



CT WETLAND IN LIEU FEE PROGRAM

FULL APPLICATION PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDANCE

These instructions were prepared to aid applicants in the completion of their Full Application Proposals for the CT Wetland In Lieu Fee Program.

PART A

Vital project information is requested in Part A and should be self-explanatory. However, the applicant is urged to read the following information that refers to the requested information in Part A of the Application.

Cooperating Entity: The “Cooperating Entity or CE” is the applicant. It is possible to have more than one CE, but their roles in the proposed project should be clearly stated. For instance, one CE may be the landowner, and the other the grantee of a conservation easement. Be sure to include this information with the name’s entered in this section.

Official Project Name: This will become the official name of the project should the project be successfully evaluated and chosen for grant funding. The official name will be used by Audubon and the Army Corps of Engineers and other regulatory stakeholders when referencing the project. It should match the name used in the LOI application and should remain consistent through subsequent stages of the ILF process.

Project Location: There are three pieces of information requested that identifies the physical location of the proposed project. The first is the physical street address of the site. Often, undeveloped rural properties do not have a street address, or the street address is not sufficient to direct a visitor to the parcel’s access point. In that case, other information that would be helpful in finding the property is helpful and thus requested. Therefore, both the Map/Block/Lot Number information and the coordinates of the center of the parcel should be provided along with the physical address. The project location should reference a map figure appended to the application.

The applicant should submit the following map attachments:

Overview Map: Submit an 8 ½ x 11” color print or copy of the relevant portion of a USGS Topographic Quadrangle Map, at a scale between 1:24,000 and 1:12,000 that is clearly labeled and indicates the exact location of the site. Be sure to include relevant landmarks in the map to assist ILF PAC and IRT members in locating the site.

Detailed Site Map: A map depicting the site boundaries and the area of work at a scale between 1:12,000 and 1:6,000, using a current aerial photo base. Streets, water bodies and other relevant landmarks should be clearly labeled. Outline the parcel of land upon which the proposed project will be located and outline and label the proposed area of work, including any staging and access areas. This map should also include the site name, town, north arrow, and scale bar. Detailed maps can be created using an application like Google Earth, which allows you to draw on an aerial photo base and print or save it as a JPEG. To submit maps electronically, create either a JPEG or PDF file of reasonable size and quality.



Digital Data: A digital data file containing the site boundary and other pertinent data to identify the site location must be provided in either ESRI Shapefile (.shp), Bentley MicroStation (.dgn), AutoCad (.dwg), or Google Earth (.kml/.kmz) format. ESRI .shp is preferred. Shapefiles and Microstation/AutoCad data must be correctly projected in NAD_1983_StatePlane_Connecticut_FIPS_0600_Feet.

Service Area: “The Service Area” is the hydrologic unit in which the project lies. There are six service areas in the CT Wetland In Lieu Fee Program Area. They correspond roughly to the six major basins in CT which are the Housatonic River, Connecticut River, Thames River, and three coastal basins: the Southwest, South-Central, and Southeast Coastal Basins. Please note that a portion of the Hudson River major basin – which has limited area in CT – is lumped together with the Housatonic River Service Area. Similarly, the Southeast Coast Basin includes the Pawcatuck River Basin in Rhode Island.

A link is provided within the application form that brings the applicant to a map viewer that allows the applicant to zoom into their project site to see in which major basin the site lies. (Refer to that link to see in which major basin the project is located.)

Cooperating Entity – Property Owner: If the applicant is different from the Property Owner, please provide the Property owner’s information as well.

Project Description: Please provide a brief project description that summarizes the full scale of the proposed project.

PART B

The Audubon CT ILF program compensatory mitigation projects are selected using a competitive award approach. Mitigation Plans (i.e., full proposals) are evaluated on a 100-point scale by the Project Advisory Committee using the prioritization criteria. The 100 points are divided up among the criteria. These criteria are provided below (with the % of the 100 points provided in parenthesis), followed by specific questions that must be answered to provide the necessary information that the ILF Project Advisory Committee will use to assign the necessary points. Not all questions may be applicable to a particular type of project (i.e., preservation, enhancement, restoration, or creation). If you feel a particular question does not apply to your project, simply state “N/A”. If you do not know the answer, then state “unknown”. Keep in mind that missing answers may impact the score of the respective criterion, and thus the overall ranking of the application.

I. CRITERIA NO. 1. POTENTIAL TO MEET AUDUBON CT ILF PROGRAM GOALS (30%).

I.a. “Explain in this section how your project meets the core program requirement to restore, enhance, preserve or create aquatic resources and how the project site will be conserved in perpetuity by appropriate easement or other legal mechanism”.

