

**To: Richard Tomasetti  
Chairman, Wilton Planning and Zoning Commission**

**Re: Request for Letter of Support for Preservation of the 9.6 AC Montanaro property in Wilton through an Open Space Grant from the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection.**

**From: David Brant, Executive Director, Aspetuck Land trust**

**Date: July 16, 2021**

Dear Mr. Tomasetti,

Aspetuck Land Trust (ALT) is applying to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for an Open Space and Watershed Acquisition (OSWA) Grant to help us preserve a land-locked parcel at the heart of one of the last significant forest block expanses in Fairfield County that spans the Wilton-Weston border. If we obtain state funding, we will purchase this 9.6-acre property and preserve a significant core landscape that serves to protect the survival of species requiring interior forest habitat. This particular property has subdivision approval from the town of Wilton for two houses. ALT has been negotiating with the owner/developer Christopher Montanaro for many years and we have finally secured an agreement for ALT to purchase the property for \$612,500 which will prevent a development in the middle of our 119-acre Honey Hill Nature Preserve in Weston and Wilton and the larger Wilton/Weston Forest Block we are protecting.

Applications are weighed by a point system in which municipal and community backing rank high. Accordingly, we are asking you to help our efforts by writing a letter supporting ALT by stating why you think this is a project worthy of state funding. We are working with Wilton Land Conservation Trust on this project.

As background, I have attached two maps showing the geographic location of the Montanaro property. The first map shows the property located just south of the CT Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) "circle", which indicates the state of CT Species of Special Concern eastern box turtle. The second map is a Natural Resource Map that highlights types of wetlands and soils on and around the property. The Montanaro property falls within the sub-regional watershed outline for the West Branch of the Saugatuck River and preserving it conforms with the goals of the Wilton Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) to preserve, protect, and maintain open space, trails, and green ways; to protect natural resources and habitats; and to preserve rural character, historical setting, and cultural landscapes. Below are several ecological and open space attributes of the Montanaro property:

- The property protects a vernal pool and tributary stream that connects to Mayapple Brook and the Norwalk River providing watershed and watercourse protection.
- The property is bordered on all four sides by Town of Wilton owned land and Aspetuck Land Trust owned land. To the south is ALT's 119-acre Honey Hill Preserve and to the north and east is the 85-acre Fromson Strassler property that ALT is purchasing from the town of Weston. The property also connects with town of Wilton lands to the west and north.
- The property builds upon the core forest block which, with the inclusion of Fromson Strassler, will exceed 700 acres - significant for protection of interior forest species.
- Species on adjacent properties in the forest block are important to overall wildlife biodiversity metrics and include species that are rare, and species that are environmental quality indicators.

- If acquired, ALT will take advantage of the property's excellent trail potential, creating a hiking trail connecting to the larger trail system within the Wilton-Weston forest block.
- The rolling terrain of this property will provide a hiker with opportunities to experience what early settlers to Connecticut first encountered.

We invite you to use this information however you like in preparing your own letter. The letter need not be long. If possible, it should be on your organization's letterhead. The letter should be **returned to me** via PDF by email to [dbrant@aspetucklandtrust.org](mailto:dbrant@aspetucklandtrust.org), not to DEEP, but should be addressed as follows:

Commissioner Dykes  
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program  
Constituent Affairs/Land Management Division  
79 Elm Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

