


TO: The Honorable Mayor and Town Council

FROM: W. Lee Palmer Jr., Interim Town Manager 

DATE: December 10, 2024

SUBJECT: Discussion about Restoration and Planning related to the Hawthorne Fire, Lamentation Mountain

Summary of Agenda Item:

The Hawthorne/Lamentation Mountain fire damaged undeveloped areas in Berlin and Meriden and there were collateral impacts in Middletown related to roads created to fight the blaze. Berlin's volunteer fire companies did an outstanding job containing and extinguishing the fire, with the help of the State, neighboring Towns and many other organizations.

Staff has had preliminary discussions about the post-fire conditions on Lamentation Mountain with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and various other stakeholders including the cities of Meriden and Middletown, the Berlin Land Trust, and the Connecticut Forest and Park Association. The Town of Berlin owns 3 parcels totaling 48 acres in the fire area and staff has requested that DEEP's Forestry Unit prepare a report regarding damage to the Town properties.

Based on information obtained to date:

- The fire was partially in Berlin, but the largest area was in Meriden.
- Significant access paths to fight the fire were cut/improved in Middletown.
- Most of the trees will survive, including probably all deciduous trees.
- Fire access roads (marked dozers on mapping) were built. The main access road is along the former Stantack Road right of way in Berlin and Middletown. A spur was built off Stantack Road in Middletown heading west toward the mountain.

Based on preliminary discussions, stakeholders are interested in identifying funding sources for planning, restoration and improvement of the Lamentation Mountain area. The scope of improvements might include some or all the following items.

- Fire Departments are interested in having good access to the area to fight future fires that may occur. Fire roads could be improved, including drainage and surfaces, etc.
- Basic restoration of the trails.
- Improvements to discourage ATV use. ATVs were already a problem in the Lamentation Mountain area and may become a bigger problem now that the fire roads make the area more accessible.
- Creation of a memorial to the firefighter who died.
- Incremental improvements for hiking and trails.
- Improvements to parking.

- Creation of a new parking area off the Berlin Turnpike at Lamentation Mountain State Park and an access trail from this parking area to the Mattabesett trail at the top of the ridge. The Berlin Land Trust scouted a route for this trail connection.
- Creation of better signage kiosks at entry points.
- Consideration of acquiring additional parcels not already owned by the Towns, State, and Land Trusts.
- Making major improvements to create a more integrated system of trails including Meriden's Giuffrida Park trail system.
- Connecting this Lamentation Mountain trail system with the bikeway that is now being planned through Middletown and Meriden to connect the Farmington Valley and Airline rail trails.
- Installing educational signage related to the fire and to the natural processes by which the ecosystem is restored. Also, signage about the history of Lamentation Mountain and its naming.
- Mitigating damage caused by the construction of the fire roads (for example, to restore wetlands).
- Plantings to replace trees or to create an understory of next generation trees to mitigate fire damage or respond to destruction of certain tree species due to invasive pests or pathogens.
- Control of existing invasive species in the area to also limit the spread of these species in fire damaged areas.

The purpose of this agenda item is to start a conversation about the future of the Lamentation Mountain area and to determine if the Town Council wants staff to continue to engage in a dialogue with other stakeholders about the future of the area, the appropriate response to restoration and improvements after the fire, and the identification of possible funding sources for these purposes.

Funding:

No funding is requested currently.


Action

Discussion

Attachments:

1. Property report including maps prepared by the DEEP Forestry Division for the Berlin Land Trust's Vernlund Preserve property that is the area of the Hawthorne/Lamentation Mountain Fire.

Prepared By:

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Chris Edge, Economic Development Director



Connecticut
**Department of Energy &
Environmental Protection**

**Field Visit to the Vernlund Preserve of the Berlin Land Trust on Lamentation Mountain,
Berlin, CT**

**Site Visit Report for Post-“Hawthorne Drive Fire” forest assessment
DEEP Forestry Division, Service Forestry, Private and Municipal Lands Program**

Present Parties: David Vogt and Tom Heisler of the Berlin Land Trust; David Irvin, Central District Service Forester; and Elizabeth Bernard, DEEP Outreach Forester; on 11/19/2024 from 10am-1:30pm.

Stewardship Objectives

1. Assess fire impacts on forest health and forest ecosystem
2. Provide a climate resilient forest and diverse wildlife habitat, with limited resources and access available
3. Address invasives
4. Provide for more potential public recreation, while balancing with healthy forest ecosystem needs

*Specific options and advice are listed in the “Recommendations” section at the end of the report.
All photos included were taken on the Land Trust Property Nov. 19, 2024.*



PROPERTY OVERVIEW

The Berlin Land Trust (BLT) owns more than 400 acres of land, with conservation easements on additional property, in the towns of Berlin, Middletown, Cromwell, Rocky Hill, Southington, and New Britain (see website, [Berlin Land Trust, Inc.](#)). BLT operates as a non-profit of all volunteers with two major goals: To preserve land in the town of Berlin and Central Connecticut, and to educate residents about the benefits of land preservation and the local environment. The organization is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the Connecticut Land Conservation Council.

The purpose of this visit is primarily to assess the impacts on one BLT property, the Vernlund Preserve, by the recent Hawthorne Drive Fire that burned approximately 127 acres in Berlin and Meriden, beginning in mid-October 2024. The forested parcel is 15.6 acres, and was purchased in 2017. While BLT owns a number of contiguous parcels that form a much larger forested property to the north, this parcel stands alone, surrounded by private property, Town of Berlin land, and Lamentation Mountain State Park. The widely-known and publicized Hawthorne Drive Fire burned approximately half the Vernlund parcel, on the west side and included the steep trap rock cliff where the western boundary occurs. The eastern half was unaffected. The fire perimeter and how it relates to the BLT property and other parcels, can be seen with the map set at the end of this report.

DEEP Service Forestry is offering assessments to all landowners impacted by the Hawthorne Drive Fire and suppression efforts, and the Berlin Land Trust is the first affected landowner to respond and schedule a site visit.

The Vernlund Preserve occurs in the geographic southern edge of Berlin, in a tri-town area near Meriden and Middletown. The entire acreage is part of a large “Core Forest” (see Core Forest Map). Large Core Forests are parcels of contiguous, unfragmented forest 500 acres in size and larger. Core forests of small (<250 acres), medium (250-500 acres) and large acreages are tracts of unbroken forest that provide a more stable and useful home for plant and animal species, thereby protecting biodiversity. *They are priority forest stewardship areas in Connecticut.* The BLT parcel is part of an extremely valuable core of undeveloped land, in an area of the state that has a high percentage of development! While loss of habitats is always a major concern in a populated state like Connecticut, fragmentation of existing habitat is possibly of even greater concern, as even where protection of valued habitat and ecosystems may be occurring, fragmentation of those areas into smaller and less useful tracts is frequently much less understood and noticed.

The CT DEEP Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) does have occurrences of state-listed species of Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern status on most of the property (see NDDB map). A preliminary automated site assessment was produced for this property in preparation of the report, but one of the two listed plant species is not disclosed in the body of this public report due to sensitivity and the possibility of harm to the plant. For more information, the full site assessment could be provided to the land trust board upon request as long as the information is not made public. The land trust is also welcome to contact our state’s Botanist and Plant Community Ecologist, Bill Moorhead, for more details: He can be reached at 860-424-3861, William.moorhead@ct.gov. The identified species are:

- Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*), reptile--Species of Special Concern [Eastern Box Turtle \(ct.gov\)](#)
- Tall cinquefoil (*Drymocallis arguta*), plant—Species of Special Concern

The above will be discussed a little more later in the report, along with an area of “Critical Habitat” identified in the western part of the Vernlund Preserve, known as “dry subacidic forest”, which also highlights the importance of protecting this open space. Note that this preliminary reporting should not take the place of a more formal NDDB review that is needed prior to any activity in the “bubbled area” of NDDB. This includes forest management, widespread invasive controls, trail construction or other recreational enhancements, etc. [About the Natural Diversity Data Base \(ct.gov\)](#)

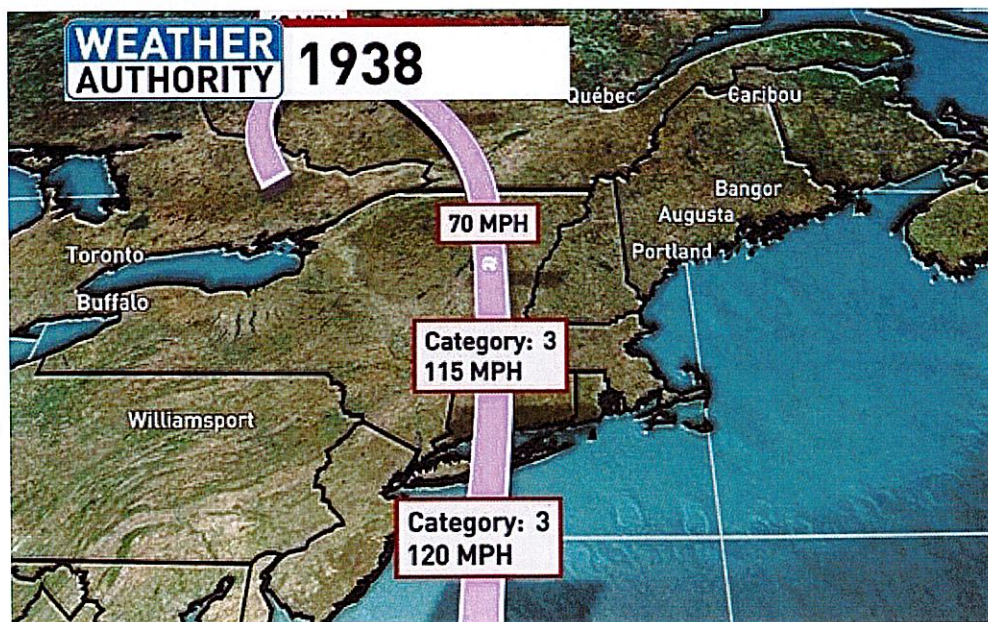
There were no identified wetland soils or farmland soils on this upland and rocky parcel. All soils are the Holyoke-Rock Outcrop Complex. Holyoke series of soils are considered shallow, well-drained and somewhat excessively drained. They are formed in a thin mantle of till derived mainly from basalt, red sandstone, conglomerate, and shale. The wooded property, even on flatter terrain, is very rocky and characterized by the local loose trap rock well-known on the ridges of central Connecticut. For forest management purposes, they provide challenges of operability for the harvest and movement of forest products. Despite the layers of loose rock, there are areas downslope in the eastern half of this property facing east/northeast that pool and channel water, and likely have minor underground seeps, providing enough moisture on the site to promote growth of high quality hardwood trees with a deceptively high site index. Berlin is part of the Mattabeset Regional Drainage Basin, which ultimately drains into the Connecticut River Major Drainage Basin.

Tree Cover

The forest closest to the ridgetop in the western extent of the property is oak-hickory forest, while the eastern half of the property transitions into a mesic Alleghany hardwood forest with more sugar maple, tulip-poplar, beech, black birch, and formerly white ash. The primary species list of trees identified and noted in your forest is as follows (species may occur on the property that were not observed and noted):

- Chestnut oak** (*Quercus montana*)
- Northern red oak** (*Quercus rubra*)
- Pignut hickory** (*Carya glabra*)
- Shagbark hickory** (*Carya ovata*)
- Sugar maple** (*Acer saccharum*)
- Black birch** (*Betula lenta*) a.k.a. sweet birch
- Red maple** (*Acer rubrum*)
- Scarlet oak** (*Quercus coccinea*)
- White oak** (*Quercus alba*)
- American beech** (*Fagus grandifolia*)
- Tulip-poplar** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
- Eastern hemlock** (*Tsuga canadensis*)
- Sassafras** (*Sassafras albidum*)
- White ash** (*Fraxinus americana*)

The forest cover is dominated by sawtimber-size trees (12" diameter and up), sometimes with a secondary poletimber size class (6-11") in mixture. The 1934 aerial photo (included at the end of this report) shows that most of this forest was already forested even 90 years ago. On average, most forests in Connecticut are between 100 and 120 years old. On exposed ridgetop sites like this property in Berlin, many trees may have been taken down by the Hurricane of '38, which tracked south to north through the central/western part of Connecticut as a Category 3 storm. Therefore, many of the shade intolerant to moderately tolerant tulip-poplar, ash, hickory and oak seen today may have re-established approximately 85 years ago just after this major disturbance, which is consistent with qualitative observations of tree age and size. On more exposed sites, the Hurricane of 1938 leveled trees and started the areas over from regeneration and the scattered surviving smaller trees. Here is interesting historical information from another town in Connecticut regarding the Hurricane of 1938: [The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 & Its Impact on Branford | Branford Historical Society](#) . It is also suggested to contact the Berlin Historical Society for more local history that may be available, [Home - Berlin Historical Society \(berlinthistorical.org\)](#) . No core samples or increment boring was done to determine tree age.



The loss of ash and possibly the beech reduces native species diversity in the forest. But it also creates openings to sunlight that encourage new patches of young growth in the understory without any further intervention-- as long as invasives are not permitted to control those sites. Unfortunately, most of the invasives on the parcel are where the ash and beech is primarily found.



Lightly filtered sunlight through the open November canopy along the Mattabesett Trail, Vernlund Preserve, Berlin Land Trust. Late falling oak leaves partially conceal the black burn evidence on the ground following the Hawthorne Drive Fire.

Understory/Ground Cover

While there are exceptions, the overall understory and ground cover on this property is lacking, even where not recently burned. There is very little consistent understory development of regeneration in the seedling-sapling sizes (5" diameter and less). This is believed to be due to a combination of deer browse and heavier shade in the closed canopy. The lack of active management and natural disturbances to provide sufficient canopy openings for sunlight have helped in the latter condition. This may also be partly due to the nature of the Dry Subacidic Forest plant community discussed below.

Most upper canopy dominant tree species do also occur as seedlings and saplings, but are very scattered and in insufficient numbers to replace the forest, should a storm event or forest health issue suddenly take out many of the older trees. The beech sprouts that form the most dense clumps of regeneration are not expected to survive. Other native plants observed included witch-hazel, eastern hophornbeam, Christmas fern, and grapevine. Some plants may be found on the woodlot that were not observed due to vegetative dormancy.

It is significant to note the existence of a 2-acre area identified as a "Dry Subacidic Forest", which is a Critical Habitat category in Connecticut (see green shading on the NDDDB map). This type of area has a higher pH/lower acidity than would normally

be seen on a dry site on a ridgetop like this, and promotes more plant diversity than typical, as well. But it tends to lack heath family plant associates that one might usually see in this environment, including lowbush blueberry and huckleberry. The area is also characterized by an open and not dense shrub layer, with an abundance of hickory and hophornbeam.

Note that the state listed plants in the vicinity are likely to persist following a fire that does not burn as a deep ground fire. The tall cinquefoil, a perennial which may not actually occur on the land trust property, but is known on Lamentation Mountain, is most likely to be found in canopy openings in the area. Even the undisclosed listed plant species, according to Mr. Moorhead, the DEEP Botanist, seems to be encouraged by fire in other areas where it is known.

Invasives are a management concern and ecosystem issue in the unburned eastern half of the property, but are not necessarily expected to spread to the burned area, due to site differences. Invasives are most common on this land trust property on the sites that hold more moisture, as indicated by the overstory trees present, especially the sugar maple, ash, and tulip-poplar. Invasives did not appear to be present in the western half of the property, where the soil was dryer and on ridgetop ledge. Typically, most invasives are found in wetlands and on the richest soils, along trails and roads where they are easily spread by humans, and in areas closest to development and bittersweet more recently abandoned field and field edges. Invasive species noted: Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, winged euonymus (burning bush), and Japanese stiltgrass. The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group at the University of Connecticut is a great resource for the identification and control of invasive plants, and you are encouraged to visit their website: [Home | Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group \(uconn.edu\)](http://Home | Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (uconn.edu)). Here is also a resource regarding control of some of the more common invasives we see in the state: [Invasives guide 2020 web.pdf](#) Note that there is not a public vendor list currently available for companies that control invasive plants, but feel free to contact us if there are any questions, and we can discuss how to reach reputable licensed applicators, if that is something you ever want to pursue.

It is not known if invasive “jumping worms” are found on this parcel, but if they are present, they will be where the invasive plants are also found. Much more information on this growing environmental concern is found here: [Jumping Worms in Connecticut](#).

