

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**



January 13, 2010

Honorable Fillmore McPherson  
First Selectman  
Town of Madison  
8 Campus Drive  
Madison, CT 06443

Dear First Selectman McPherson:

This is in response to your letter, dated January 12, 2010, in which you seek the support of and assistance from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the town's purchase of shoreline open space land along Route 1 in Madison.

First of all, I would like to congratulate you and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) on securing an agreement to purchase the former Griswold Airport property. I know that the preservation of this property as open space has been an important priority for many people in your community for years. Your plan for the purchase, protection and redevelopment of this property should provide wonderful opportunities for passive and active recreation.

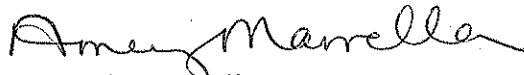
We anticipate that the primary potential avenue of state support for the acquisition of this parcel will be through the DEP's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. As you know, this program was created to provide grant funds to support the preservation of land to be used for passive recreation. Through fourteen previous grant rounds, the state has partnered with towns, land trusts, and water companies across the state in hundreds of projects, preserving tens of thousands of acres.

We are hopeful that we will be able to have a fifteenth open space grant round during 2010. If we are able to open this grant round, we will contact you with the information you will need to apply. In anticipation of any such round, town and TPL officials have met with DEP staff to discuss the details of the acquisition as they relate to eligibility for a future grant round. We understand from these discussions that a portion of the property may be proposed for use as active recreation fields. TPL and town officials are aware that any section of the property that would be used as recreational fields cannot be included in an open space grant request, as the grant program is limited to land that is to be used for passive recreation. As DEP staff have explained, there are ways to structure the purchase to preserve the ability of the town to seek a state open space grant for the remainder of the property.

Your letter asks for clarification of DEP's thoughts on the natural resource values of the land in light of the fact that the DEP itself has not pursued acquisition of the land. Thank you for that opportunity, as our decision not to pursue acquisition of the property does not imply that the property lacks significant natural resource values. To the contrary, going back well over twenty years, the DEP has evaluated the property and offered comments regarding its significant natural resources values to the Town of Madison and potential developers through the consultation process of the Connecticut Coastal Management Act. For instance, in a 1988 letter to First Selectman Gus R. Horvath, Jr., DEP coastal management staff noted that, "this site is unique and important from a coastal management perspective due to its relatively large size, its proximity to the Hammonasset Natural Area Preserve, and the location and quality of sensitive coastal resources on and adjacent to the site." The state's decision not to pursue acquisition of this property has always had more to do with state-wide acquisition priorities, limitations on funding, and the practical difficulties of making the Griswold Airport property an integral, functioning part of Hammonasset Beach State Park. The Department has always recognized, in our letters and comments over the years, that the Griswold Airport property contains significant, sensitive coastal and habitat resources that warrant permanent protection.

Once again, congratulations on your progress thus far to preserve this property, and I trust this information is responsive to your request. If you have additional questions, or you would like to speak further on these issues, please feel free to contact me or Tom Tyler on my staff. Tom can be reached at 860-424-3099 or [tom.tyler@ct.gov](mailto:tom.tyler@ct.gov).

Yours truly,



Amey W. Marrella  
Commissioner

cc: William E. Gladstone, Board of Selectmen  
Alfred J. Goldberg, Board of Selectmen  
Noreen S. Kokoruda, Board of Selectmen  
Joseph A. MacDougald, Board of Selectmen  
Senator Edward Meyer  
Representative Deborah Heinrich