To effectively explain this section of the application you will first need to simply state the amount of the property in acres that contain wetlands, and then provide the acreage that will be subjected to restoration, enhancement, or creation. All mitigation areas should be protected in perpetuity via a legal instrument (e.g., conservation easement preferred over a deed restriction).

I.b. “The resource types to be restored, enhanced, preserved or created”.

Next, you will need to know what type of resources occur on the property and their acreage. Use the following Link to zoom into your site and obtain the respective Cowardin Classification cover types from the NWI Mapper <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html>

The Cowardin et al. (1979) classification system is used by the Army Corps of Engineers to categorize the types of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats that are impacted, restored, created, enhanced, and impacted in the nation. There are five major systems (Marine, Estuarine, Riverine, Lacustrine, and Palustrine) and 11 subsystems.

At a minimum, the resource type category and corresponding level of the hierarchical classification systems included in Table 1 in the application should be determined. Using the NWI mapper, one can click on the polygons of the wetland type presented to get a definition of the resource code and the acreage. If the polygon of the wetland type extends beyond the border of the property, visually estimate the percentage of the resource that lies on the property.

The functions and values of each wetland resource should also be determined by a qualified wetland expert. A list of wetland experts can be obtained from the Connecticut Association of Wetland Scientists (CAWS) at the following link: <http://www.ctwetlands.org/members.html>

The degree to which the proposed project changes, replaces, or enhances the functional benefits of each resource on the property should be assessed and described.

I.c. “Determine the proximity of the proposed project to impacts within the same service area”.

If major developments have recently occurred within the same service area that has resulted in wetland impacts, it should be stated in this section. If such developments are unknown, or their impact is unknown, it should be stated as such.

I.d. “The likelihood of the threat of degradation to the site over the next twenty years should be assessed”

This question is particularly important for preservation projects. This can be done qualitatively by looking at recent past patterns of development in the community and projecting those patterns forward. Typically, areas serviced by a suite of utilities (esp. sewer, water, and natural gas) are likely to be attractive to development. Zoning can also provide a clue as to the types of development expected for a given area of the municipality.

I.e. “Provide a description of how inclusion of upland areas will be sufficient to protect, buffer, or support identified aquatic resources and ecological connectivity to other conservation areas or undeveloped large blocks of habitat”.

This information is necessary to show that the hydrology of the proposed project can be sustained. Often, uplands are areas of groundwater recharge, while the adjacent wetlands are areas of groundwater discharge. If the adjacent uplands are not protected, then the hydrodynamic, ecological, and physiographic attributes of the resource may be adversely impacted diminishing the functions and values of the resource. Often, the upland areas are used by semiaquatic organisms to complete one or more of



their life stages; or provide dispersal corridors for these organisms to travel to and from other wetland or watercourse systems.

I.f. “Describe the expected changes in the resources – both positive and negative - as a result of the project”.

The expected changes in the resources – both positive and negative – resulting from the project should be described. Start by first describing the current conditions of the property and resources. Beyond the cover type, provide information on characteristic species, productivity, known or probable occurrences of species of conservation concern, and other general habitat attributes of the natural areas on the site.

Then, describe the proposed condition of the property, and how the proposed changes will provide a “functional lift”. That is, how the proposed changes will produce a net benefit in habitat quality, ecological and physiographic processes that sustain the ecosystems and habitats on the site, how the project could be expected to protect or improve upon water quality, eliminate pre-existing threats, or create habitat that can benefit species of conservation concern.

I.g. “Identify other specific conservation objectives developed for the major watershed basins within which the project exists”.

The specific objectives developed for the major watershed basins can be found on pages 33-36 of the CT Wetland ILF Instrument (AudubonCT, 2013).

II. CRITERIA NO. 2 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT (20%).

State how the proposal meets the core program requirement to consider the location of a potential project relative to statewide focus areas for land conservation or habitat preservation identified by a state agency, other regional or municipal plans, or Audubon CT as explained in each subsection below.

II.a. “Identify whether or not the project’s location lies within or adjacent to habitat areas of statewide conservation planning significance or other natural resource priority areas”.