Except where largely consumed in the recent fire, there is a healthy layer of leaf litter and some presence of coarse woody material (CWM) from dead trees and limbs. The leaf layer provides habitat for overwintering insects such as bumble bees, luna moth cocoons and woolly bear caterpillars. CWM promotes soil health and nutrient recycling, as well as healthy insect populations and therefore feeding opportunities for birds and mammals. They also provide cover for small mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. There are ecosystem values to leaving downed trees and material of all sizes in the forest.

While natural regeneration establishment with invasive control is probably the most effective way to go on a larger scale, here is some information regarding nurseries that provide native trees and shrubs, and some information on planting that could prove useful in the future:

[Native tree and shrub availability list.pdf](#) –this is an excellent publication with many links to other useful links within.

[Tree Nurseries.pdf](#)

[cttreeownersmanualpdf.pdf](#)

Remember that any planting stock, whether trees or shrubs, should have deer protection. It is recommended that you only plant native trees and shrubs, or some that originate from slightly further south as part of climate adaptation. The rocky surfaces would make planting methods a challenge, even where the soil obviously holds more water and supports quality trees. It is also worth noting that planted trees and shrubs should be watered initially and if it is difficult or impossible to reach the area with water, you may want to reconsider planting. It is suggested that you only plant the most drought hardy trees or shrubs because of the lack of accessibility.

Forest Health

Fire:

Concern about fire hazard is often expressed by land trusts, where the discussion of Coarse Woody Material (CWM) on the ground is involved. DEEP Forestry understands and recognizes this concern and issue, and assists in fighting of wildfires statewide if town fire departments request aid, as in the case of the Hawthorne Drive Fire. Hundreds of fires are ignited and reported annually in Connecticut, although most are extinguished or controlled quickly and efficiently due to organization and training, accessibility and the rapid communications available in the 21st Century. Larger wildfires do occur, usually during the typical early spring fire season, or during summer or fall drought periods as experienced during this writing. The world of East

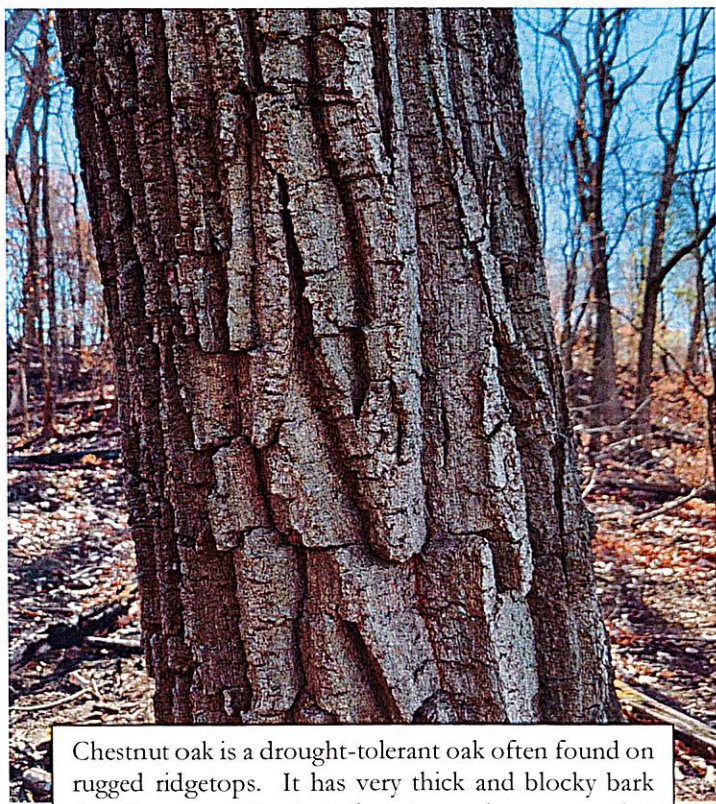
Coast fires is also normally different from the arid western states. Typically, New England provides much higher average humidity and rainfall, and higher fuel moistures as a result, which reduces intensity and severity. Although the statement can be considered simplified for this discussion, green vegetation is usually unavailable for burning, with some rare exceptions such as huckleberry and mountain laurel. In addition, our primary mode of fire spread in Connecticut is hardwood leaf litter. Larger woody material may burn if dried out and not advanced in decomposition, but does not contribute to fire spread. Therefore, harvest slash left on the ground, including large woody debris, does not necessarily promote or increase fire dangers as much as the fine fuels such as the leaf litter surrounding it. It is still considered more valuable to wildlife and the ecosystem to leave as much woody material on the ground as possible. In fact, when DEEP administers timber harvests on state forest land, contracts require that loggers leave behind any material under 3" on the ground and no whole-tree harvesting or chipping is permitted. The majority of nutrients in the tree to return to the soil are in those smallest stems and buds in the treetops. Besides nutrient cycling and small animal cover, CWM also helps to protect the soil immediately after a harvest and helps prevent deer from browsing new regeneration that will germinate and grow through this "slash".

An exception in fire concern is in the event of a major insect or disease kill in a forest. When standing trees that are dead outnumber live larger trees of the same size category, this can become a concern during drought periods, which are increasing due to climate change. The perfect example is widespread mortality following consecutive years of spongy moth defoliation. In event of that situation, DEEP Forestry considers it important to salvage dead and dying trees wherever possible to prevent these particularly heavy "jackpots" of standing dead fuels.

The best preparedness in event of a wildfire in forested land trust property is to have road access available, and good maps of the land showing trails, which may be used for firefighter foot or off-road vehicle access, and serve as firebreaks. Also understand where your best water sources are located, such as the nearest fire hydrants and standing water.

The Hawthorne Drive Fire is a product of an unusual fall drought that is likely due to climate change. Fall 2024 provided approximately the 7th notable drought period since 2015. The droughts are becoming more frequent and prolonged. Fire is historically a natural part of some ecosystems and vegetation associates in Connecticut. Fire can make some nutrients more readily available and prepare the site for the germination and development of plants that are disturbance-dependent. The pitch pine sand plain is one of Connecticut's most imperiled ecosystems and is heavily dependent on fire and other disturbances.

Initial qualitative observations at the Vernlund Preserve is that the forested acres subject to the Hawthorne Drive Fire will likely recover with very little impact. The upper canopy sawtimber-size trees appear to have not been adversely impacted and will survive. Random areas "sampled" during the walk showed little sign of burn char under the surface of the forest floor.



Chestnut oak is a drought-tolerant oak often found on rugged ridgetops. It has very thick and blocky bark that is a partial adaptation to environments that experience periodic fires.

Despite the drought and extremely dry soil conditions, the fire on BLT property did not seem to burn deeply into duff and soil and kill root systems. The exceptions in the larger trees were usually individuals that already had areas of rot or hollowing near the base, or other health compromises. It was also clear that some sapling and poletimber trees in the understory will not survive because of the natural vulnerability of these younger trees to fire. But many of these trees were already suppressed or in poorer condition than the upper canopy sawtimber trees. The burn is likely to even encourage a new flush of growth in 2025, in the form of low shrubs, forest regeneration, and herbaceous plants. The oak seedlings and saplings observed near the ridgetop at the western end of the woodlot may be top-killed, but with root systems established, they will likely resprout with an even more rapid growth. Trees that do die will provide more snags and CWM for wildlife on the ground. *It is the overall assessment in this report, that there are no significant concerns that require intervention from active forest management to mitigate fire impacts or mortality, and the fire will probably be one of the least concerning forest health issues experienced in the area.*

For much more information on wildfires, including a comprehensive analysis of northeastern fire risk from a few years ago, please see the following links:

[Forest Fire Prevention Tips \(ct.gov\)](#)

[NFPA - Firewise USA®](#)

[NortheastRegionalRiskAnalysisReport11012012.pdf \(forestsandrangelands.gov\)](#)

Invasive Plants:

Invasive plants are a forest health threat, as previously discussed under “Understory/Ground”. Invasives directly threaten the establishment and growth of native trees and shrubs, and must be addressed before native forest and habitats can continue to be managed or restored. Invasives are serious to woodland owners because these nonnative plants did not evolve in our ecosystems and often have competitive edges. They tend to spread rapidly in multiple ways and are resistant to control efforts, and have the ability to outcompete native vegetation. Invasive shrubs such as Japanese barberry and winged euonymus (burning bush) can form dense, continuous thickets that allow no seedlings to develop. Over time, as a native forest overstory loses trees, those trees cannot be replaced. So a native canopy of forest is gradually replaced by a low shrub layer of invasives. Invasive vines such as bittersweet can also kill trees two ways, by overtopping or girdling them. These plants do not provide the nutrition for wildlife that native plants do, and therefore do not support healthy wildlife populations. Most of our native plant-feeding insects such as moth and butterfly caterpillars can only feed on native plants. Most of our terrestrial birds raise their young on insects, especially caterpillars. When native vegetation is replaced by non-native plants, it disrupts the entire wildlife food web. Birds also feed on berries. Berries from non-native invasive shrubs and vines do not provide the fat content that birds need to survive.

Deer:

Part of Connecticut’s issues with invasive plants are closely tied to deer browse pressure. Typically, deer consume the natives and leave invasives alone, thereby contributing directly to the dominance of nonnatives. To understand the issue of deer damage to native vegetation, a couple facts: A deer needs to consume about 6%-8% of its body weight daily during spring through fall. This can mean up to 10 pounds of vegetation per day.

Here is an introduction to options for dealing with deer issues: [Deer Nuisance Problems \(ct.gov\)](#) , and a fact sheet about our white-tailed deer as a species: [White-tailed Deer \(ct.gov\)](#) .

The Berlin Land Trust currently does not permit hunting on its properties. Hunting is one option that could be considered to help control the area deer herd and reduce browse pressure. In fact, the benefits of regulated hunting go beyond harvest of deer. The hunting activity creates a pressure that drives deer away from the property and more to neighboring areas. If there is no hunting on land trust property, it would probably even benefit forest health for the land trust if hunting is pursued on some neighboring land, including large holdings of the town of Berlin and the city of Meriden. For information on hunting, you are encouraged to reach out to our Wildlife Division: [Wildlife Division Office Directory](#)

Insects:

Most upper canopy ash has died from emerald ash borer attack. ([Emerald Ash Borer EAB \(ct.gov\)](#) EAB was first discovered in Connecticut in 2012, and was completely unknown as a species prior to 2002.

Hemlock is rare on the property, but observed overstory hemlock on the ridge did not have healthy or full crowns. This is not an appropriate growing site for hemlock. The biggest health challenge of hemlock in Connecticut during recent years has been drought stress, which can be exacerbated by two Asian insects, the hemlock woolly adelgid--[Hemlock Woolly Adelgid \(ct.gov\)](#) and elongate hemlock scale- [Elongate Hemlock Scale \(psu.edu\)](#) . The forestry community consensus is that hemlock is likely to persist despite these insects on the better growing sites supporting this shallow-rooted and moisture-loving species. Climate change adds some uncertainty to this present assessment however, as weather warms and drought periods become more frequent. The CT Agricultural Experiment Station has had success in controlling hemlock woolly adelgid by releasing beetles that feed exclusively on the adelgid, as biological controls. Controlling the adelgid gives the hemlocks more of a chance to survive other adverse conditions such as drought and scale insects. For more information on this for future reference on properties of the land trust that may have more hemlock, visit the web page link cited above for adelgid.

Spongy moth (formerly known as “gypsy moth”) is a nonnative and damaging insect that has been in Connecticut for well over a century. Large-scale outbreaks of the caterpillar, which primarily impact oaks, are more rare these days due to biological controls. However these controls fail during severe drought periods, which are becoming more common during this period of

rapid climate change. Major outbreaks in eastern Connecticut killed thousands of acres of oak forest between 2016-2018, and another outbreak in the northwest hills of the state did the same following 2021-2022. During 2022 alone, the Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) reported 45,000 acres of defoliation in northwestern Litchfield County from spongy moth. It is best to continue monitoring your forest in future growing seasons, especially during years of drought. The best long-term remedy for helping protect forests from severe spongy moth damage and mortality is to *manage* the forest and encourage a diversity of age classes and of species, and to not be content with same-aged oak forest. While timber harvesting is appearing to be less of a viable option for this isolated parcel of land trust property, it is still possible to use noncommercial small-scale management to improve the diversity and resilience of this forest, as will be discussed. Also, while oak is a strong and dominant component of your forest, it is not all an oak forest and is in mixture with other hardwood species, so this is somewhat encouraging. Here is a link to much more information on this notorious invasive insect: [The Spongy Moth: Information for Tree and Woodland Owners \(ct.gov\)](#)

Disease:

An apparent forest health issue statewide in 2024 is beech leaf disease (BLD). Here is information about this new disease: [beech-leaf-disease-pest-alert.pdf](#). BLD is caused by a microscopic nematode from Asia that has recently begun to spread throughout the state, and the long-term prognosis for infected beech trees is still unclear. There is no known effective treatment for beech in a forest setting. Some early BLD management thoughts are provided in this writing, but are not practical across a forest setting: [beech-leaf-disease-management-options.pdf](#). In case it comes in handy even beyond this woodlot, here is a list of all licensed arborists in the state, from the Connecticut Tree Protective Association (CTPA) website: [arborist-list-March2024.pdf \(ctpa.org\)](#). Beech bark disease has been in the state for much longer and has been infecting beech trees for decades. Here is a publication providing more information on beech bark disease: [fsbdev2_043310.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#). Here is also a fact sheet on it: [Beech Bark Disease fact sheet.pdf](#). Beech bark disease does not always kill beech trees but when it does, it is much slower to lead to mortality than beech leaf disease. Both of these disease issues were present and observed on the land trust parcel.

Black birch has sometimes been infected with Nectria canker, a disease caused by a *Neonectria* fungus. This disease can weaken a tree or make it more prone to breakage over time, but does not always kill the tree. It does cause disfiguring of the stems and often ruins the value of the wood. There is nothing contagious or risky by leaving infected birch trees standing, but they can be removed during thinning activity.

In the future, it is possible that Connecticut could face devastating impacts by oak wilt, a disease that is known in some other states but has not yet been identified here. As in the case of spongy moth, the best defense against losses from this future disease are diversifying the ages and species in your forest so that it is not dominated by one type. Here is information on oak wilt, in a detailed story map format: [Oak Wilt in the Northeastern and Midwestern States \(arcgis.com\)](#). Here also is a link to a PowerPoint program on oak wilt from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES): [On the Lookout for Oak Wilt \(ct.gov\)](#)

Storms:

You may notice a couple recurring themes on these forest health discussions: Climate change is pronouncing impacts from these issues, and the best defense is a more diverse and resilient forest in terms of species and age classes. Storms are no exception. Increasing strong storm events have been predicted, including hurricanes like the aforementioned Hurricane of 1938. Ice storms and wet snow can damage trees, as well. Interestingly, the most damage by hurricanes will be on larger and older trees, which Connecticut has a far higher percentage of today than in 1938. Contrarily, the most damage by winter storms can be on the younger trees, using a sapling or pole stand of birch bent over or broken by the weight of ice or snow as an example. Having a mixed forest can mean less loss by any one event or cause. Continually encouraging understory regeneration to develop, in order to replace the forest should most of the canopy be lost to a hurricane, is a key principle in forestry and promoting a healthier and more resilient forest.

Carbon and Climate Resilience

Many forest health issues can be directly or indirectly linked to climate change. Any forest health concern that causes a high degree of mortality impacts both carbon storage and carbon sequestration (the active removal of carbon from the atmosphere). This forest is presently storing a high volume of carbon per acre for climate change mitigation, while healthy trees of all sizes are actively sequestering more. Typically, younger trees are more vigorous and growing faster, and therefore sequester carbon more rapidly. The lack of well-established and widespread regeneration reduces the future carbon sequestration potential of the property. Any recommendations in this report to develop a healthier, more diverse, and more resilient forest will generally make a forest more adapted to climate change and also make a better contribution to mitigating it. In New England, our forests are a carbon “sink”. When comparing carbon emissions from greenhouse gasses in the region

vs. carbon sequestration and storage, our forests offset approximately 14% of annual emissions. For more information, [Forest Health and Climate Change \(ct.gov\)](#). Here are excellent booklets on the topic if you have further interest:

- Forest Carbon booklet (UMASS, Univ. of VT): [42306 Magazine.indd \(masswoods.org\)](#)
- A Guide to Forest Carbon in the Northeast, [FORESTCARBON-compressed.pdf \(northeastforestcarbon.org\)](#)

It is also noteworthy that harvest and removal of trees as part of well-planned forest management objectives do not necessarily detract a large amount of carbon stored in the forest: The harvest of wood to produce long-term forest products, such as building homes, and use in furniture, flooring, cabinetry, even lower-grade products such as railroad ties, will tie up this carbon for many years to come in the form of the finished products.