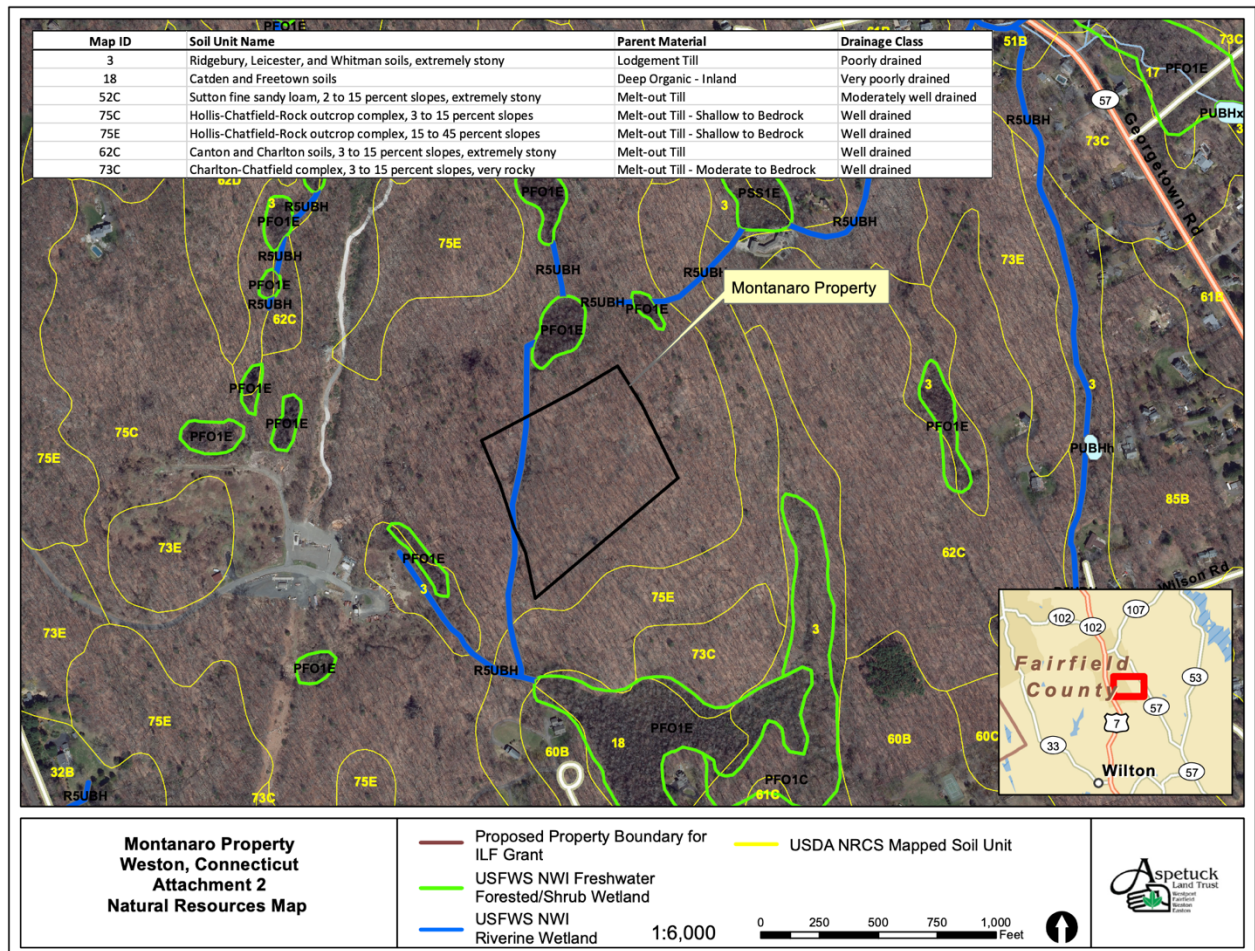
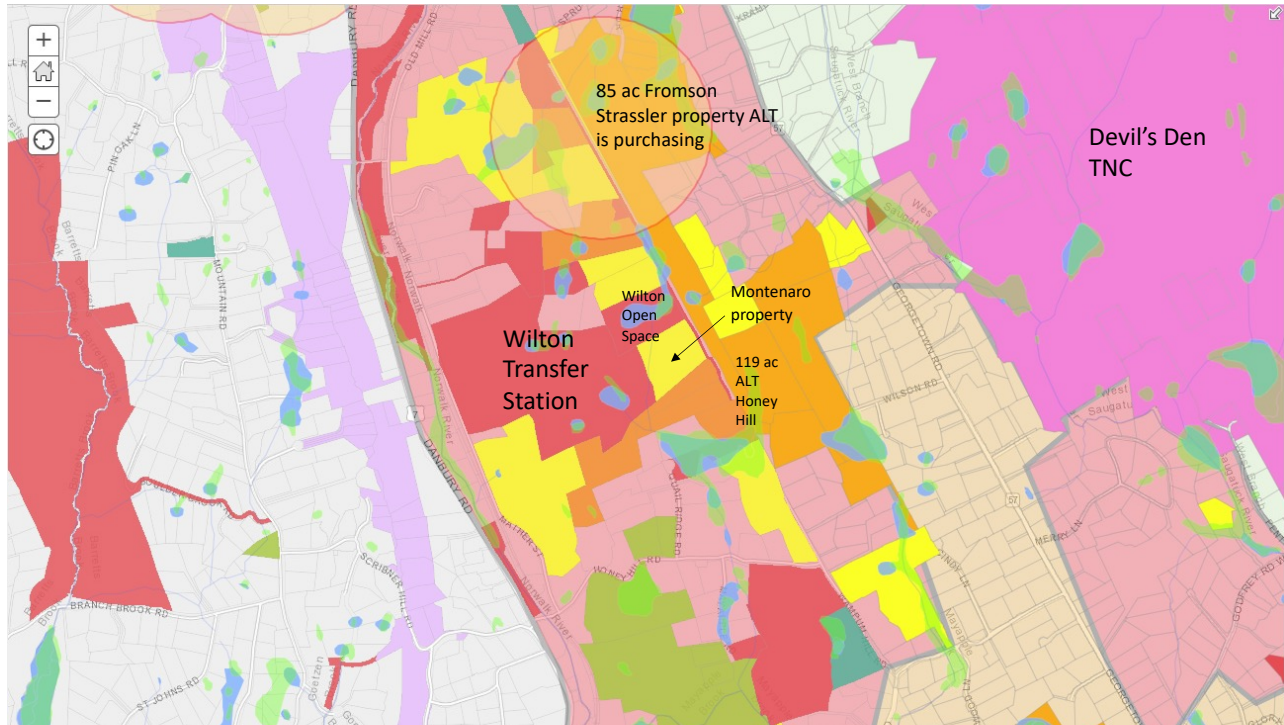
The deadline for submission of Letters of Support is September 30, 2021, but I would like to have your letter in hand via email pdf by September 1, 2021. Please call David Brant at ALT at 612-730-1990 (cell) if you have questions or need more information.