Begin with the presence within or adjacent to habitat areas of statewide conservation significance or other natural resource priority areas. Examples include but are not necessarily related to the following regional conservation priority areas:

- Existing or proposed fish and wildlife refuge Conservation Planning Areas or Special Focal Areas (USFWS)
- Wild and Scenic River Designations National Park Service
- H2H Regional Partnership
- Lower Connecticut River Ramsar Wetland
- Lower CT River and Coastal Region Land Trust Exchange
- Audubon Important bird Areas
- Staying Connected Initiative – Green Mountains to Hudson Highlands
- Berkshire Taconic Regional Conservation Partnership
- Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative
- Sandy Brook Conservation Corridor
- Mass-Conn Sustainable Forest Partnership

- Quiet Corner Initiative
- Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership
- Thames River Basin Partnership
- Rhode Island Woodland Partnership (Rhode Island – Southeast Coast Service Area)
- South Central Regional Land Conservation Alliance
- CT Traprock Ridgeline Protection
- Etc.

A detailed map of Regional Conservation Partnerships in New England can be found here: <https://www.lisw-rcpp.com/forests.html>

These will tend to be large multi-parcel landscape level designations or initiatives. The location of the proposed project within these large areas can be shown by placing a star on a regional map with the appropriate conservation area delineated.

II.b. “Determine the project’s location within or adjacent to public or private conservation lands that maintain and preserve habitat connectivity”.

In this subsection, the applicant should identify the presence of the site within or adjacent to public or private conservation lands that maintain and preserve habitat connectivity. This is an individual parcel level assessment as opposed to a regional or landscape level assessment for II.a. above. For instance, the projects location in relation to state parks, forests, wildlife management areas (WMAs), or natural areas; municipal town forests; Nature Conservancy Lands, Audubon Society preserves; Land Trust holdings; etc. should be identified. To aid in answering this question, reference the following online map viewer to see what conservation lands may occur next to your parcel:

<https://fhiplan.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=81d5e26a32904f4cbeb10567dde515b6>

A map depicting the parcel *vis a vis* other appropriately identified conservation lands could be prepared and appended to the application with a note in this section referring the reader to the appropriate appendix.

II.c. “Identify and describe the presence of natural resources of significant value and/or rarity within the project site boundaries”.

Natural resources of significant value and/or rarity within the CT ILF Program area include but may not be limited to the following:

- Sites known to contain rare animals or plants (e.g., locations mapped as stations in the CT Natural Diversity Database or NDDDB), etc. You can visit the CT Environmental Conditions On-line (CTECO) Website to get NDDDB mapped stations using the following link: http://www.cteco.uconn.edu/map_catalog.asp once at this webpage, type in the municipality of your site and then select the “Natural Diversity Database Areas Map” to see where the mapped NDDDB stations are in relation to your site. Specify the date of the map, as this information is periodically updated on an average of every six months.



- Rare or unique wetland types (e.g., vernal pools, calcareous fens, black spruce bogs, eelgrass beds, etc.)
- Presence of any of the Thirteen Rare or Unique Habitats in CT identified by Dowhan and Craig (1976)

III. CRITERIA NO. 3 PROJECT READINESS/FEASIBILITY (20%).

In this section the applicant must explain how the proposal meets the core program requirement to demonstrate project readiness and likelihood of success, where success is defined by the ability of the project to meet Audubon CT ILF Program goals and objectives in a reasonable time period. Considerations include the following:

III.a. *“Provide documentation of landowner willingness to participate in the proposed project, including conveying a conservation easement or fee title, with conservation covenants, to the property (for projects not on public or private conservation lands)”.*

Landowner willingness to participate in the proposed project can be documented by providing a copy of a letter stating the landowners consent to the project (for construction projects) or the landowner’s willingness to sell the property to the CE. Purchase & Sale Agreement and other appropriate documents should be appended to the application.

III.b. *“Describe the level of project urgency (e.g., area of rapid development or on-going site degradation, other available funding with limited timing, option to purchase set to expire, etc.).”*

Proof of this urgency will help the PAC assess the level of urgency. For instance, for construction projects and projects requiring work within a regulated resource, if no requisite state or federal permits have been acquired yet, then the project has not yet demonstrated that it can achieve the necessary approvals from regulatory authorities and will not be considered urgent as these approvals often take months to acquire.

For preservation projects, the expiration dates of purchase and sales agreements or temporal limitations on other documents can serve as proof of urgency.

III.c. *“Describe the degree to which the proposal demonstrates understanding of resource conservation issues and needs”.*

The information provided here will be cross-referenced with information provided in Criteria Nos. I and II. Keep in mind that although passive recreation opportunities and related socioeconomic benefits to a mitigation project may be appropriate for any given site, it is not the primary goal of the ILF program to provide sites for public recreation. The extent to which the application focuses on ecosystem benefits will be evaluated first.