Land trusts are often interested in “old growth”. This is how we define “old growth” in Connecticut: [forestry_old_growth_handout_final2.pdf \(2550×3300\) \(ct.gov\)](#). While our authentic old growth may be gone, a new form of uneven-aged management can be used to develop some old growth characteristics in a shorter time, as explained in this booklet: [Restoring Old-Growth Characteristics | UMass Amherst MassWoods](#). Note that areas like this parcel that are not practical to intensively actively manage, will be primarily left alone to theoretically become a form of “old growth” in the long-run. But it is important that areas intentionally chosen to be in “passive management” should first be diverse, healthy, and resilient enough, with plenty of tree species that are long-lived for carbon storage, and without invasive plants. An unhealthy forest does not sequester carbon well, and short-lived species or unhealthy trees do not store carbon for long-term. Many dead trees return some carbon to the atmosphere. So for a forest to be useful for climate change mitigation or to become an example of an old growth ecosystem, it must first be healthy and meet conditions that show it is capable of reaching such condition. Often that still requires some type of management. Leaving a forest “sight unseen” and assuming it will maximize climate mitigation goals simply by being left alone to grow older, is an oversimplification of complex forests that require collection of data and appropriate follow-up analysis.

Wildlife Habitat

As discussed during the site walk on November 19, a healthy forest ecosystem includes a layered forest structure, with established tree seedlings and saplings and a low shrubby layer, and preferably with a midstory of stems, and not just “mature” upper canopy trees. While we all enjoy the aesthetics of large trees and an open understory, this type of environment provides little benefit for most native wildlife. Without ground vegetation for small animal cover and forage opportunities, and downed woody material in varying sizes and states of decay, most of the forest is devoid of wildlife use except in the crowns high above. There are even migratory bird specialists that nest and/or feed at different levels of the forest, including on the ground, and require this vertical diversity. Note that some areas were not completely lacking in vertical stratification, but most of the discussion in this overview takes into account the average condition observed on just one walk through the area. It is also pertinent to note the natural condition of the Dry Subacidic Forest critical habitat that may lack in understory density, which is acceptable in that environment.

Oak and hickory trees on this property are a great wildlife asset, due to the nuts (hard mast) they produce. The hard mast availability is likely abundant most years, especially considering that there are multiple species of oak and hickory on different mast “schedules”. Deer, bear, and turkeys all depend on this hard mast to help them through the winter, by consuming large quantities to produce their winter fat layers. White oak alone is heavily sought by wildlife, because the acorns do not have the bitter tannins of red oaks. White oak supports over 500 species of lepidoptera caterpillars (butterflies, moths)! These caterpillars are among the most important source of food for songbirds.



This sugar maple has a severe fire scar, but may survive. It's vascular cambium has been "fried" on only one side, meaning nutrients and water can still pass up and down the tree on the remainder of its circumference. While there were trees impacted like this, it is important to remember that an individual tree sacrificed does not make an unhealthy forest.

White oak acorns sprout in the fall, however, and are not available as a food source for as long. Red, scarlet and black oak acorns do not sprout until the following spring.

Most of Connecticut's estimated 57% forest cover is composed of older forest averaging a century old or more. Young forest habitat is severely lacking in the state, and therefore many birds and other wildlife species that depend on this early successional habitat are in sharp decline. However, this small woodlot is not likely a good candidate for intensive harvesting that would be needed for this type of habitat due to challenging operability, remoteness and lack of practical accessibility for forest management.

The eastern box turtle is the single listed wildlife species occurring in the vicinity. The following passage about the box turtle is taken from the NDDB Site Assessment report:

In Connecticut, these turtles are found in well-drained forest bottomlands and a matrix of open deciduous forests, early successional habitat, fields, gravel pits, and or powerlines. Turtles are dormant between November 1 and April 1 and hibernate in only a few inches from the surface in forested habitat. The greatest threat to this species is habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation due to development. This species is very sensitive to adult mortality because of late maturity (10 years old) and long life span (50-100years). Vehicular traffic, heavy equipment used for farming, and ATV use in natural areas are implicated specifically in adult mortality through collisions. Illegal collection by the pet trade and unknowing public for home pets exacerbates mortality rates and removes important individuals from the population. Predation rates are also unnaturally high because of increased predator populations (e.g. skunks, foxes, raccoons, and crows) that surround developed areas.

Planning and scheduling forest management work (even if the work only involves dropping trees in place) outside of the bird nesting season can protect some wildlife using your forest. Bird nesting for most tree canopy, shrub, and ground nesters is May through July. Harvests and tree felling from August 1 onward through fall and winter have little concern for accidental mortality of nesting birds, other than a few nonmigratory species or backyard generalists.

The wood thrush, which nests on or near the ground, would benefit from cutting of some trees. The wood thrush population has plummeted by 60% in the last 50 years. If that trend continues, they will be extinct in another 40 years. The wood thrush is a forest interior bird that needs multiple forest layers to hide its nest and breed successfully. Even small cuts would encourage more habitat for wood thrush. Larger cuts would produce habitat for many other species. See the [Wildlife in Your Young Forest checklist](#) to see which species are likely to be found in different stages of young forest.

Standing dead trees ("snags") and any size cavity trees provide important sources of forage and shelter, as does the aforementioned CWM. Snags and downed material provide food for decay insects that, in turn, feed wildlife that seek the insects. Ash snags on the property provide great cover for bats, and brown creepers will nest under the loose bark of these dead ash trees. Cavities for nesting in naturally hollow trees are invaluable for many species of both birds and mammals, including owls, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, great-crested flycatchers and flying squirrels. Eastern bluebirds will nest in snags that are left standing after a forest harvest. For more information on mast, the value of snags, edge areas, and even how to create brush piles useful for small animal cover, please see the information provided at this DEEP website link: [Wildlife Habitat Fact Sheets](#) .

Shagbark hickory makes multi-valued tree for wildlife. Besides the nuts it produces, the "shaggy" shedding nature of the outer bark creates natural hiding spots used by tree-roosting bats during the day. Because of the "white-nose syndrome", an imported disease of bats, our native bats have become increasingly rare and more species are becoming either federal- or state-listed. Any natural resource management program should also respect needs of bats and enhance habitats in any way possible. For more information on bats, their value and habitats, [Bats Count \(ct.gov\)](#) .

[Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan](#)

[Habitat Management for Wildlife \(ct.gov\)](#)



At left, this small ash snag in the burn area is still of value to wildlife, by providing insects for birds and loose hanging bark for brown creepers and bats. When it falls over, it will suddenly become CWM that benefits a host of arthropods and provides cover for reptiles, amphibians and many other small animals.

Recreation

The Mattabesett Trail, a 62-mile long Blue-blazed Trail managed by the CT. Forest and Park Association (CFPA) passes through the Vernlund Preserve. This trail is significantly part of the New England National Scenic Trail. The trail is shown on some of the included map layers with this report, and hugs the western edge of the property near the edge of the ridgeline.

There are no other authorized or recognized recreational trails. The road system that was widened for access and firebreak contingency lines by the Hawthorne Drive Fire's Incident Management Team can be used for walking, but may provide more attention to the area and ease of use by illegal recreational uses such as ATVs. But discussion of this issue during the tour seemed to reach a conclusion that the roads are more beneficial to keep in an upgraded state for the purpose of emergency access for future fires, or for medical emergencies that could be faced on the mountain along Mattabesett Trail.

Recreation is a use desired by the land trust on the property, as long as the type and volume of activity does not impact forest health. There is interest in a connector trail through the parcel off the Blue-blazed Trail, with no proposed route or details available. It is highly recommended that any new trail include educational or interpretive opportunities using signage or QR codes, to make the experience more fulfilling for visitors. All trails should be thoroughly blazed with no overhead hangers or snags directly adjacent. Any unapproved trails created without the land trust's wishes should be actively eradicated. Maintained well-marked trails and the road systems should be reflected on official maps to help prevent lost visitors and to facilitate search and rescue efforts.

Note that new trails and Mattabesett future re-routes should not be established through the estimated 2-acre Dry Subacidic Forest habitat. It is also suggested that mountain bikes not be permitted on new recreational trails, as bikes move much faster than foot traffic and can endanger the state-listed box turtles. It would also be wise to not allow bikes on any new trail that connects to Mattabesett, because that is a foot trail where wheeled traffic is prohibited by CFPA and by statute, and connection or proximity would be inviting undesired uses.

By reducing trails, or focusing on keeping trails out of core forest interiors whenever possible, disturbance can be reduced in sensitive habitats. Trails serve as disturbance corridors for wildlife, that essentially fragments usable habitat. It has been found that conservation areas with trails have less wildlife than conservation areas without trails. Trails can also be a source of human impacts, including spread of invasives and disruption to nesting. The question is always how many trails to have and when to stop. A management plan can determine these details, but you are encouraged to keep these guidelines in mind: For parcels like this one where conservation is a top priority, it is recommended that these parcels contain no more than 3 miles of trails per square mile of property. 1 square mile is equivalent to 640 acres of land. While a general recommendation not really applicable at the Vernlund Preserve, trails should avoid being routed along wetlands and watercourses, as this riparian area is important habitat for many species. More information can be found in the [Trails for People and Wildlife](#) publication from the State of New Hampshire Fish and Game. It provides information on the impact on wildlife from trails and things to consider when creating or removing trails.

It is recommended that the Berlin Land Trust seek an A2 survey of the property and maintain well-marked boundaries that include tags/signs and paint. The boundaries should be readily identifiable both within the land trust property and from other properties surrounding it. This prevents encroachments on the protected open space from private parcels, and informs recreational users where the property ends to prevent unintended trespasses. [KNOWING YOUR BOUNDARIES.pdf](#) Note that, to answer a question from our field visit, NRCS does provide funding to cover access restricting such as gate installation, as well as boundary marking, which are both activities intended to protect your property and its natural resources. But not as lone items, but as part of a management program under the umbrella of a stewardship plan. Funding would not be provided for invasive plant control alone or just gate installation, but as part of the implementation of an approved plan. Here is a preview of access control/gates guidelines, from NRCS: [472 Access Control Access Control Gates November2020.pdf](#)

It is also suggested for the sake of wildlife, as well as safety of pets, that a rule of “dogs should be on a leash at all times” be considered for implementation, which is the case on DEEP property. Off-leash pets have the potential to do a lot of damage to wildlife, particularly birds that are ground nesters (such as eastern towhee, whip-poor-will, woodcock, grouse, turkeys, doves, ovenbirds, black-and-white warblers, and many other types of birds) or low shrub nesters (such as wood thrush, brown thrashers and yellow-breasted chats). Loose dogs can also cause problems for other trail users and themselves if tangling with the wrong wildlife species.

Recommendations—Property Management

Here is a list of recommended tasks and possibilities for the Vernlund Preserve:

- The first step to manage the property might be to find a Certified Forester that can prepare a Stewardship Plan for this land trust property. It is also possible that Eric Hansen at Ferrucci and Walicki, who you are already using for your larger contiguous forest to the north, could simply do an addendum or revision to include this smaller separate parcel. Here is a list of certified professional foresters in CT, updated every month: [ForestPractitiCertificatExamAnnouncementReport](#) . Here is another version of the list from the Connecticut Forest and Park Association website (CFPA), that you will likely find in a more user-friendly organizing and formatting. You can find foresters by name, county, or even services offered: [CT Forestry Services Directory - Connecticut Forest and Park Association \(ctwoodlands.org\)](#)
- The following are grant opportunities that you should consider, which are not limited to Vernlund in scope:
 - Visit CT DEEP's [grants website](#), as the list of funding opportunities is updated as they become available. If eligible, Berlin Land Trust may have particular interest in the Land and Water Conservation Fund: Outdoor Recreation and Legacy Partnership Program ([Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Program \(ct.gov\)](#)).
 - Visit [CT DEEP's Urban & Community Forestry Program's grants website](#), as the list of opportunities is updated as they become available. You can contact deep.ucf.grants@ct.gov with specific questions. I believe this is possibly less applicable to a land trust, but worth asking the question.
 - Berlin Land Trust properties are eligible to apply for the [Connecticut Land Conservation Council's Climate Smart Grant Program](#) . It may be wise to even start here before proceeding with other possibilities provided. Ricky Bentley is the coordinator: rbentley@ctconservation.org. There are grants for both producing plans, and for implementation work (typical cap on planning is \$8,000, and on implementations, \$50,000).
 - Contact the Connecticut Botanical Society to assess viability for their small grant program: [Grants – Connecticut Botanical Society \(ct-botanical-society.org\)](#) ; there could be relevance to the rare habitat present.
 - Contact NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), or be sure to do so through your private forester. A “Stewardship Plan” to USDA Forest Service standards would qualify you for these opportunities. NRCS

provides financial means to support such work, with no minimum acreage, and even includes assistance to pay for writing plans and not just implementation. It could be worthwhile to inquire about cost-share or grant possibilities. [NRCS CSP right for me.pdf](#). You can also contact: todd.bobowick@ct.usda.gov or call 475-355-3864. Note that NRCS offers cost shares, and land trusts sometimes get CLCC to cover the costs that NRCS alone cannot.

- Consider the value of regulated hunting on the property, for the benefit of growing trees and other native vegetation and a healthier forest ecosystem.
- Find and mark boundaries of the land trust property, and consider acquiring your own A2 survey to achieve this accurately and completely. Some abutters may have useful A2 surveys on file in the town hall that you could use to find your own lines.
- Develop your new trail, map and mark it well, and take advantage of the interpretive opportunities. Address hazards on the new trail(s).
- Consider rules requiring dogs to be leashed on the land trust property.
- Take measures to try and keep roads and trails into the land trust property blocked to ATVs and 4X4s, which can be critical for protection of natural resources.
- Research legal access possibilities to determine if there are rights of access the land trust may be unaware of, for forest management work from Middletown, Meriden, or Berlin. This may require a real estate attorney.

Recommendations—Vegetation Management

- Control invasive plants in the eastern half of the property. Emphasis should be on invasives where there are canopy openings from tree mortality or wherever any active management will occur.
- Release understory hemlock saplings in the eastern half of Vernlund. Focus on larger patches of hemlock rather than lone individual trees. Drop and leave individual hardwood stems shading the hemlock. This is valuable to produce a conifer component that is lacking in the forest, for more diversity.
- If work must be done by land trust volunteers, drop smaller pre-commercial pole-size trees to create canopy openings to encourage regeneration and pockets of shrubland habitat throughout the woodland.
- Avoid active vegetation management and disturbance as much as possible on the 2 acres of Dry Subacidic Forest.
- Avoid tree felling during bird nesting season and during the most active times for box turtles, as previously outlined, if this is feasible.
- Consider thinning in your forest or producing an uneven-aged condition in small areas at a time, with the help of your consulting forester. It is understood that due to access limitations, a commercial timber harvest or other large-scale forest management activities may not be feasible on this property.
- When cutting trees on the eastern half of the property, reduce stocking of black birch wherever possible, in favor of other native species that are not as widespread or easy to regenerate. Forest management should favor native oak, hickory, and tulip-poplar. Large openings for fast-growing tulip-poplar regeneration could be considered.
- Do not make many plans in areas stocked in beech and beech root suckers for another 2-3 years. It is not entirely determined that beech will face full mortality, and it is premature to consider doing anything to these sites other than invasive plant control.
- If the land trust desires planting stock, choose drought-hardy trees and shrubs and remember that all planted material requires deer protection and water at least during the first growing season. If this is unlikely to be practical at this parcel, it is suggested that you rely solely on natural regeneration. Note that pitch pine is a very hardy tree that grows on some of the most rugged and arid sites in the state, and is also part of a severely imperiled ecosystem and forest type. Chestnut oak and bear oak are also extremely drought hardy trees that commonly grow on ridges and ledges.
- Request a full bird survey of the parcel or any other land trust property by contacting the DEEP Wildlife Division ([Wildlife Division Office Directory](#)) or Audubon Connecticut ([Staff, Location, and Contact Information | Audubon Connecticut](#)). You could also request a complete plant survey, if this information is not already produced. It is suggested that you contact Bill Moorhead for advice and contact information to assist with that: william.moorhead@ct.gov

The DEEP website has many educational materials available on numerous aspects of managing for healthy forest resources: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/forestry/ct-forestry-division>

Here is a valuable link to the Connecticut Forest Action Plan from 2020. Most recommendations and missions by the DEEP Forestry Division can be linked to this comprehensive document which is produced after extensive surveys and interviews with stakeholders of our state's forest ecosystems and resources: [2020-approved-ct-forest-action-plan.pdf](#)

Here is a "Story Map" presentation of this plan that is fascinating and very helpful in understanding the principles of the statewide plan: [Connecticut's 2020 Forest Action Plan \(arcgis.com\)](#)

For information on how habitats have changed in Connecticut see [Habitat History slide show](#) on the Belding WMA webpage.

