

The Kaczynski Property

Located in the

Farm River estuary east of Beacon Hill



The Kaczynski Property

Summary

The **22 acre Kaczynski property** lies in **Branford's Farm River estuary**, (see map of protected open space in the Farm River estuary and ortho-photo map of Farm River estuary). **Acquisition of the Kaczynski property:**

- **Contributes to the development of an existing greenway and complements existing preserved open space;**
- **Protects a valuable resource for wildlife habitat and recreation;**
- **Provides multiple resource values (wildlife habitat, water quality, recreation, farmland soils);**
- **Protects habitat of species that are threatened or of special concern (Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Saltmarsh Sparrow);**

Acquisition of the property has been a **high priority** for the Town and the Branford Land Trust because it **increases the protection of environmentally sensitive open space** in the Farm River estuary and **protects the viewscape** from the **Beacon Hill** preserve and the Shoreline Trolley Museum rail line. The acquisition also protects about 5 acres of **statewide important farmland soils**.

The Context – The Farm River estuary and Beacon Hill

The value of the Kaczynski property as open space is significantly increased by its location in the Farm River estuary and in close proximity to Beacon Hill, the southernmost component of the Metacomet Ridge complex.



The Kaczynski property looking toward Beacon Hill and the Farm River

As early as 1972, Branford's first plan of Conservation and Development designated the Farm River riparian area as an area for conservation. The environmental value of the Farm River and its estuary has been recognized in the 1991 US Fish & Wildlife Service report "Northeast Coastal Areas Study: Significant Coastal Habitats of Southern New England and portions of Long

Island, New York". The USF&WS report identifies the Farm River as a specific habitat area within the New Haven Harbor Habitat Complex that is of **particular regional significance to fish and wildlife resources** and in need of **protection and/or management**. The lower Farm River provides critical black duck breeding habitat and, with the nearby Branford River, supports the **largest concentration of wintering American wigeon in Connecticut** as well as significant numbers of wintering canvasback, scoter and Atlantic brant. The Farm River also supports an anadromous fish run of river herring and sea-run brown trout, and the tidal marshes on the Kaczynski property and elsewhere in the estuary constitute an important staging area for juvenile alewife. Acquisition of the Kaczynski property will preserve the current riparian vegetation necessary for the filtration of pollutants from stormwater before it enters coastal marshes and waters, protecting the value of these areas to shorebirds and other wildlife that forage or breed in the marshes or the river and the water quality of the Farm River and Long Island Sound.

According to Patrick Comins, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon CT (the Connecticut branch of the National Audubon Society), the tidal marshes that line the river and its tidal tributaries also provide foraging habitat for shoreline and wading birds, including **Great Egrets** and **Snowy Egrets**, and have moderately high potential for supporting nesting **Saltmarsh Sparrows**, perhaps the species of highest conservation concern in Connecticut from a global perspective (see Friends of the Farm River Estuary list of birds observed during the 2012 annual spring bird survey). Kelsey Island, located where the Farm River enters Long Island Sound, is another important specific habitat area in the New

Haven Harbor Complex. The acquisition of the Kaczynski property **promotes a goal of the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**, a partnership of federal, regional and state agencies and private organizations focused on the conservation of habitat for native bird species in the Atlantic Flyway, **to acquire privately-owned tidal wetlands** in the New Haven Harbor Complex.

The Farm River estuary and Beacon Hill form the **gateway to a greenway** that, from southwest to northeast, consists of **Beacon Hill**, the **~1700-acre RWA Lake Saltonstall property**, the large contiguous open space area in the **Pisgah Brook/Supply Ponds watershed**, and the **~7800-acre RWA holdings around Lake Gaillard**. The location of this protected corridor along the southern reaches of the **Metacomet Ridge System** protects part of the southern end of the **Bolton Range Forested Corridor**, which is a flyway for possibly as many as **thousands of migratory raptors** and other birds each year. Annual spring and fall bird surveys conducted by Friends of the Farm River Estuary since 2003 have identified more than 120 species of birds in the estuary and on Beacon Hill.

The Kaczynski Property

Even before the formation of Branford's Select Committee on Open Space Acquisition (SCOSA) in 2002, the Kaczynski property was a high priority target of the Branford Land Trust and other Branford environmentalists for acquisition.

The Kaczynski property has **several features** that make it a **priority for protection**:

- it increases the area of contiguous protected open space and an existing greenway;

- it is part of a complex of more than one ecological type;
- it contains floodplain and an upland riparian buffer to high quality wetlands and watercourses (including a regionally important anadromous fish run);
- it contains habitat that supports, enhances or protects biodiversity, including Threatened and Special Concern species;
- it provides area for tidal marsh to advance upslope in response to predicted sea-level rise; and
- it contains state important farmland soils.