III.d. *“Soundness of the technical approach of the conceptual plan presented in the proposal will be evaluated based upon any engineering design plans that accompany the proposal.”*

For wetland creation, restoration, and enhancement projects, the application should be accompanied by a technical plan set (engineering drawings) depicting the existing and proposed changes associated with



the project. For projects requiring Army Corps of Engineers permits, submit the copy of the permit application package with the ILF grant application. Plan sets should include a depiction of the project in plan view, representative cross-sections, plan details, construction phasing, etc. Plans should be prepared to scale and include a scale bar and north arrow. The title block should contain the Project Name, the plan sheet name/number, preparer's information, and current version or revision date.

Remember that engineering goals need to be aligned with conservation goals. For instance, a proposed culvert replacement that re-establishes hydrologic flow sufficient to handle stormwater flows and flooding events, must demonstrate that it won't become an impediment to fisheries movement under those scenarios. Similarly, a dam removal project must demonstrate that the release of the previous impoundment won't release legacy contamination downstream, or that redirected flows won't cause significant channel bed or bank erosion/scour, etc.

III.e. *"Initial progress (e.g., planning, fundraising, contracting, site design, etc.)"*

Higher scores will be awarded to projects that have shown the greatest progress toward project completion. Projects that have already received requisite local, state, and federal permits will be scored higher than those that have not. For those projects that have not yet obtained the requisite permits, it must be demonstrated that the proposed action is "permissible" and that the proposed action, when assessed against other feasible and prudent alternatives, is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative.

III.f. *"Likelihood that the project will meet proposed schedule and/or required deadlines"*

Demonstrate how the project is likely to meet the proposed schedule and/or required deadlines. Note that there is a time limit imposed upon the accrued funds. The funds accrued by the ILF program must be spent within three years of their accrual. Often it takes a year or more to accrue sufficient funds to offer a meaningful grant. Therefore, by the time the grant monies are awarded, a year or more's time may have passed for at least a portion of the funds.

III.g. *"Likelihood that the proposed actions will achieve the anticipated ecological benefits and results"*

In this section, the desired ecological/successional trajectory should be ascertained, and the resulting benefits assessed and disclosed. The information provided in this section should be supported by scientific fact or the professional opinion of a qualified ecologist / wetland professional.

III.h. *"Completeness and feasibility of long-term stewardship and monitoring plan, including endowment"*

A long-term stewardship and monitoring plan, including an explanation of how such a plan will be funded upon implementation should be prepared for the project.

For acquisition projections, the CE should at least provide an outline of an eventual long-term stewardship and monitoring plan that will need to eventually be implemented should the project be funded by the ILF Program. A conceptual framework should be provided with an explanation of how the stewardship and monitoring will be funded. Note that should the project be selected for funding under the ILF Program, a



full Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) will be required. For preservation projects, a CMP can be completed after the Project is selected for funding under the ILF Program, however some of the awarded funding will be withheld until a draft CMP is submitted to the Corps, the plan is reviewed by the Corps, and any Corps comments are addressed in a final CMP which will also need to be submitted to the Corps and Audubon.

III.i. *“Potential for adverse impacts (such as flooding or habitat loss) associated with the project”.*

Any proposed project that has potential to alter hydrology must consider the impacts associated with flooding. Inundation of natural systems can be a restorative process (e.g., restoring estuarine flood tides to areas that have been blocked by berms, dams, undersized culverts, tide gates, etc.), restoring such processes after years of development encroachment and altered land use can result in inadvertent adverse impact to the built and natural environments. The benefits of such actions need to be assessed against any potential adverse impacts. Hydrologic reports and engineering studies will likely be required to address the potential impact of such processes.

III.j. *“Conformance with any applicable Corps and state mitigation policy, guidance and permitting requirements, including appropriate financial assurances for any construction activity”.*

For wetland construction, restoration, or enhancement projects requiring work within a regulated wetland or watercourse resource, copies of any requisite state and federal permits should be appended to the application.

IV. PROJECT SPONSOR CAPACITY (15%).

For this criterion, the applicant must demonstrate how the proposal meets the core program requirement to provide for long-term management and/or stewardship by a responsible state or federal resource agency, municipality, or conservation organization. You will need to consider the following:

IV.a. *“Presence of qualified, capable conservation entity willing to sponsor and/or maintain the project”.*

If the CE lacks the appropriate technical staff to implement the proposed actions, then information that identifies intended consultants or outside professional personnel who will be contracted to assist in project implementation should be provided here. This includes but is not necessarily limited to the following: legal services for property closing, wetland scientist or other natural resource management personnel, designers, landscape architects, or construction general contractors, etc.