Check out the [Native Landscaping slide show](#) for more information on the importance of native plants.

Want to learn much more? Become a Master Woodland Manager! Annual application deadline for landowners and land trust members is July 15, so you have nearly a year to consider and apply for the next available round. More information: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/deep/forestry/mwm-flier.pdf>.

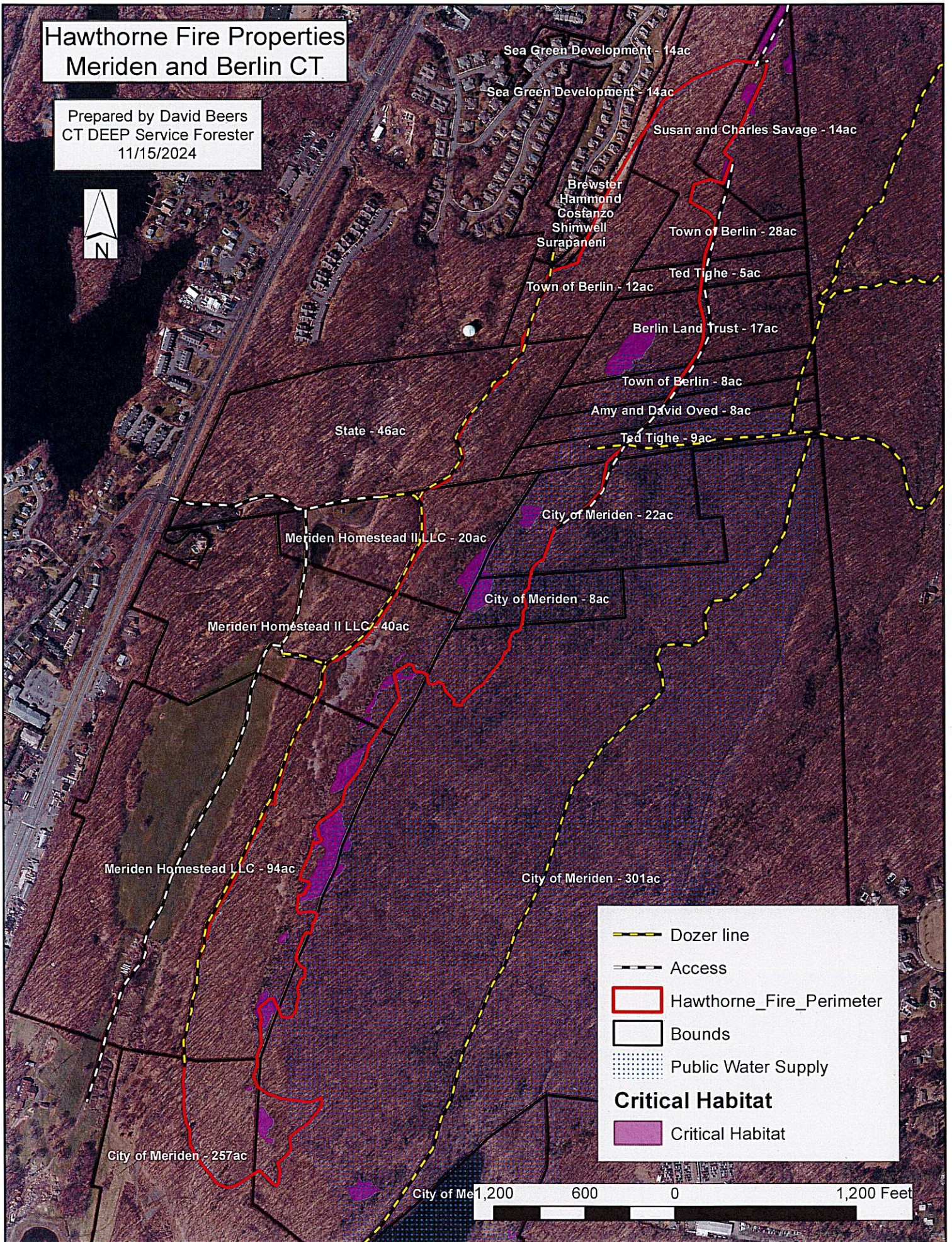
Interested in a forester presentation for your land trust? You can fill out this online request form: [Education and Outreach Request \(Page 1 of 2\) \(office.com\)](#)

Please feel free to share this report!



Hawthorne Fire Properties Meriden and Berlin CT

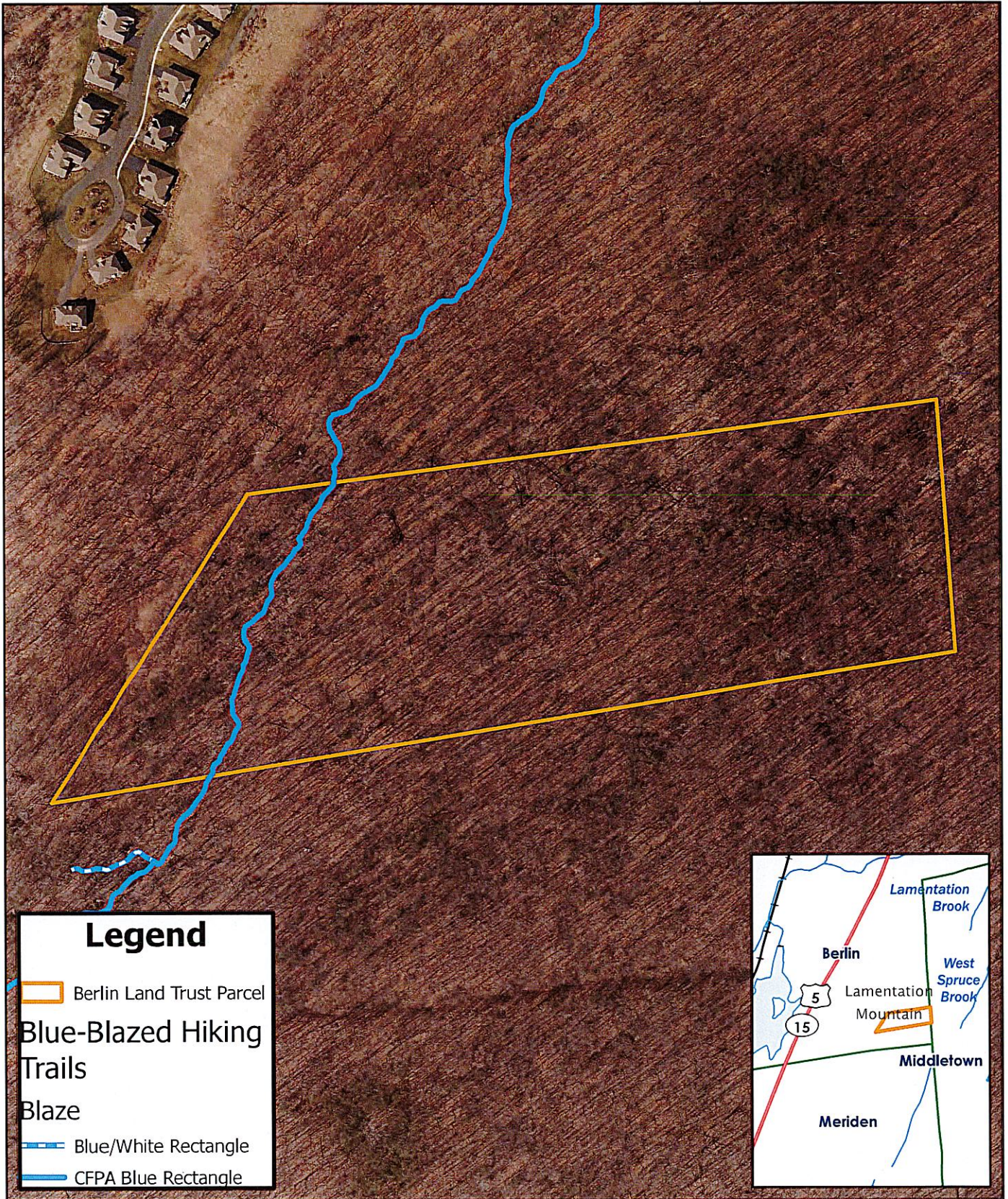
Prepared by David Beers
CT DEEP Service Forester
11/15/2024



Parcel Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin

15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31



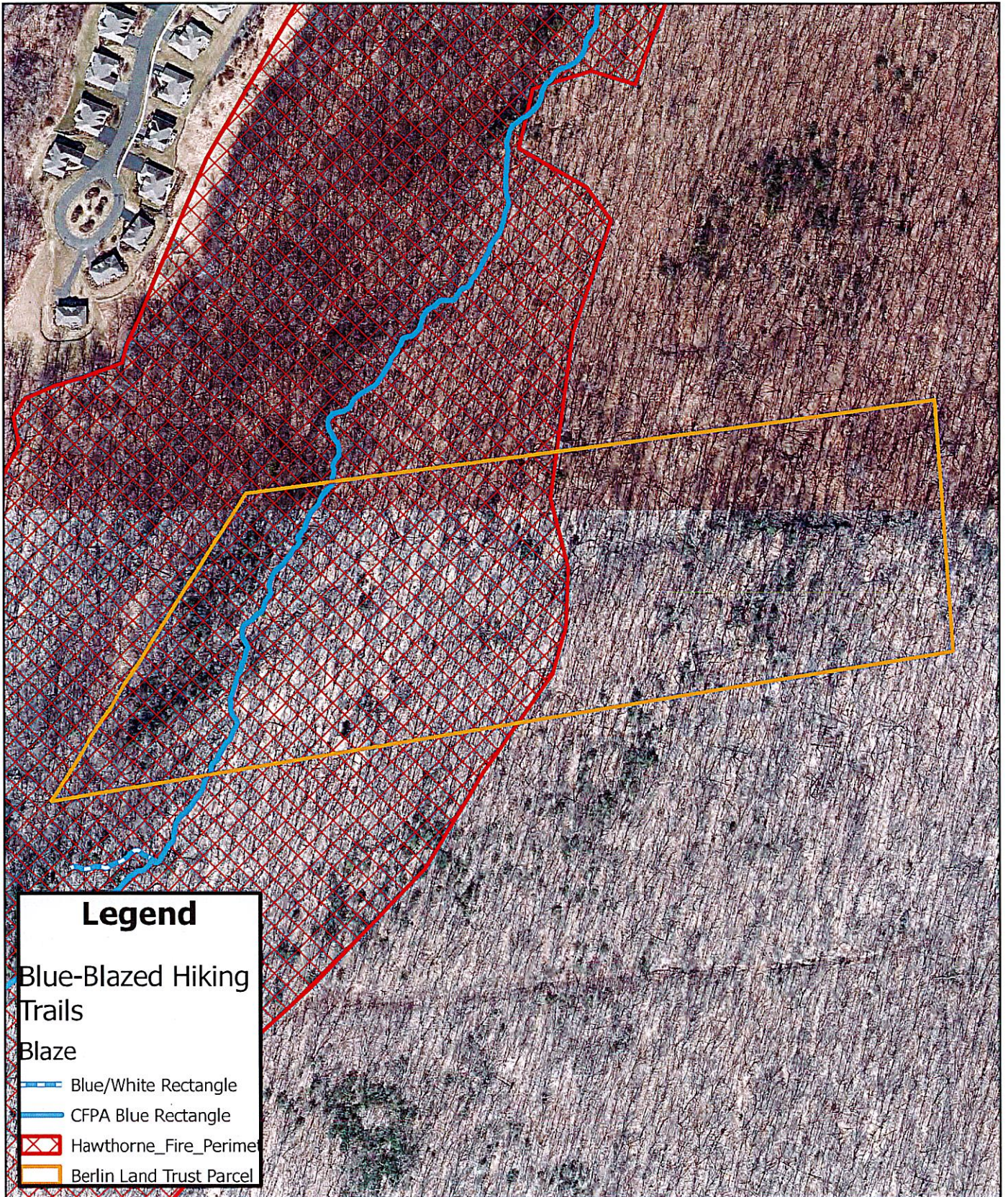
Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry

Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire

Parcel Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin

15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31

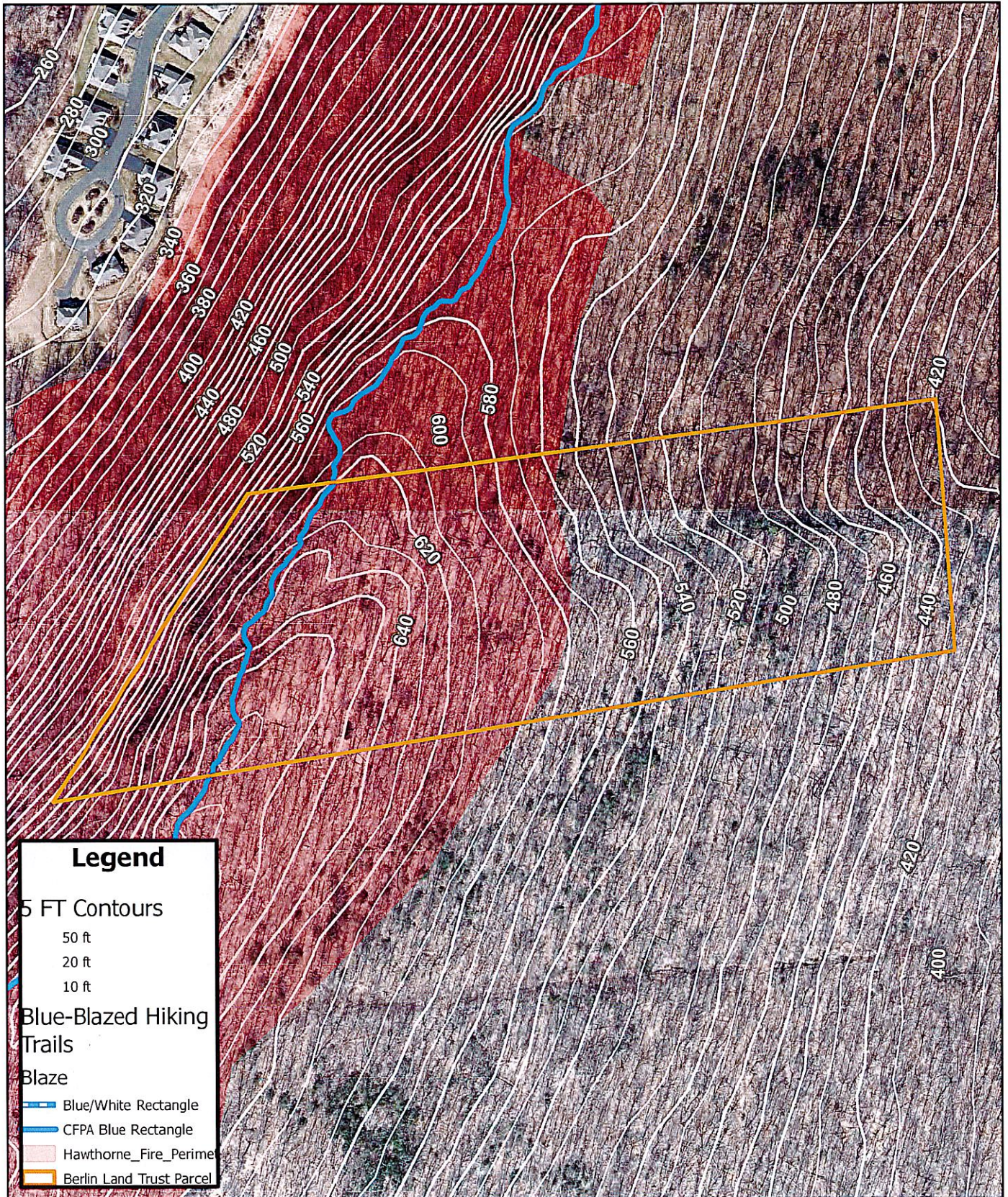


Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry

Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire

Contour Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin
15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31



