

Connecticut General Assembly
Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
In Support of HJ 37



greenwichtreeconservancy@gmail.com

HJ 37 RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO PROVIDE FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The Greenwich Tree Conservancy is writing to ask for your support for House Joint Resolution HJ 37, Connecticut Environmental Rights Amendment

Environment Committee Public Hearing, Monday, February 27, 2023

Senator Lopes, Representative Gresko, and members of the Environment Committee,

The Greenwich Tree Conservancy (GTC) is a 501(c)3 with over 1,000 supporters whose mission is to preserve and enhance Greenwich's urban forest to benefit the community, its health and its quality of life.

REMEDIATION PROJECTS

Greenwich, CT is no stranger to environmental hazards. The Cos Cob Power Plant site, operated from 1907 to 1986, was dedicated to providing electricity to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. Asbestos was used throughout the building to retain heat, and for fire resistant construction materials. The coal, that was used to fire the plant and provide electricity to the trains, spew coal ash throughout the town and Long Island Sound depending on which direction the wind blew. Sometimes the ash was so heavy, rail commuters would return across the street to their parked cars covered in what looked like snow, but it was coal ash. After the plant closed, millions of dollars were spent to remediate the site and turn it into a beautiful treed park.

Our high school in Town, was built on wetlands that were filled in prior to building in 1970. Unfortunately, when it was time to expand the school and playing fields a few years ago, contaminants were found in the soil. Eight hundred trees were removed for an extensive remediation project costing millions of additional dollars.

Located in an Environmental Justice area of town and next to the Transfer Station, a Western Middle School project will begin this summer. A possible 325 trees may be removed to remediate the contaminated playing fields that have been out of commission for 6 years.

U.S. Route 1, the NY & New Haven Railroad, the Merritt Parkway, and Interstate 95 pass through Greenwich. These transportation corridors cut Greenwich into 5 separate defined areas. Recently, we have experienced clear cutting along the Merritt Parkway, I-95, and the New York and New Haven Railroad. CTDOT moves from project to project never assessing the impacts to the communities within these transportation corridors as a whole.

PRIVATE PROPERTY TREES

Connecticut Towns and cities are on a constant high alert for extensive tree loss. Builders eye beautiful wooded lots and come in and clear cut hundreds of mature trees on properties before there is any Planning and Zoning

approval, and when the projects are denied the land lays barren with extensive runoff flooding rivers and homes down-stream. The soil quality is destroyed. Wildlife is ravaged. Yet the residents have no recourse. There are no laws to stop these practices.



RIGHT OF WAY TREES

Our utility providers have removed trees in homeowners back yards in coastal flood zone areas. These edge forests provide significant noise reduction and reduce carbon emissions. Recent aggressive tree removal along these utility corridors has created significant environmental setbacks to our towns, residential neighborhoods, and Environmental Justice areas that take decades to mitigate. **There is no accountability.** If trees have been removed there must be a robust replanting plan to reforest these areas, with the cost not passed on to the ratepayers. We also want to protect our water sources and coastal waters. However, after clear cutting, herbicides are used to prevent tree regrowth, ultimately washing into homeowners' yards, basements and Long Island Sound during the frequent flooding we experience along our coastal areas.

Edge Forest bordering these utility ROWs are seen as obstacles to be removed rather than private assets to be preserved.

Our utility provider cuts down our street trees with no replanting plans. Each project literally chips away at our urban forest one tree at a time!



CONCLUSION

Connecticut needs a Green Amendment that will align with the GC3 and other climate change initiatives. We hope the examples that we have provided confirm for our state legislators the benefits that our mature and urban forests play as an integral part of environmental rights. Please support HJ 37!

- Trees Combat Climate Change
- Trees Clean the Air
- Trees Provide Oxygen
- Trees Cool Streets & Cities
- Trees Prevent the Heat Island effect in Environmental Justice Areas
- Trees Conserve Energy
- Trees Save Water
- Trees Help Prevent Water Pollution
- Trees Capture Rainwater
- Trees Help Prevent Soil Erosion
- Trees Promote Healthy Soils
- Trees Help with Drought mediation
- Trees Provide a Canopy and Habitat for Wildlife
- Trees Provide Food for Wildlife
- Trees Reduce Violence
- Trees Mark the Seasons
- Trees Create Economic Opportunities
- Trees Increase Property Values
- Trees are a cost-effective solution to climate change

The Greenwich Tree Conservancy Supports Bill [HJ 37](#).

Our mature and urban forests play an integral role in protecting our individual right to clean and healthy air, water, soil and environment, a stable climate and self-sustaining ecosystems for the benefit of public health, safety and the general welfare . . . for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, tribal membership status, gender, socioeconomics or geography. The state, municipalities and any political subdivision thereof, shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of the state, among them being its waters, air, flora, fauna, soils, and climate; and shall conserve, protect, and maintain these resources for the benefit of all people, including present and future generations. The rights stated in this section are inherent, inalienable, and infeasible, are among those rights reserved to the people, and are equivalent with all other inalienable rights.

Respectfully submitted,

Urling Searle, President

Francia Alvarez, Advocacy Chair

JoAnn Messina, Executive Director

greenwichtreeconservancy@gmail.com

<http://greenwichtreeconservancy.org/>