Increasing contiguous protected open space and an existing greenway

As discussed above, the Farm River estuary and Beacon Hill are ecologically important features of the Connecticut coast and a gateway to a regionally significant migration corridor that follows the southern reaches of the Metacomet traprock ridge system. In part for these reasons, the Farm River estuary area has been the focus of significant conservation effort over the past two and a half decades that has resulted in the protection of more than 160 acres of open space by the State, Town and Branford Land Trust. **Acquisition of the Kaczynski property for open space will increase the protected area in the estuary by more than 10% and double the area of contiguous protected property along the Farm River's tidal tributary east of Beacon Hill.**

Protecting valuable habitat for multiple plant and animal species

The Kaczynski property contains tidal marsh, upland grassland and wooded areas, and thus a mix of plant species characteristic of these biological

communities. It is a **rare example** of the herbaceous/marsh boundary zone in Connecticut (Patrick Comins, Audubon CT Director of Bird Conservation). Tidal marsh is a highly productive system that supports numerous and varied species. It provides shelter and sustenance to juvenile stages of many species of the fin-fish and crustaceans found in Long Island Sound, including anadromous alewife.



Kaczynski property's herbaceous/marsh boundary zone

Tidal marsh also provides foraging habitat for coastal water birds and shorebirds. Annual spring and fall bird surveys conducted by Friends of the Farm River Estuary on the Kaczynski property and the surrounding estuary have identified

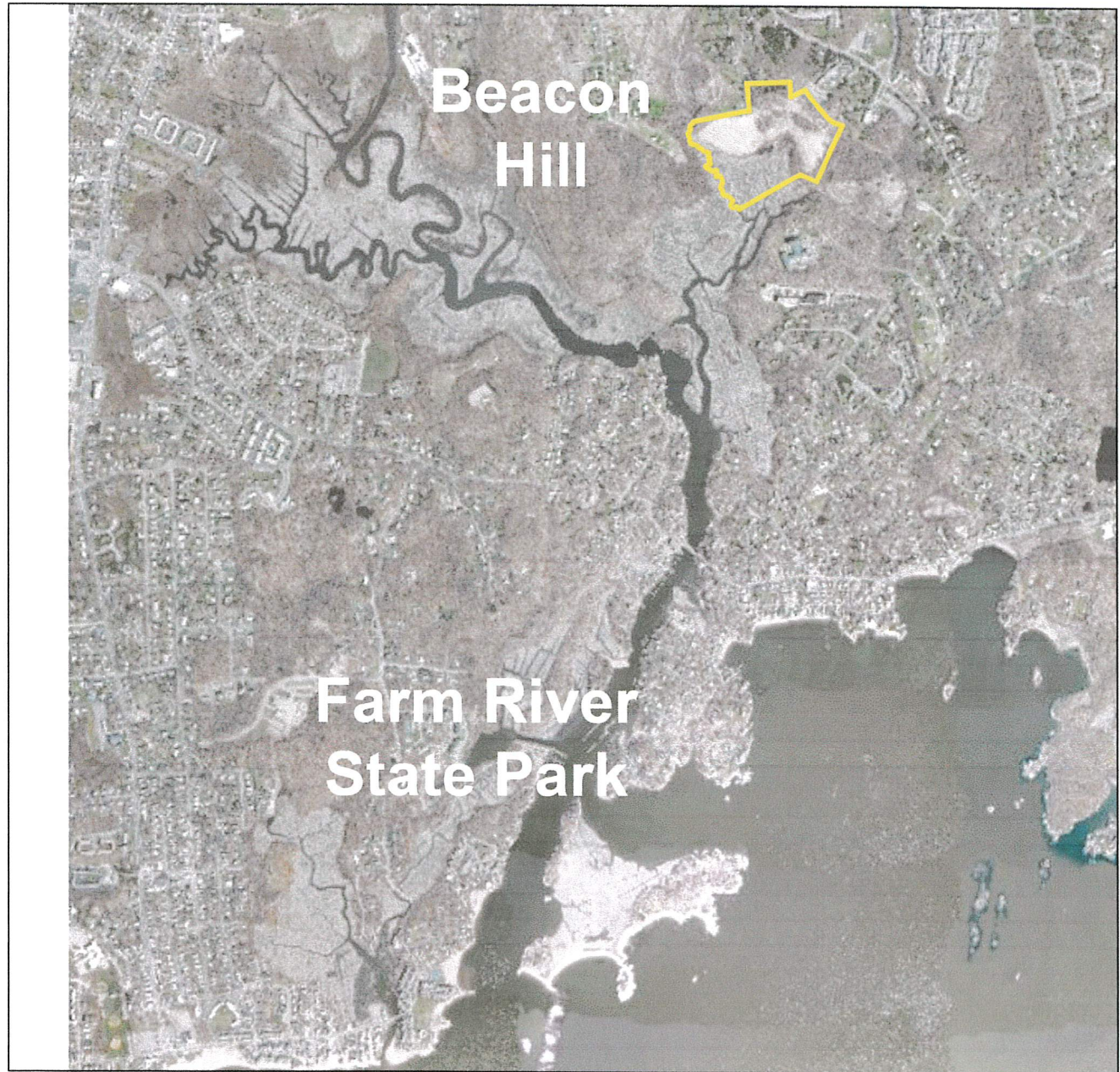
Farm River Orthophoto

Town of Branford

Geographic Information System (GIS)