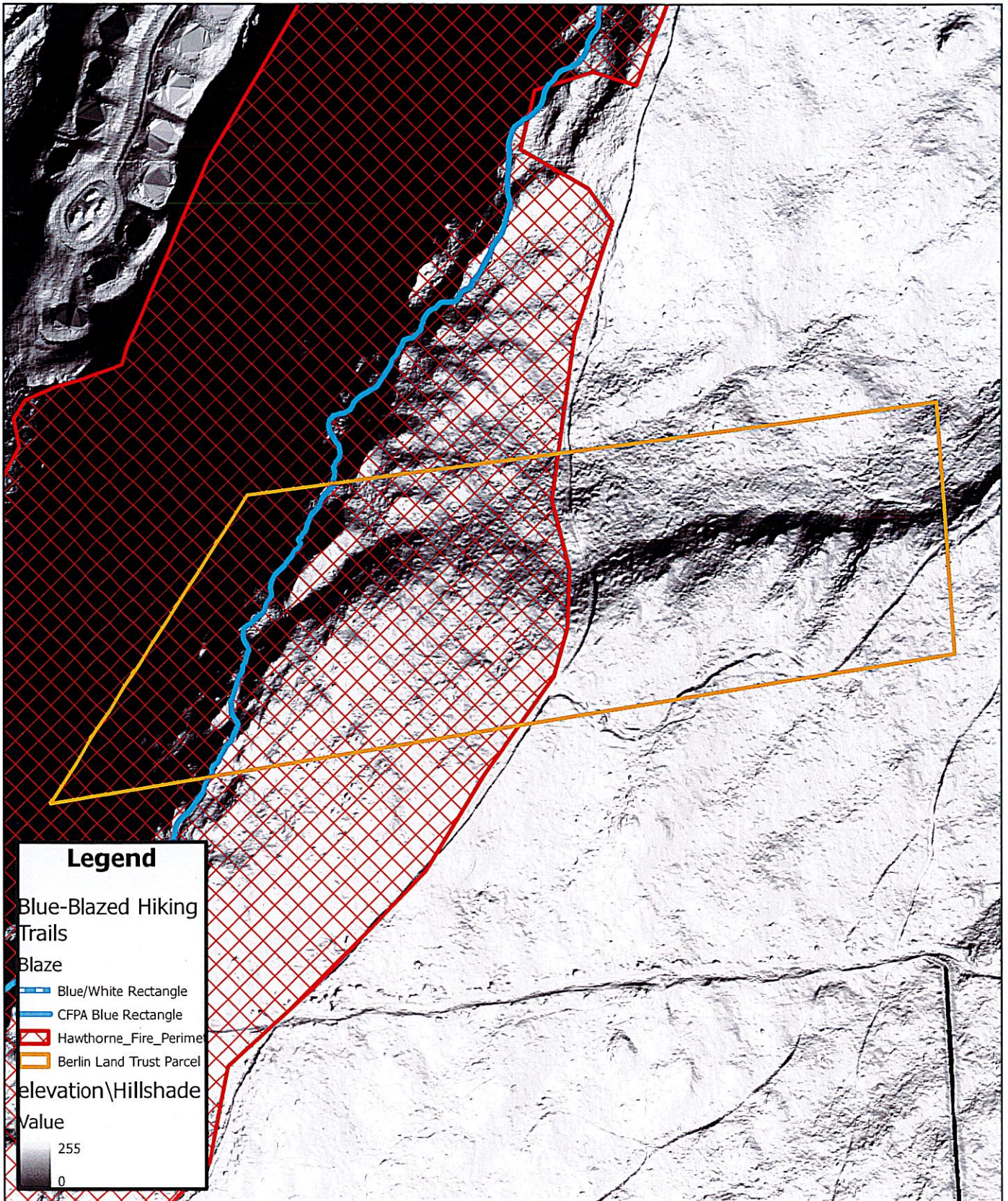
Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry

Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire

LiDAR Map: SE

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin

15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31

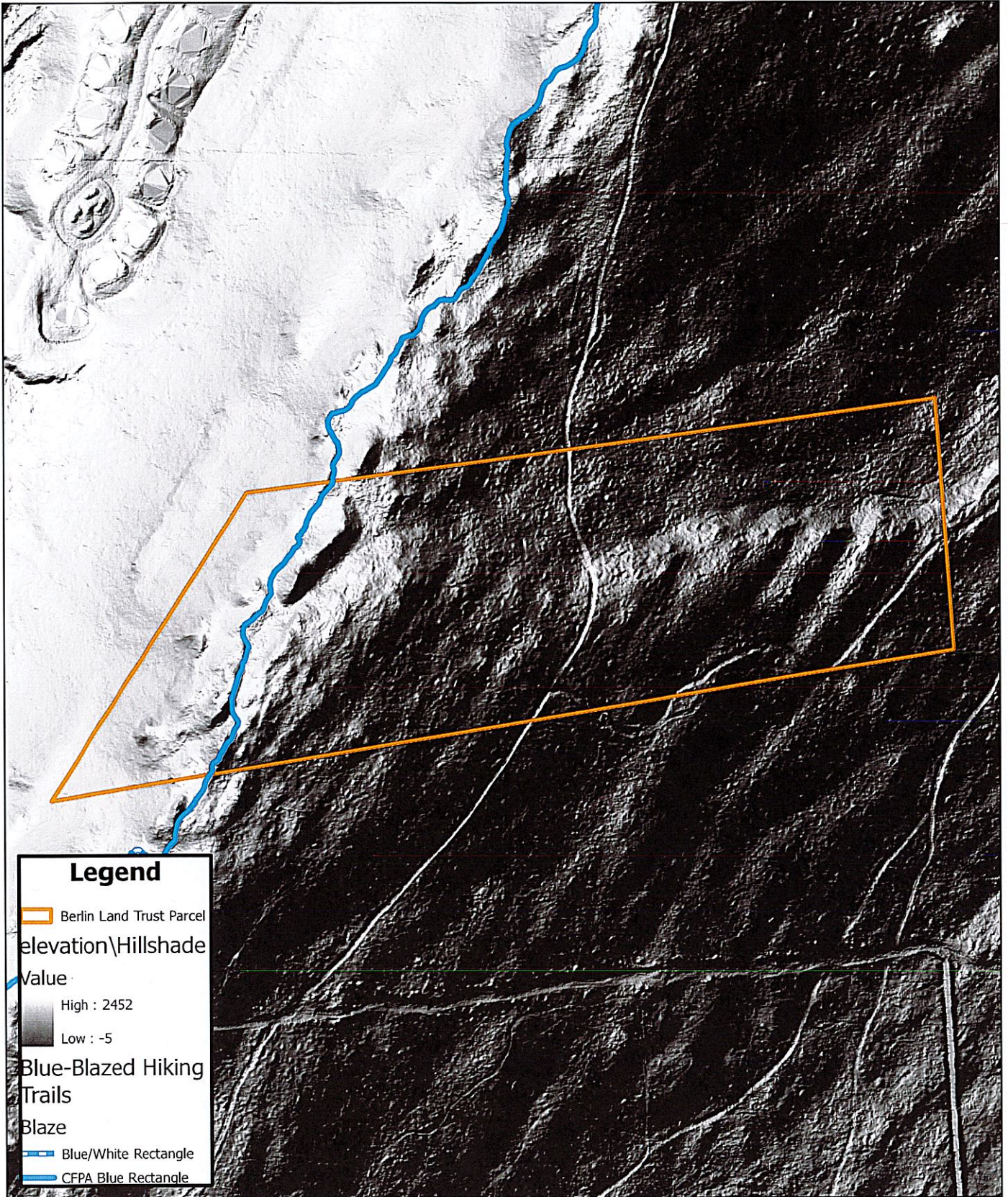


Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry





Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire

LiDAR Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin
15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31



Legend

-  Berlin Land Trust Parcel
-  elevation\Hillshade
-  Value
-  High : 2452
Low : -5
-  Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails
-  Blaze
-  Blue/White Rectangle
-  CFPA Blue Rectangle



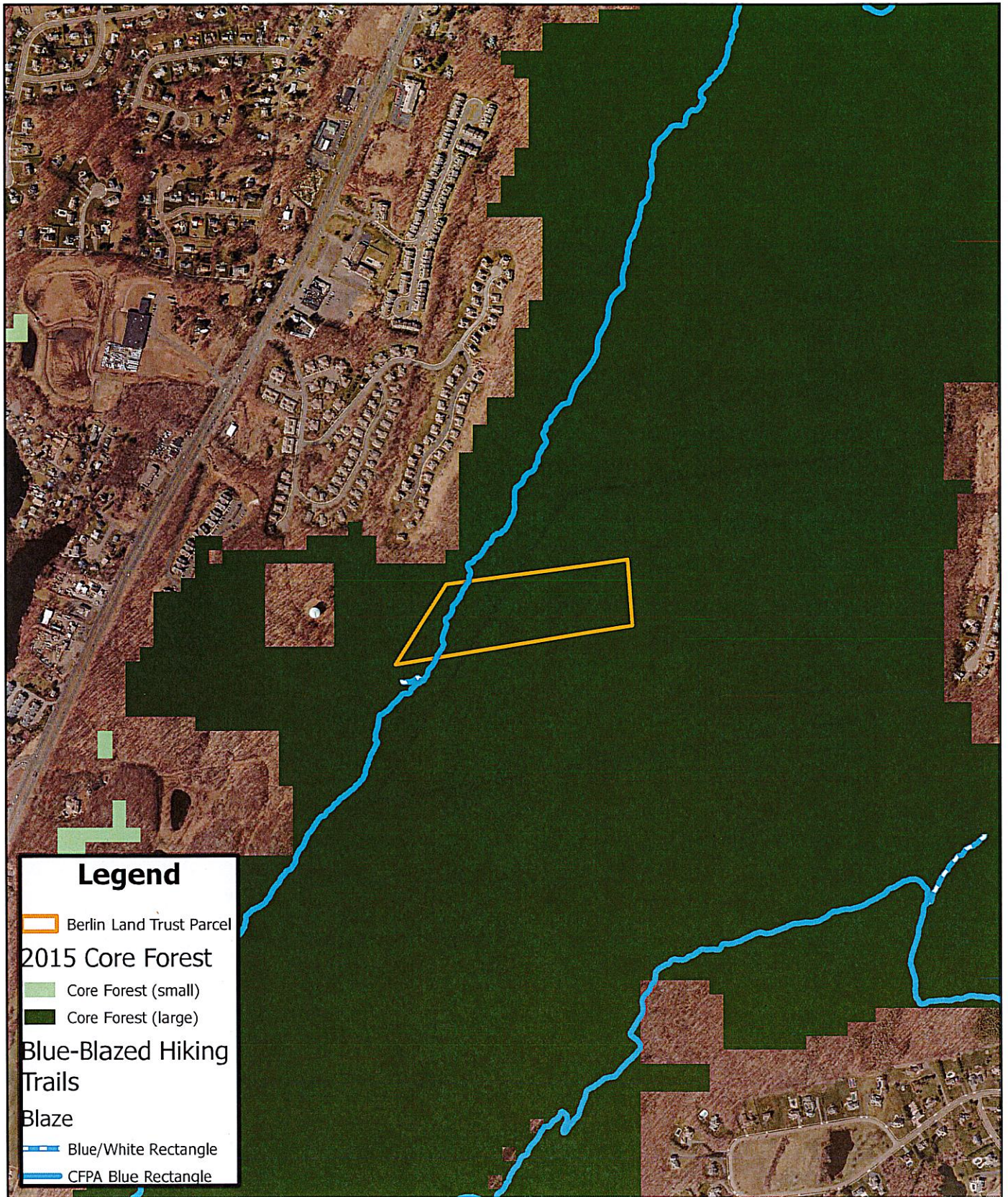
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Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry

Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire

Core Forest Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin
15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31



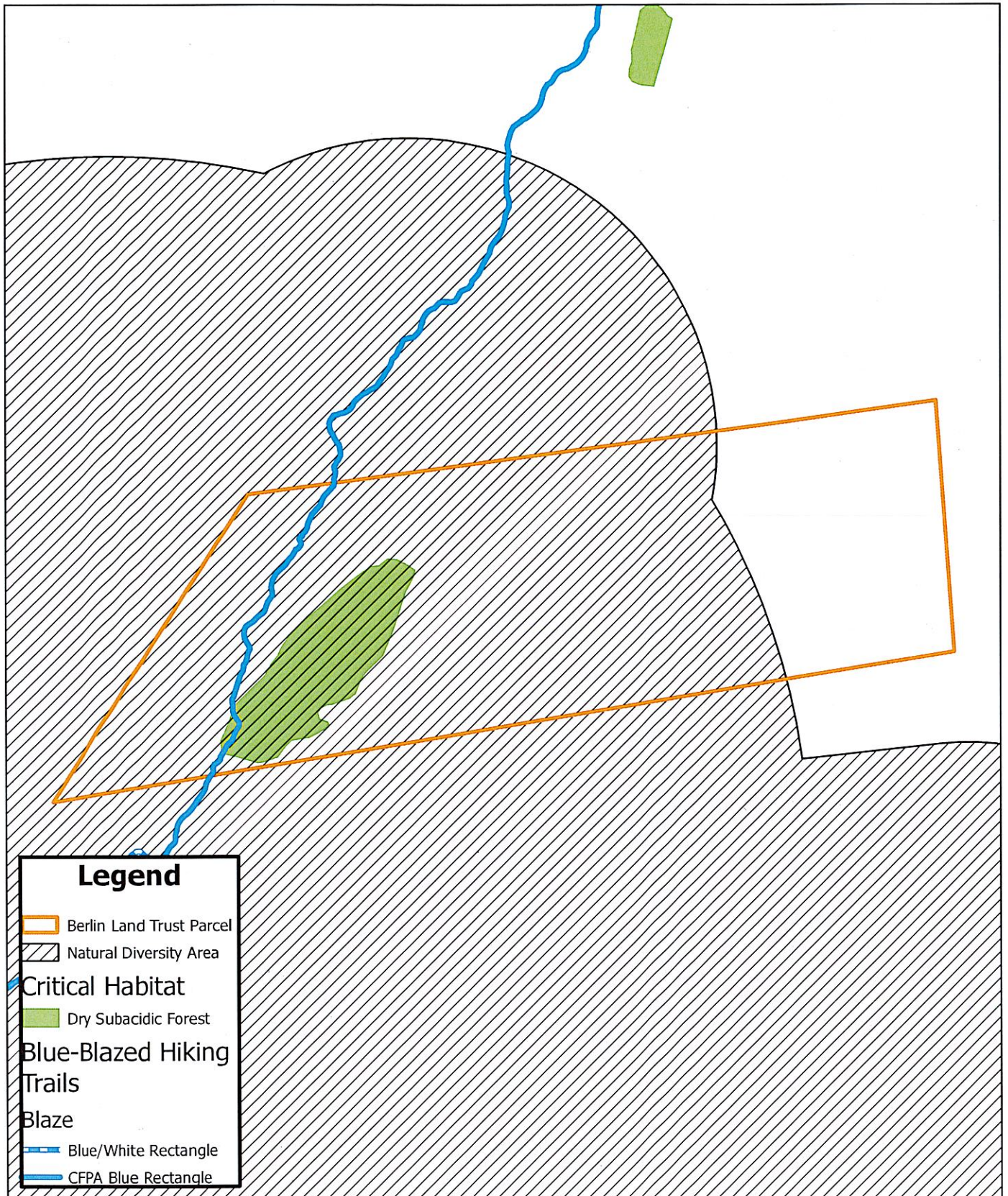
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Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry

Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire

NDDDB Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin
15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31