For reference, I have also attached the July 23, 2020 letter of support you completed for our Fratelli Zeta property.

Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

David Brant, Executive Director  
Aspetuck Land Trust



PLANNING & ZONING  
COMMISSION  
Telephone (203) 563-0185  
Fax (203) 563-0284



TOWN HALL ANNEX  
238 Danbury Road  
Wilton, Connecticut 06897

July 23, 2020

Commissioner Katie S. Dykes  
Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection  
Open Space & Watershed Acquisition Grant Program  
Constituent Affairs / Land Management Division  
79 Elm Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

RE: Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Grant – Aspetuck Land Trust – The Fratelli Zeta LLC property (aka the Pagano) 11.56 acres, Wilton CT

Dear Commissioner Dykes:

The Wilton Zoning Commission has reviewed the proposal of the Aspetuck Land Trust to apply for a grant from the DEEP in order to preserve the above referenced property. The property connects 2 properties already preserved by the Aspetuck Land Trust, creating a great opportunity to expand the core forest block in that area.

In October of 2019, the Planning and Zoning Commission completed its update of the Plan of Conservation and Development, in which it was made clear that the preservation and protection of valuable natural resources and open space was a key consideration and goal. The Town of Wilton has a strong record of preservation working with land trusts, the state, the federal government to protect open space.

This parcel would do much to continue this long-standing record of land preservation and is consistent with the goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development. As such, the Planning and Zoning Commission strongly supports the grant application being made to DEEP for the purchase of the Fratelli Zeta, LLC (aka Pagano) property, assuming the money for this grant is already bonded.

Very truly,

Richard Tomasetti,  
Chair, Wilton Planning and Zoning Commission