

**PRESS RELEASE**

**7/10/2018**

**A Celebration of the Highlands Conservation Act in Connecticut  
with Senator Chris Murphy**

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), the Kent Land Trust, the Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative and the Appalachian Mountain Club will host Senator Chris Murphy from 4:00 – 5:30 pm on July 13, 2018 in Kent for a special celebration of the success of the Highlands Conservation Act (HCA) in Connecticut. The event will be held at Kent Land Trust Field, part of its Southern Gateway Preserve, located on the east side of Rte. 7 (51 South Main St.) just south of Kent center. Light refreshments will be provided and parking will be in the mowed field.

**The Highlands Conservation Act** is one of the most important sources of federal land protection funding in Northwest Connecticut. Between 2008 and 2017, Connecticut received more than \$8 million in Highlands funding, enabling the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and its municipal and land trust partners to save more than 1,630 acres to date, with nearly 1,000 acres more anticipated in the coming months. Together these public and private conservation partners have been able to save community treasures across the Housatonic Valley and the Litchfield Hills like Kent Land Trust’s 262-acre East Kent Hamlet Preserve in Kent and Warren.

First established by Congress in 2004 and reauthorized earlier this year through 2021, the Act recognizes the national significance of the Highlands region comprising portions of Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This landscape – within 90 miles of major urban populations - includes spectacular forested uplands that provide clean, fresh water for tens of millions of people; agricultural lands; wildlife corridors and critical habitats; and outstanding natural places for residents and visitors to enjoy. Twenty-six towns in Northwest Connecticut lie within the designated Highlands region north of a line running between Danbury and Granby.

Thanks to the efforts of Connecticut’s Senate and House delegation and Highlands advocates in all four states, the Highlands Conservation Act - fully funded in each of the last three years at \$10,000,000 - now constitutes nearly 1/6 of the entire land protection budget of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

**Public/Private Partnership Praised by Congress**

Congress applauded the Highlands Conservation Act in its 2017 budget appropriation; noting; “In a time when budgetary constraints allow for only a limited number of new land acquisition projects, the Committees are encouraged by programs that leverage public/private partnerships for land conservation like the Highlands Conservation Act”. Connecticut leverages every federal dollar invested through the Highlands Conservation Act by more than 3:1 in matching state, municipal and private funding.

A new Highlands success demonstrating the importance of regional conservation partnerships will soon protect 420 acres of land in Norfolk Connecticut. This property is the keystone linking Canaan Mountain to the Blackberry River and part of a vast wildlife corridor stretching from the

Hudson River to Canada. DEEP and HVA are partnering together to save this exceptional place using a combination of public funds including Highlands money, matched with \$250,000 secured by HVA in a private donation through its Greenprint Partners Pledge Fund. HVA's Executive Director Lynn Werner will present DEEP with a ceremonial check in this amount during Friday's celebration.

For more information about this event please contact Tim Abbott at 860 672 6678 x113 at HVA.

**The Housatonic Valley Association**, a regional watershed group and accredited land trust, was a founding member of the coalition that worked for passage of the Highlands Conservation Act in 2004 and remains a close partner with DEEP in its implementation in Connecticut. It sponsors and staffs the Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative, comprising more than 28 land trusts and conservation-minded organizations who work together to save the lands that make northwest Connecticut such a special place. [www.hvatoday.org](http://www.hvatoday.org)

### **Greenprint Partners Pledge Fund Leverages Public Investment in Conservation**

The Highlands Conservation Act is a vital part of that equation in Northwest Connecticut, but it takes additional public and private resources to match that funding. HVA's Greenprint Partners Pledge Fund is an innovative approach to conservation finance, recognizing that land protection transactions often require multiple sources of funding and more than one conservation partner to accomplish. In conservation with its donor networks and land trust partners, the Housatonic Valley Association realized that there were important land protection efforts that were falling short of their funding needs even though they had public and private commitments. Through the Greenprint Partners Pledge Fund, individuals and family foundations may elect to contribute up to a quarter of the funding (up to \$250,000 per transaction) needed to complete regionally significant land protection projects within the Housatonic Watershed in northwest Connecticut, southwestern Massachusetts and eastern New York. Since 2015, HVA has been able to pass on to its conservation partners \$900,000 through the Greenprint Partners Pledge Fund to save spectacular properties, including family farms, headwater streams, large forests and recreational assets with outstanding views – totaling 1,720 acres.

**Kent Land Trust**, one of the first accredited land trusts in Connecticut, is a founding member of the Greenprint Collaborative and was the beneficiary of Highlands Funding that was part of its transaction to protect the 262-acre East Kent Hamlet Preserve acquisition and also the nearby West Aspetuck Wetlands. [www.kentlandtrust.org](http://www.kentlandtrust.org)

**The Appalachian Mountain Club**, founded in 1876, promotes the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the mountains, forests, waters, and trails of America's Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. AMC supports the Highlands Conservation Act through outreach and education in Washington and advocates for its yearly funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The LWCF uses no taxpayer dollars, but rather is funded through royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf. It is the source of all federal land protection funding outside the Farm Bill. The LWCF will expire on October 1, 2018 if Congress does not act to reauthorize it. [www.outdoors.org](http://www.outdoors.org)