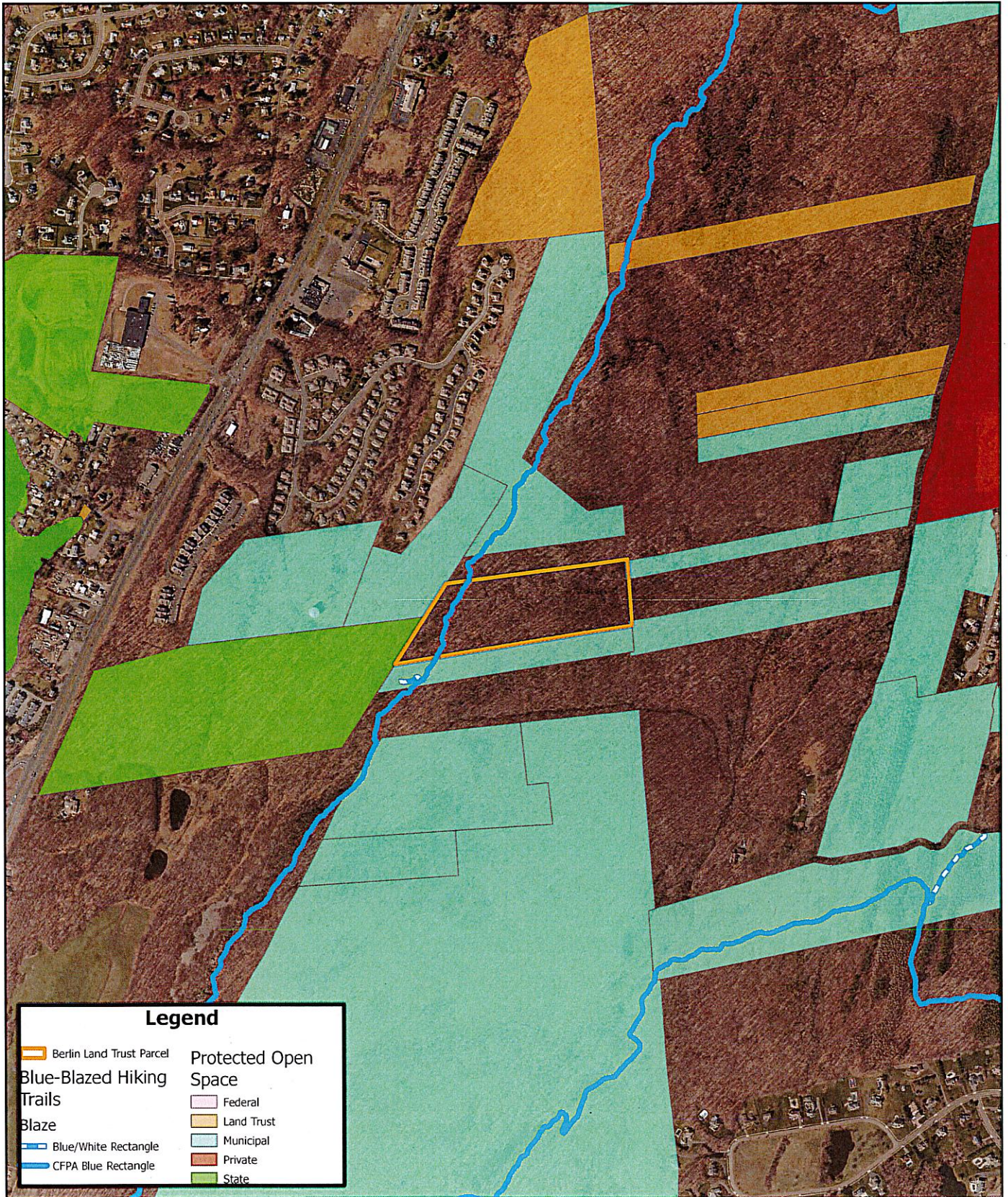
Prepared by Frank Cervo
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CT DEEP Division of Forestry

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RE: Hawthorn Fire

Protected Open Space Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin

15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31



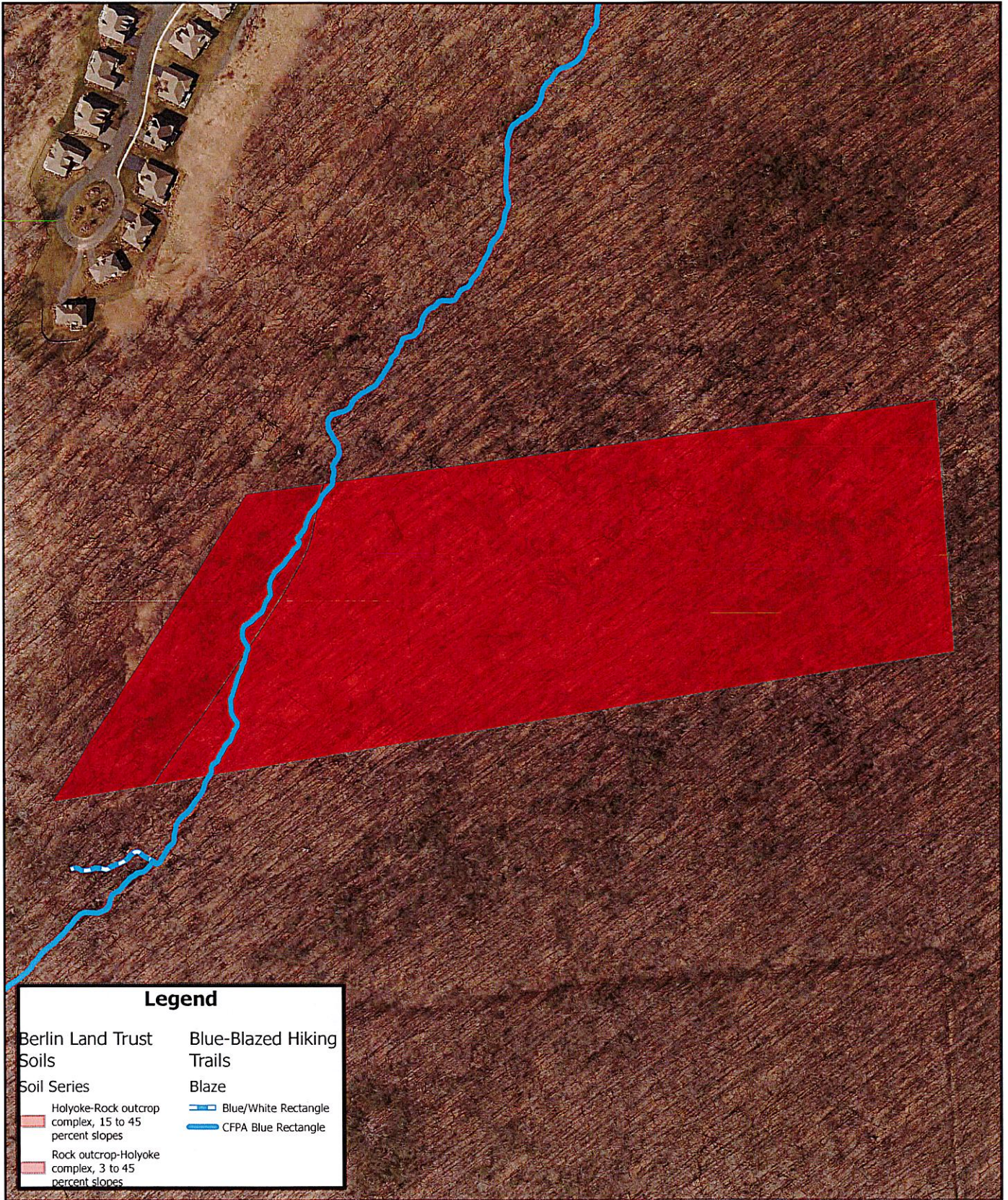
Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry

Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire

Soil Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin

15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31



Legend

Berlin Land Trust
Soils

Soil Series

Holyoke-Rock outcrop
complex, 15 to 45
percent slopes

Rock outcrop-Holyoke
complex, 3 to 45
percent slopes

Blue-Blazed Hiking
Trails

Blaze

Blue/White Rectangle

CFPA Blue Rectangle



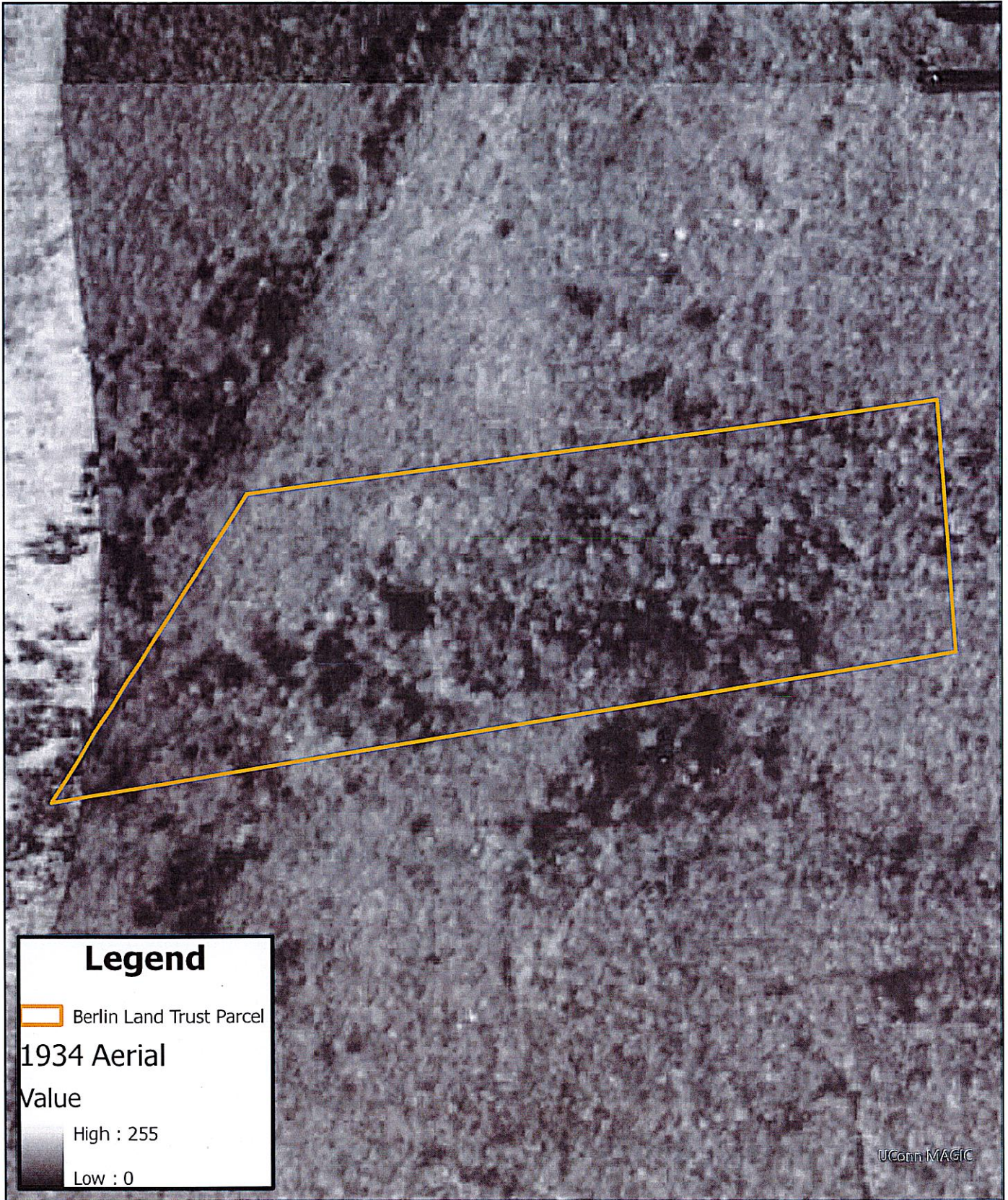
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Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry

Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire

1934 Map

0 Berlin Tpke, Berlin
15.6 acres; Parcel #27-4/153/31



Prepared by Frank Cervo
Service Forester
CT DEEP Division of Forestry

Prepared for
Berlin Land Trust
RE: Hawthorn Fire



APPENDIX OF LATIN NAMES

TREES

Red Oak	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	Eastern Hemlock	<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>
Tulip-Poplar	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Quaking Aspen	<i>Populus tremuloides</i>
Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Bigtooth Aspen	<i>Populus grandidentata</i>
Black Birch	<i>Betula lenta</i>	Blackgum	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>
White Oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>	Yellow Birch	<i>Betula alleghaniensis</i>
Hickory	<i>Carya Sp.</i>	Chestnut Oak	<i>Quercus montana</i>
Black Oak	<i>Quercus velutina</i>	Black Cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>
Scarlet Oak	<i>Quercus coccinea</i>	White Pine	<i>Pinus strobus</i>
American Beech	<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>
Sugar Maple	<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Paper Birch	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>
Sycamore	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	White Ash	<i>Fraxinus americana</i>
Black Locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	Eastern Redcedar	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>
Cottonwood	<i>Populus deltoides</i>	Basswood	<i>Tilia americana</i>
Slippery Elm	<i>Ulmus rubra</i>	Gray Birch	<i>Betula populifolia</i>
Pitch Pine	<i>Pinus rigida</i>	Pin Cherry	<i>Prunus pensylvanica</i>

NATIVE UNDERSTORY

Eastern hophornbeam	<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	Spicebush	<i>Lindera benzoin</i>
American hornbeam	<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	Witch Hazel	<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>
Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier Sp</i>	Mountain Laurel	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>
Lowbush blueberry	<i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i>	Huckleberry	<i>Gaylussacia baccata</i>
Highbush Blueberry	<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	Sweet Pepperbush	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>
Striped Maple	<i>Acer pensylvanicum</i>	Holly	<i>Smilax</i>
Hobblebush	<i>Viburnum lantanoides</i>	Greenbrier	<i>Ilex</i>

EXOTIC INVASIVES

Barberry	<i>Berberis Sp.</i>	Burning Bush	<i>Euonymus alatus</i>
Multi-flora Rose	<i>Rosa multiflora</i>	Bittersweet	<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>
Privet	<i>Ligustrum Sp</i>	Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera Sp</i>
Russian Olive	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>	Tree-of-Heaven	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>

TO: The Honorable Mayor and Town Council

FROM: W. Lee Palmer, Interim Town Manager 

DATE: December 10, 2024

SUBJECT: Land Recording Contract

Summary of Agenda Item:

Currently, the Town Clerk's Office uses Valsoft Corporation, Inc. dba Cott Systems for the land recordings, fee systems, marriage licenses and dog licenses. The contract will expire in December 2025. As you may remember there was a ransomware attack on Cott Systems on Christmas Day in 2022 and since the Town was hosted in their cloud system, the office was impacted for about a month. In February of 2023, Cott Systems was sold to Valsoft Corporation, Inc.

The Clerk's Office would like to move to a new vendor in January 2026, Info Quick Solutions, Inc. aka IQS.

	Cott	IQS
Monthly fee	\$1,155.00	\$1,650.00
Monthly OIB fee (historical records)	\$ 180.00	\$0
Audit – per document	\$.60	\$1.40

The fee for calendar year 2026 for Info Quick Solutions, Inc. will be \$19,800. The audit fee will probably be about \$4,000 for the calendar year. The Town will also now host the information; it will no longer be hosted to the cloud.

Currently, we are paying Cott Systems approximately \$16,770 per year. During FY 2023/2024 the Town Clerk's Office collected \$357,944.30 in land record recordings and conveyance fees. The amount of fees collected totally depends on the housing market – FY 2021/2022 the Town Clerk's Office collected \$510,309.54 in land record recordings and conveyance fees.

There will also be a fee to convert the OIB (historical records) to the new software in the amount of \$6,000. This will be paid by the Town Clerk's Preservation Account.

Funding:

Computer Support 001.05.0511.0.53813.00000

Contractual Services 001.05.0511.0.53814.00000

Action Needed:

Move to approve waiving the town's bidding procedures and award a four-year contract starting in January of 2026 with IQS in the amount of \$19,800 plus auditing fees of about \$4,000 (\$1.40 per document). There will be a onetime charge of \$6,000 to convert the historical records to the new software paid for by the Town Clerk's Preservation Fund.

Attachments:

IQS Proposal

Prepared By: Kate Wall, Town Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KW', located to the right of the 'Prepared By' text.