IV.b. *“Level of support and involvement of other relevant agencies, organizations and local community”.*

Letters of support from other relevant agencies, organizations and local community groups should be solicited and appended to the application. This information can be used to attest that the project is not viewed as controversial by other stakeholders and is important in obtaining and maintaining the long-term commitment and support of the ILF Program.

IV.c. *“Degree to which the project sponsor, and any associated partners, demonstrate the financial, administrative and technical capacity to undertake and successfully complete the project”.*

Resumes, web-content, project sheets or other documentation should be provided for the PAC and IRT to assess the capabilities of the CE. For hired outside contractors, a Statement of Qualifications, resumes of key personnel, project sheets describing similar projects successfully completed by the contractor and references can be provided. A copy of the annual financial report and a project-specific budget should also be provided to demonstrate financial capacity.

IV.d. *“Adequacy of long-term stewardship to ensure the project is sustainable over time and a funding mechanism for the associated costs (e.g., endowment or trust)”.*

For projects that advocate a recreational component, the applicant must demonstrate the capacity to implement an effective stewardship program that will protect the natural resources of the site and other sensitive environmental receptors.

IV.e. *“Legal and financial standing of the project sponsor”.*

The following documents should be provided by the CE to affirm the favorable legal and financial standing of the CE:

- A Certificate of Good Standing from the IRS
- Current title insurance commitment in an insured amount not less than the purchase price of the property.
- The CE’s document retention policy; and.
- CE Bylaws and Certificate of Incorporation

The CE must also be registered with the Connecticut Secretary of State and provide their Business ID number from the Connecticut Secretary of State CONCORD Business Directory website.

IV.f. *“Quality and completeness of proposal materials”.*

Make sure all questions are answered and all referenced supporting documentation is appended to the application, all maps are legible, contain a valid scale bar, north arrow, and all referenced features (roads, waterbodies, etc.) mentioned in the text of the application are labeled on the map. Scientific or technical claims must be validated by parenthetical citation to peer-reviewed literature, photographs, direct observation from a natural resource assessment professional, or otherwise. Gray literature and unpublished raw data may be acceptable if details on how it was obtained are provided as well.

V. COST EFFECTIVENESS (10%).

In this criterion, the proposal is evaluated on how well it meets the core program requirement that a project uses its funds efficiently given the condition, location, and relative appraised value of property(ies). Therefore, a detailed budget sheet should also accompany the application and applicants should consider the following:

V.a. *Clarity and detail of budget submitted.*

Use of the budget template provided at the following link will serve as a guide for the clarity and detail that the project evaluators are looking for: [ADD BUDGET TEMPLATE LINK HERE](#)

V.b. Sufficiency of funds available in the applicable service area (major watershed basin).

The amount of funding available within each service area each year will fluctuate based upon the sale of credits the previous year or years. It is possible that some service areas will have available funding while others will not. Projects that can use the limited ILF funds available for project completion despite the ILF funding being a small portion of the overall cost will be scored higher than those that will still need to raise additional funds from other sources.

V.c. Availability and source of matching funds necessary to complete the project.

Applicants that have already acquired significant matching funds from outside sources that are dedicated to the proposed project will be rated higher.

VI. OTHER BENEFITS (5%).

The Application must assess the potential for the project to support economic activity, job creation, recreational access, scenic enhancements, or other contributions to the environmental quality of the area where the project is located. However, it is important to note that providing recreational access is not a primary goal of the ILF program, and it may not be appropriate for every site. The potential for adverse impact that recreational access may have on site-specific resources, the presence/absence of Greatest Conservation Need Species (CTDEEP, 2015), soil erosion/compaction, water quality, access, safety, adjacent landowners, and other resources/receptors should be assessed. For sites where recreation is advocated, the applicant must demonstrate the capacity to implement an effective stewardship program that will protect the natural resources (refer to **IV.d.**, above).

Cited

Cowardin, L. M. (1979). *Classification of wetlands and deepwater habitats of the United States*. Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of the Interior.

Cowardin, L. M., & Golet, F. C. (1995). US Fish and Wildlife Service 1979 wetland classification: A review. In *Classification and inventory of the world's wetlands* (pp. 139-152). Springer, Dordrecht.

CTDEEP. 2015. Connecticut's Wildlife Action Plan. Developed by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection in consultation with Terwilliger Consulting, Inc.

Dowhan, J. J. and Craig, R. J (1976). Rare and Endangered Species of Connecticut and their Habitats. State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut, Report of Investigations #6. Hartford, CT: CT Department of Environmental Protection.