines generally, to describe the Town's authority over them. There are multiple times the word "ridgeline" is mentioned in the following documents and it is mostly used to state that they are to be preserved.

The closest mention to this legislation is found in the 2017 POCD, under What We Want to Protect – Maintain And Enhance Community Character, Strategy 7.4 Preserve and enhance the scenic characteristics of Simsbury, Goal B **Ridgelines/Hillsides**, Action Item 1 states that "Simsbury will establish, maintain and enforce regulations to protect hillsides and **ridgelines** and the scenic views to and from these areas" (pg. 52).

In the subdivision regulations, the only times ridgelines mentioned are in Section 3.19 where it states that the purpose of these regulations are to "maintain characters of Town's **ridgelines**" (amended 9/22/87); in Section 6.5 it mentions that the



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

“Commission shall include **ridgelines**” (amended 9/22/87). I don’t remember which Commission it’s referring to. And looking at the 2018 version, Section 9 Subdivision plan requirements; Section O: Additional Plan Requirements mentions **ridgelines**.

The 1998 version of Simsbury’s Zoning Regulations in Article 10: Special Regulations; B: Single Family Open Space Cluster Zone mentions **ridges** (amended July 21, 1997). Lastly, the 1994 POCD mentions **ridgelines** under Open Space & Recreation, Policy 1: Objective B.

In the 2007 POCD, there are multiple references to ridgelines and “trap rock”. Under What we Want to Protect, Natural Resources, Policy 1, Objective D: Protect **trap rock ridges** and steep slopes (grade over 20%) from development (pg.13). Under Policy 8, Objective I: Maintain unfragmented wildlife corridors along the **trap rock ridges** on both the east and west side of town and actively seek to preserve parcels of open space that will provide linkage between these two systems (pg. 19). Under How We Want to Grow, Housing, Policy 3, Objective 1/2: Mentions **ridgelines** are to be unobstructed (pg. 121).

In the 2017 POCD, under What We Want To Protect- Natural Resources, Strategy 5.3, Policy A, Action Item 1 states “Simsbury will protect **trap rock ridges** from development” (pg. 28). Under What We Want to Protect – Open Space, Strategy 6.2, Policy A, Action Item 3 states that “Simsbury will seek to establish “greenway” systems along the **trap rock ridges** on both the east and west side of town” (pg.35).

An interesting find, all the Land Use Commissions met for an Educational Session on January 30, 1996. In this meeting they discussed governing statutes for municipal planning and zoning and state regulations. The reference materials included in this meeting could possibly prove useful for further research regarding this topic.

6. **Financial Impact:**

None

7. **Description of Documents Included with Submission:**

A) [2007 POCD](#)

B) [2017 POCD](#)

THE PROBLEM

Life evolved with light and dark as a strong daily cycle that regulates physiology and behavior of most species, including us. Dark should be the default.

Light pollution is unnecessary or excessive artificial light, particularly poorly designed outdoor lighting.

Light trespass is poorly controlled outdoor lighting that crosses property lines. It is a nuisance that hurts property values and quality of life. It wastes energy.

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) can be a harmful color (too white - above 2700 Kelvin) and **waste energy** whenever they are too bright or not needed.

Human health and safety suffer. Glaring lights can blind and distract drivers, especially in bad weather.

Many species suffer serious negative impacts, including pollinators, bats, birds and more.

Lights should be fully shielded and only installed and used as needed to protect wildlife and people and prevent light pollution and trespass.

Current laws are limited in their application and scope. A much broader approach is needed.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

Enforce Existing Legislation:

Connecticut has existing, poorly enforced legislation (for example, CGS §13a-143d, §§3 and §4, CGS §13a-110a, §4b-16) that limit light trespass from utility floodlights, mandate energy conservation, and limit light installation, pollution and trespass on state roads and properties.

Connecticut's existing legislation must be enforced, reviewed, and strengthened in the face of this rapidly escalating and solvable environmental problem.

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2017/rpt/pdf/2017-R-0258.pdf>



Light pollution and light trespass are both present here in the glare, lack of shielding, stark white color, and spillover of light in all directions and past the property line.

Reducing light pollution has multiple immediate benefits at little to no cost.

It's Time to Pass New Legislation:

State policy and legislation can be a model for all public and private properties.

Lead by example!

Outdoor lighting should:

- 1) be installed and used only ***as needed***, and thereby save money and maximize energy conservation going forward.
- 2) always avoid light pollution and glare, and eliminate light trespass with shielding, timers and motion sensors.
- 3) be limited to 2700K maximum color temperature and low lumens (<1800).

FAST FACTS

- ◆ **Public education is essential.** Public and private entities need clear information on proper light choice and installation to prevent light pollution and trespass. Many do not know that lighting can cause harm.
- ◆ **Timers, dimmers and motion sensors** save wildlife, protect our health and save money and energy. They are underused on public and private property and should be the default.
- ◆ **More light does not prevent crime.** In Chicago, each of the three crime categories experienced an increase in reported incidents between the pre- and post- installation period of alley lighting:

Violent Index offenses (**up** 14%)
Property Index offenses (**up** 20%)
Non-Index offenses (**up** 24%)
- ◆ **Light pollution and light trespass are increasing, and the light spectrum is changing.** This is due to land development and redevelopment, and, as quantified in Europe, LED installations that are too bright and too white.
- ◆ **Human health impacts are well known.** They include poor sleep, and impacts to immune function, cognition, and mental health issues – including in children, who are already struggling.
- ◆ **Wildlife need the dark.** Lighting strongly disrupts navigation, foraging, mating and migration. Light pollution defeats our supportive efforts (*i.e.* pollinator pathway programs).

Unlike many environmental problems, light pollution and trespass are easily reversed and prevented.

- ◆ Several communities in Connecticut have passed ordinances to prevent light pollution. (*Milford, New Haven, Newtown, Stamford*)
- ◆ **International Dark-Sky Association (IDA)** is the recognized authority on light pollution and is the leading organization combating various forms of light pollution worldwide. <https://www.darksky.org>
- ◆ The vision of the International Dark-Sky Association is fundamental and inclusive:

The night sky, filled with stars, is celebrated and protected around the world as a shared heritage benefitting all living things.

Reducing light pollution and light trespass will save money and energy, help our health, and help other species.

FIND OUT MORE:

Contact:

Leo Smith, Northeast Regional Director
International Dark Sky Association
64 Boysenberry Court
Suffield, CT 06078
860-668-6000
leo@smith.net

Susan A. Masino, Ph.D.
Professor of Applied Science,
Trinity College
Science and Technology Working Group,
Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)
Susan.masino@trincoll.edu



HNPark.org