Info Quick Solutions, Inc.
7460 Morgan Road Liverpool, NY 13090
matta@iqsworks.com • (800) 320-2617

November 11, 2024

Kate Wall
Berlin Town Clerk
240 Kensington Road
Berlin, CT 06037

Dear Ms. Wall:

IQS is pleased to submit a proposal for a land records management system. IQS has experienced tremendous growth built upon our ability to combine technical knowledge with a thorough understanding of the Town Clerk's office functions as well as the Town Clerk's relationships among other departments, to develop creative, customized, and user-friendly solutions.

IQS proposes a solution that employs the most current technologies available that will provide the Town Clerk's office with a comprehensive integrated records management system to fee, index and image land, map, vitals, trade names, licenses, military discharge, and dog records.

We have developed a plan for the Town Clerk's Office to seamlessly transition to our records management system, including data conversion, implementation, training, and ongoing support.

IQS is excited by the opportunity to work with the Town of Berlin to implement a system that can expand well into the future. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BJO", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Brian J. Owens
Vice President of Sales



**Proposal For Land Records Management System
Town of Berlin, CT**

November 11, 2024

Info Quick Solutions, Inc.

7460 Morgan Rd. Liverpool, NY 13090
matta@iqsworks.com • (800) 320-2617

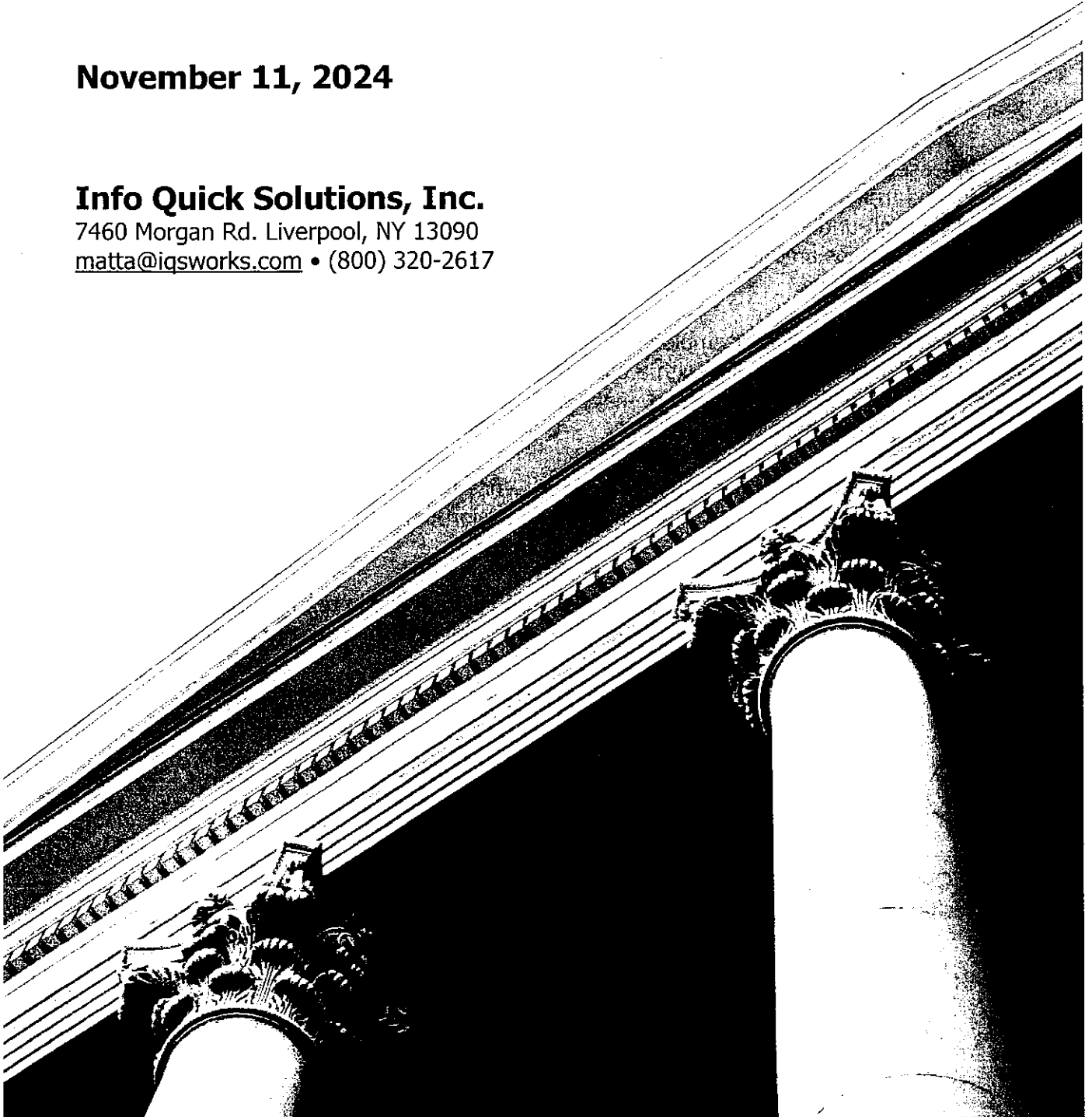




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I. Executive Summary

Info Quick Solutions, Inc. (IQS) is pleased to submit a proposal for the Berlin Town Clerk's records management system.

It has been a privilege to serve many Town Clerks in Connecticut over the past fifteen years. IQS has established a track record of excellent service, quality products, and innovation. We have delivered many software updates and enhancements consistent with our commitment to continuous improvement.

Our software suite, Solution, integrates all office functions into a user-friendly and easily-adaptable interface. Upon review of this proposal you will learn why Solution powers municipalities throughout the Northeast, including 53 cities and towns in Connecticut.

In addition to our best-in-class software suite, we deliver world-class support. This proposal includes unlimited on- and off-site support. Calls to our office are answered by live people and routed to the appropriate support person, who is empowered to solve any problems that may arise.

Berlin will receive expert consultation throughout the contract. As a full-service company, IQS has the resources and knowledge to develop creative solutions.

Company Profile

IQS is a privately-held, veteran-owned, debt-free New York State corporation specializing in records management services. Our founder, Bernie Owens, has decades of experience in the field and has spearheaded numerous industry innovations.

Our Liverpool, NY facility includes a state-of-the-art microfilming and imaging lab, indexing department, support center, programming staff, and data center. We employ approximately 50 people, representing many collective years of experience. We pride ourselves on high staff retention, which correlates to our excellent customer service and ability to innovate.

Experience

As an industry leader in land records management, IQS has a deep knowledge and expertise in the business operations of the Town Clerk's office. We provide a wide range of solutions to municipalities of all sizes in Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Maine, and New Jersey. IQS has implemented more than 100 installations.



Solution

Our philosophy is that software is never done. Our software suite is constantly being improved to accommodate feedback from our customers and integrate industry changes.

The Town of Berlin will receive expert consultation from IQS. As a full-service company, IQS has the resources and knowledge to develop creative solutions. We are excited by the opportunity to provide a system that can expand well into the future.



II. Proposed Solution

A. System Overview

Our software suite, Solution, integrates all office functions into a user-friendly and easily- adaptable interface. It is designed using Microsoft .NET technologies.

The application logic resides in modules that are independent of both the database and the user interface. This architecture allows functionality to be delivered to both Windows desktop clients and intranet/internet Web clients.

The system features a flexible workflow that can be adjusted as the situation demands. Administrators may easily identify the status of all documents via a real time "Work Status" console which facilitates ad hoc adjustments to workflows.

Users can scan documents at any time during the workflow, including prior to recording.

1. Technology Architecture

Program: Microsoft .NET

Database: Oracle 19c

Server: Windows Server 2022, 2 vcpu, 12GB RAM

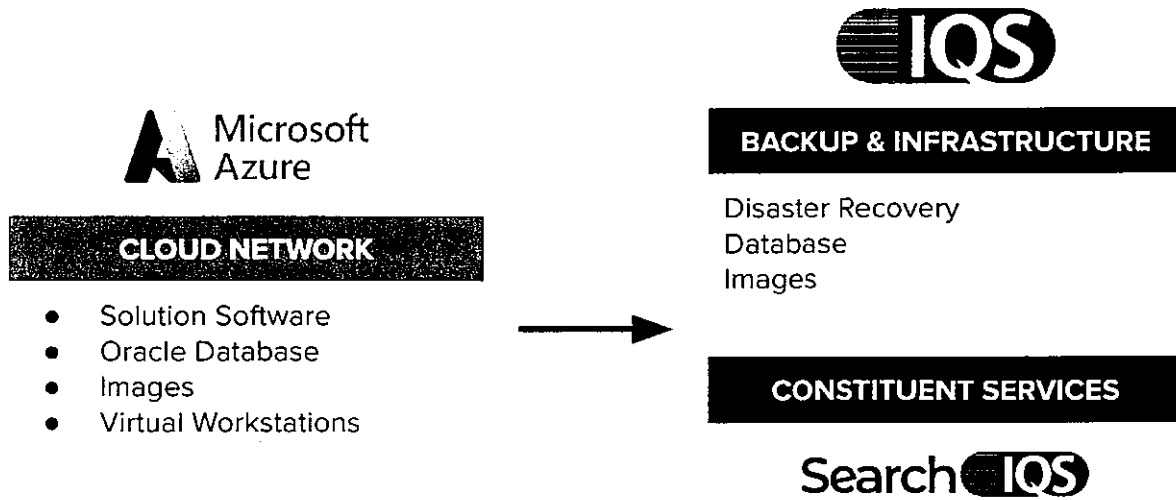
Workstations: Windows 11 Professional, 16GB RAM

IQS does not use any proprietary hardware. We can provide hardware recommendations based on our experience with a variety of devices.

This proposal includes the option to host the database and application on premises or in the cloud. Both offer the same, robust desktop experience.

Solution Cloud runs on Microsoft Azure. Users connect through a secure, encrypted channel. Access is limited to the Solution application, which requires additional authentication. Access can also be limited by time or location.

IQS maintains multiple controls to ensure the integrity of the County's critical data. In addition to redundancy in Microsoft Azure, IQS maintains a complete backup of the County's database and images in our Liverpool, NY data center. This data center also contains a siloed, read-only copy of the database for the online search portal.



2. Security

The application security model uses a familiar users and groups structure. User access to screens and/or specific functions on a screen is easily controlled within the system. Sealed documents require users to have additional security credentials.

The system requires a username and password for access. Security levels are controlled by the system administrator using a flexible administrative interface within the program. Various access levels are granted for processing rights such as scanning, indexing, cashiering, reporting, and searching. Additional access levels are granted for supervisory functions such as voiding, revising/editing transactions, rescanning, deleting records, etc.

The system maintains extensive audit logs which record all modifications made to transactions and the administrative tables.



B. Software Features

1. Data Entry

Data entry screens are optimized for efficiency and accuracy. Where appropriate, data fields have autofill or select lists to minimize keystrokes. Repeated data may be carried over from one screen to the next, from one document to the next, or held in a clipboard ring. Validation and auto-cleanup rules may be applied to fields to ensure consistency of data. Document screens automatically reconfigure to show fields specific to the current document.

2. Fees

Fee formulas may be configured for document groups or individual document types. Fee line items may be exempted or overridden. Pricing for fees (cost per page, per name, etc.) is easily changed by an authorized user. Receipts may be configured to print in either detail or summary mode.

3. Cashiering

The system contains a fully integrated cashiering module. All tax and fee calculation methods are supported.

Main features include:

- Ability to optionally fully index a document at the counter
- Ability to optionally scan at the counter
- Easily rearrange documents on a receipt prior to recording
- Ability to quickly enter multiple documents of the same type (e.g. tax liens)
- Ability to suspend a transaction
- Ability to automatically generate rejection letters
- Ability to automatically generate certified copies
- Simple one-click method to manage apportionments
- Integration with financial packages (e.g. MUNIS, Quick Books)

4. Indexing

Indexing can be performed at either the cashiering stage or later. The indexing module features a queue whereby the user either predefines attributes of the documents to be indexed (e.g. deeds only) or simply requests the next document in the queue.



Main features include:

- Optimized screen layout for indexing from the scanned image
- Dual monitor support
- Multiple devices to facilitate more efficient indexing (lookup tables, repeat keys, etc.)
- User-defined filters for record selection
- One-click access to view document receipt from the screen
- Easily regenerate a cover page from the indexing screen when information initially entered at the counter was inaccurate

5. Verification

The verification module provides ultimate flexibility for the user. The system supports sight, key, and combination verification options. Selection criteria may be defined by the user in the same manner as the indexing module.

Main features include:

- Optimized screen layout for verifying from the scanned image
- Dual monitor support
- User-defined filters for record selection
- One-click access to view document receipt from the screen
- Easily regenerate a cover page from the indexing screen when information initially entered at the counter was inaccurate

6. Imaging

The system supports both single and batch scanning during any point in the workflow. The scanning module contains numerous automatic and manual cleanup functions as well as the ability to skip blank pages and automatically detect the page length.

7. E-Recording

Solution has fully-integrated E-Recording capabilities. Documents are received in a queue for staff to review. They can then be electronically stamped and recorded. If a document needs to be rejected, a rejection letter can be customized and sent back to the submitter electronically.

We are integrated with all E-Recording vendors currently in the State of Connecticut.



8. Dog Registry System

The dog registry system allows for easy retrieval of information, fast processing of new and renewal transactions, and the printing of dog licenses.

Main features include:

- Issuing original licenses, renewals, replacement tags, or transfers
- Full reporting suite to fulfill local and state requirements
- Rabies tracking and reporting
- Secure internet lookup for animal control or law enforcement

IQS offers an online dog license renewal service during the open renewal period. Dog owners can look up their registrations and pay through an easy-to-use website. The website calculates the amount due and seamlessly updates information in the Solution software. The Clerk's Office can quickly process registrations through a queue, assigning tag numbers and printing licenses with one click.

9. Vital Records

The vital records program allows users to index and scan birth, death, and marriage records.

Main features include:

- Monthly reporting, including billing reports
- Ability to print and certify copies of records
- Efficient records search

10. Public Search

The in-office public search module is simple enough for the average user, yet powerful enough for the professional.

Main features include:

- Ability to view results in index or document mode
- Ability to simultaneously search multiple names, document types, and municipalities
- Ability to search names on both sides of a document (e.g. Deed where John Smith is the Grantor and Mary Jones is the Grantee)
- Document cart for easy printing of entire documents or specific pages
- Supports escrow or drawdown accounts for document printing



- Features document queue for the general public prints, allowing prints to be released when payment is collected.

The system also includes an internet access component at **SearchIQS.com**. IQS handles customer support, maintenance, and fee collection. Public users will only see documents designated by the Town Clerk; staff members can be given password-protected access to other data.

Images and data from the Town's in-house production server are replicated and stored on a web server maintained at our Liverpool, NY facility. IQS maintains redundant fiber optic lines to maximize system uptime and an automatic natural gas generator to provide service continuity.

11. Reporting

The application uses Crystal Reports as the main report engine. Reports can be printed or exported in several formats including Microsoft Word, Excel, and PDF.

The Report Explorer module categorizes and displays the authorized reports for each user. Reports can be archived for future reference.

IQS will develop custom reports as needed at no extra cost to the Town.

12. Archiving

A variety of archiving methods are available to ensure the permanence of the Town's critical data. The system provides a simple method to prepare scanned images for conversion to archival microfilm. Images can be exported to a variety of formats suitable for archiving, including TIFF and PDF.

13. Fraud Alert

Fraud Alert allows users to sign up online and receive email alerts whenever a document, such as a deed or mortgage, is recorded under their name in the Department of Real Estate. It gives homeowners peace of mind and allows them to quickly take action on unauthorized transactions.

IQS offers this service at no cost to the Town or its constituents. It is available at <https://searchiqs.com/fraudalert>.



C. Ongoing Services

1. Training and Support

Unlimited training and support are included for the duration of the contract. This includes both remote and on-site methods, depending on the situation.

IQS provides email and toll-free telephone support Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM EST.

Our support procedure is as follows:

1. Call or email is received by technical support personnel
2. Severity level is determined
3. Support specialist responds within required time frame
4. Problem resolution

IQS responds to support calls in relation to problem severity. For example, mission critical failures such as the system being down will receive immediate action. IQS will respond to less severe issues within 1 hour.

2. Software Updates

Our philosophy is that software is never done. As a result, feature updates and enhancements are provided at no additional charge during the contract.