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This map is for assessment purposes only. It is not for legal



Audubon CONNECTICUT

185 East Flat Hill Road
Southbury, CT 06488
Tel: 203-264-5098
Fax: 203-264-6332
www.audubonct.org

June 25, 2012

David Stygar
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Mr. Stygar:

I am writing to express Audubon Connecticut's strong support of the Town of Branford's application for funds to acquire the 22-acre Kaczynski Property in Branford under the State of Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. This property is primarily in hayfield habitat, directly adjacent to tidal marsh habitat of the Farm River. The slope and aspect of the parcel are such that its permanent protection will both offer important buffers to the tidal marsh and a potential landward migration corridor for the marsh in the event of rising sea levels. The adjacent areas of the Farm River tidal marsh are classified as having a moderately high probability of supporting nesting Saltmarsh Sparrows, according to the University of Connecticut's Saltmarsh Sparrow Habitat Mapping Project. http://hydrodictyon.eeb.uconn.edu/people/meiman/Map_page.html This is perhaps the species of highest conservation concern in Connecticut from a global perspective since it is of high global conservation concern and our state supports a significant portion of the global population of Saltmarsh Sparrows.

The location of this property is also important because it contributes to the network of open space that creates an ecological greenway, all the way from the Farm River to important large-scale geological and ecological features in Connecticut, the Metacomet trap rock ridge and the Bolton Range, major north-south oriented relatively undeveloped corridors in the state. The lower portion of this corridor leads directly to the Farm River, and may be a flyway for thousands of migrant land birds each year. Protection of this land will also be an important step towards maintaining the integrity this north-south connecting corridor, while also helping to protect water quality in the Farm River watershed, thus providing benefits from the local to regional scales.

In addition to protecting water quality and migration corridors, both for the marsh habitat and migratory birds, this project will provide public access and educational opportunities related to a rare habitat type in Connecticut, an herbaceous/tidal marsh boundary zone. The acquisition of this parcel will ensure that the citizens of Branford and Connecticut are able to enjoy the habitats and marsh dependent birds and wildlife that this parcel and the Farm River Estuary support for many generations to come. These are among the many reasons that Audubon strongly supports this acquisition.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to support this important project.

Sincerely,

Patrick M. Comins, Director of Bird Conservation

Audubon Connecticut, the state organization of the National Audubon Society, works to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats using education, science and conservation, and legislative advocacy for the benefit of people and the earth's biological diversity. Through our network of nature education centers, protected wildlife sanctuaries and local, volunteer chapters, we seek to connect people with nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

June 22, 2012

David D. Stygar, Environmental Analyst
Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program
CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street, Sixth Floor
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

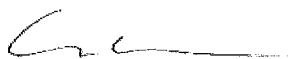
Dear Mr. Stygar,

The Nature Conservancy is pleased to enthusiastically support the open space grant proposal by the Town of Branford to assist with the purchase of the 22-acre Kaczynski property in the Farm River estuary. The Connecticut Chapter of the Conservancy has had the distinct pleasure to support this exemplary community of conservation-driven residents and professionals. With this proposal, the Town is in a very important position to significantly leverage several decades of acquisition in the Farm River which has included two state-owned properties (Beacon Hill, Farm River State Park) and several additional properties acquired by the Town and Branford Land Trust. This critical next step for conservation in the Farm River estuary will ensure connectivity and ecological function is preserved today and well into the future as sea level rise and storms continues to alter our coastal systems. This particular property will not only protect 8.2-acres of existing salt marsh, it will also provide unobstructed, adjoining space for this resource to advance upslope according to the results of The Nature Conservancy's marsh advancement analysis for Branford.

The Nature Conservancy is an international, non-profit organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Long Island Sound, the Conservancy has completed a decision support tool – www.coastalresilience.org – that provides visualization of ecological and socioeconomic risk and opportunities associated with coastal climate change. In addition, we have engaged directly with coastal communities including Branford to address the potential impacts on natural resources from a changing climate and extreme weather.

The Nature Conservancy is committed to supporting this open space grant proposal because it contributes to our shared objectives of protecting existing and future natural resources and sustainability of coastal communities in Connecticut. I sincerely hope CT DEEP will assist with funding for this proposal.

Best regards,



Adam W. Whelchel, Ph.D., Director of Science