Historically, major updates have been delivered every six months. This occurs primarily through a VPN connection during non-business hours.

Our modular design provides users with ultimate flexibility. Although all customers receive the upgrades, features may be enabled or disabled based upon customer preference.

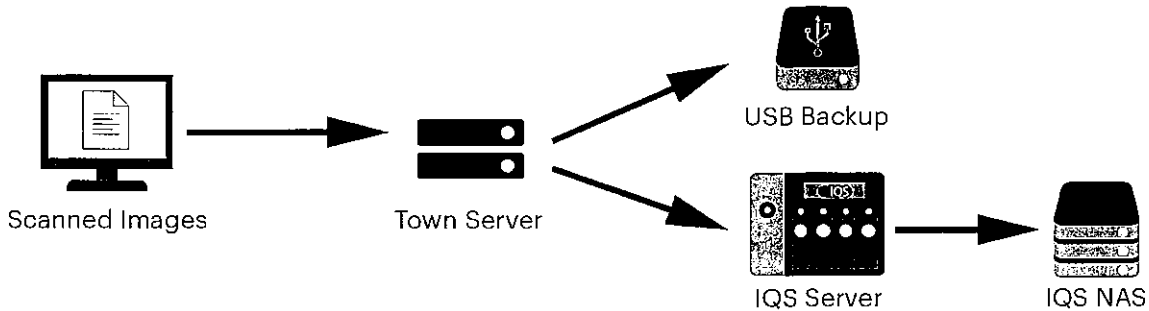
Since IQS maintains all customers on the current version of the software, there are no end-of-life cycle issues.

IQS utilizes several methods to keep customers current with any system changes or updates including user group meetings, our website, webinars, and email. When updates become available, IQS will contact the Town to determine the best method to deliver the update or change. Updates could be delivered either remotely or on-site.

3. File Backup and Disaster Recovery

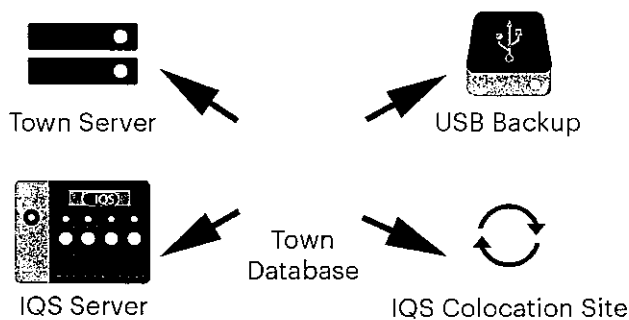
IQS has stringent backup policies in place to ensure the safety and security of the Town's data.

Image Backup



Images are immediately backed up to a USB backup drive on the server as they are scanned. They are simultaneously pushed across the internet to our FTP site. Once a day, those images are backed up from our storage server over to our NAS. IQS verifies that all files are accounted for at the end of each month.

Database Backup



IQS runs scripts that securely transmit the database over an encrypted VPN tunnel to our servers. There is also a copy that gets transferred over to an external hard drive at the client facility, a copy on the Town server, and a copy at the IQS colocation site.

Our customers are not dependent upon IQS to run on a day-to-day basis. All processing is done at the client site.

IQS maintains redundant fiber optic lines as well as a gas-powered backup generator.

In the event of a system failure, IQS would provide remote access to the database while restoring local hardware and software.



III. Proposed Hardware

The proposed system does not use any proprietary hardware. IQS will consult with the Town Clerk to determine what hardware will be required to operate the proposed system.

IQS will assist the Town Clerk's office with any needed hardware integration at no additional cost.



IV. Implementation Plan

A. Project Timeline

A more detailed plan will evolve after in-depth evaluation and discussion with the Town Clerk, IT staff, and any other stakeholders, expanding on the following phases:

PHASE	TASKS
1. Site Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather detailed information about business practices to build fee schedules, document codes, reports, etc.• Analyze networking environment• Set up project management portal
2. Data and Image Conversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write, test, and debug conversion/upload programs• Meet with Town staff to review results• Upload data to new system• Configure all necessary hardware
3. Installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Install and configure software• Upload any remaining unconverted data• Assign lead trainer to project
4. Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop custom training program• Provide extensive on-site training to designated personnel
5. Implementation ("Go Live")	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schedule after all hardware and software are tested, converted data is uploaded, and staff has successfully completed training• IQS staff remain on site to provide technical and training support as needed

Most implementations of this scope take 90 days to complete.



1. Site Preparation

The main objectives during this phase are to gather detailed information regarding the Town Clerk's business processes, analyze the networking environment that the system will interact with, and determine system hardware placement.

During this phase, IQS system staff will be meeting with the Town Clerk's office to gather information necessary to prepare the system's reference tables. This information will be used to build fee schedules, document codes, reports, etc.

We will also be meeting with Town IT to determine the level of involvement needed. Typically, involvement is limited to the provision of data from the legacy system, any network settings, and system access if applicable.

IQS will set up a project management portal to keep project stakeholders up-to-date throughout the process.

2. Data and Image Conversion

IQS has developed numerous auditing and validation procedures to ensure an accurate and complete data conversion process. Our expert team members have overseen the conversion of millions of index lines and images.

IQS will write, test, and debug any necessary conversion programs. We will meet on a regular basis with Town staff to review the results of the data conversion process prior to uploading to the new system.

We take complete responsibility for the conversion process. The Town should not expect to have to do any extensive corrections of the converted data. IQS regards converted data that requires extensive corrections by Town staff an unacceptable outcome.

IQS has converted several Connecticut towns from the Town of Berlin's current Land Record Management System.

3. Installation

During this phase, software is installed and configured for each workstation and server. All hardware and software are tested.

Usernames, passwords, permissions, and other accessibility measures are finalized. Any remaining unconverted data is uploaded to the system at this time. This generally occurs the weekend before going live with the new system.



4. Training

A Lead Trainer will be assigned to the project and a custom training program will be developed based upon the results of the site assessment.

As part of the agreement, IQS provides unlimited on-site support and training. Extensive training will be provided in all areas of system use, maintenance, and hardware. IQS will provide on-site training to Town staff, IT, and other personnel designated by the Town Clerk. Sessions can also be conducted for abstractors and public users. Learning will be reinforced by hands-on use of the test database which is populated with converted data.

IQS recognizes that no two offices are alike. Therefore, we constantly monitor training progress and adjust the duration and number of sessions according to user progress. Our training supervisor will communicate frequently with the Town Clerk to discuss progress and assess future training needs, especially during the first month of system implementation.

Furthermore, IQS training staff will be on-site during the first week of system launch to assist staff as needed. Training will continue as the situation warrants. It is our practice to provide training as long as it is needed instead of providing an arbitrary number of training hours.

5. Implementation (“Go Live”)

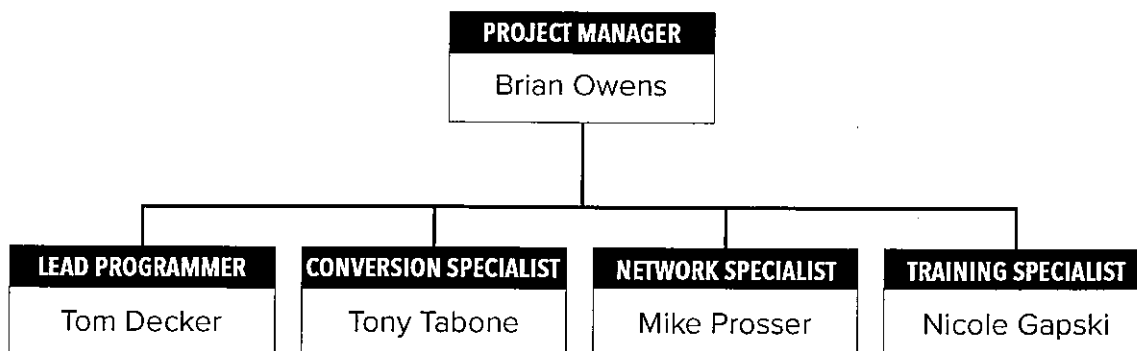
This phase is scheduled once all aspects of the system hardware and software have been tested, the converted data is uploaded to the system, and staff has successfully completed training.

IQS programming, training, and networking staff will be available on-site minimally for the first week to provide technical and training support as needed.

Toward the end of the first week, the IQS Project Manager will meet with the Town Clerk to discuss any system implementation issues that arise and determine which IQS personnel are required to remain on-site. A plan will also be developed to address any outstanding system or staff issues.



B. Project Team



Brian Owens, Project Manager

Brian has over 10 years of experience in the records management industry. He has overseen countless projects which meet or exceed the scope of the project contained in this proposal.

Tom Decker, Lead Programmer

Tom is the lead developer of the proposed solution. He has extensive experience working with a variety of database technologies and programming languages. He is also an expert in data conversion, overseeing the conversion of millions of index lines and images.

Tony Tabone, Conversion Specialist

Tony has over 25 years of experience in the Land Records industry. He has successfully completed numerous conversions, including several systems of the type in use by the Town.

Mike Prosser, Network Specialist

Mike has expertise in networking, hardware, and data storage/transfer technologies. He has successfully managed multiple transfers of land records data to their host servers. He has also been involved in staging and implementing indexing and imaging systems.

Nicole Gapski, Application Training Specialist

Nicole has extensive experience training end users in the software. Her thorough understanding of land records is built on years of on-site consultations with clients. The combination of this practical and training expertise makes her a highly effective trainer, as she can understand applications from both the user and trainer perspectives.

IQS does not outsource or subcontract any project.



V. Pricing

1. Solution Application Software and Licenses (up to 8 licenses)

- Solution recording software and departmental licenses to include land, plans, dog licensing (including online renewal portal), vitals (including online marriage application portal), trade names, military discharges, foreclosure registrations
- Solution enhancements and upgrades
- Software or reporting changes required by state or federal legislation
- Custom report writing
- All software licenses including database, server, workstation

2. Professional Services

- Data conversion
- Site preparation visits
- Staging, installation, and configuration of all software
- Unlimited software training and support
- Offsite backup/disaster recovery
- Hardware integration and configuration

3. Hardware

- Hardware listed in *Section III*.
- Unlimited support, including replacement or repair, for all IQS-provided hardware

ITEM	PRICE
Software Only- On-Premises	\$1650/month
Software Only- Hosted	\$2,300/month (36 mos)
Online Records Lookup	\$2.00 per page to print, revenue share (\$1.00 to the Town, \$1.00 to IQS)
Index Verification (Audit)	\$1.40 per document (optional)
Archival Microfilm - Storage	\$0.08/image to create - \$1.50/roll annual to store (optional)

 Brian J. Owens
 Vice President of Sales

November 11, 2024
 Date



Term is 48 Months, pricing is good for 90 Days

VI. References

IQS provides records management services for over 50 cities and towns in Connecticut.

MUNICIPALITY	CONTACT
Ashford, CT	Sherri Mutch, Town Clerk (860) 487-4401 smutch@ashfordtownhall.org
Beacon Falls, CT	Len Greene Sr., Town Clerk (203) 729-8254 lgreene@townofbeaconfalls.com
Canterbury, CT	Natalie Ellston, Town Clerk (860) 546-9377 nellston@canterburyct.org
Cheshire, CT	Patricia King, Town Clerk (203) 271-6601 pking@cheshirect.org
Colchester, CT	Gayle Furman, Town Clerk (860) 537-7217 townclerk@colchesterct.gov
Colebrook, CT	Debra McKeon, Town Clerk (860) 379-3359 dmckeon@colebrooktownhall.org
Cornwall, CT	Vera Dineen, Town Clerk (860) 672-2709 cwltownclerk@optonline.net
Coventry, CT	Lori Tollman, Town Clerk (860) 742-7966 ltollmann@coventryct.org



Durham, CT

Nicole Charest, Town Clerk
(860) 349-3453 | ncharest@townofdurhamct.org

East Hampton, CT

Patty Burnham, Town Clerk
(860) 267-2519 | pburnham@easthamptonct.gov

East Haven, CT

Lisa Balter, Town Clerk
(203) 468-3201 | sgravino@townofeasthavenct.org

Fairfield, CT

Betsy Browne, Town Clerk
(203) 256-3090 | bbrowne@town.fairfield.ct.us

Hartford, CT

Noel McGregor, Jr., Town and City Clerk
(860) 757-9750 | noel.mcgregor@hartford.gov

Kent, CT

Darlene Brady, Town Clerk
(860) 927-3433 | townclerk@townofkentct.org

Killingly, CT

Elizabeth Wilson, Town Clerk
(860) 779-5308 | lwilson@killinglyct.org

New Haven, CT

Michael Smart, City Clerk
(203) 946-8349 | msmart@newhavenct.gov

Newtown, CT

Debbie Aurelia Halstead, Town Clerk
(203) 270-4210 | debbie.halstead@newtown-ct.gov

Norfolk, CT

Linda Perkins, Town Clerk
(860) 542-5679 | nfkclerk@snet.net



Orange, CT

Mary Shaw, Town Clerk
(203) 891-2122 | posullivan@orange-ct.gov

Plainfield, CT

Dianne Talbot, Town Clerk
(860) 230-3010 | bgardiner@plainfieldct.org

Redding, CT

Michele Grande, Town Clerk
(203) 938-2377 | townclerk@townofreddingct.org

Ridgefield, CT

Wendy Gannon Lionetti, Town Clerk
(203) 431-2783 | townclerk@ridgefieldct.org

Rocky Hill, CT

Sandra Merrill Wieleba, Town Clerk
(860) 258-2705 | townclerk@rockyhillct.gov

Salisbury, CT

Patricia Williams, Town Clerk
(860) 435-5182 | pwilliams@salisburyct.us

Sharon, CT

Linda Amerighi, Town Clerk
(860) 364-5224 | sharontownclerk@yahoo.com

Shelton, CT

Margaret Domorod, City and Town Clerk
(203) 924-1555 | m.domorod@cityofshelton.org

Stratford, CT

Susan Pawluk, Town Clerk
(203) 385-4020 | spawluk@townofstratford.com

Thompson, CT

Renee Waldron, Town Clerk
(860) 923-9900 | townclerk@thompsonct.org



Torrington, CT

Carol Anderson, City and Town Clerk
(860) 489-2241 | carol_anderson@torringtonct.org

Warren, CT

Julie Wechter, Town Clerk
(860) 868-7881 | townclerk@warrenct.org

Waterbury, CT

Antoinette Spinelli, Town Clerk
(203) 574-6806 | townclerk@waterburyct.us

Westbrook, CT

Joan Angelini, Town Clerk
(860) 399-3044 | jangelini@westbrookct.us

West Haven, CT

John Lewis, City Clerk
(203) 937-3534 | jlewis@westhaven-ct.gov

Windham, CT

Patricia Spruance, Town Clerk
(860) 465-3013 | pspruance@windhamct.com

Windsor, CT

Anna Posniak, Town Clerk
(860) 285-1902 | townclerk@townofwindsorct.com

Woodbury, CT


Maria Mancini, Town Clerk
(203) 263-2144 | lindac@woodburyct.org

Woodstock, CT

Judy Walberg, Town Clerk
(860) 928-6595 | townclerk@woodstockct.gov

Agenda Item No. 12
Request for Town Council Action

TO: The Honorable Mayor and Town Council

FROM: W. Lee Palmer, Interim Town Manager 

DATE: November 27, 2024

SUBJECT: Town Council Calendar 2025-2026

Summary of Agenda Item:

The following notice was sent to the Chair of the Calendar Committee by the Town Clerk's Office. "In accordance with the Berlin Charter Section 8-3 and the Freedom of Information Statute, each Board and Commission in town, whether elective or appointive, shall file by January 31st of each year with the Town Clerk, a schedule of regular meetings for the ensuing year. Also, the statutes state that no such meeting of any such public agency shall be held sooner than thirty days after such schedule has been filed. When you adopt the meeting calendar for 2025 your board or commission should also approve any meeting(s) that would be held in January 2026."


Councilor Coppola as Chair of the Calendar Committee has proposed the enclosed calendar for 2025 and January of 2026. This calendar was distributed at the previous Council Meeting.

Action Needed:

Move to approve the adoption of the Town Council Meetings Calendar for 2025 and January of 2026.

Attachments:

Proposed Town Council Meeting Calendar

Prepared By: Kate Wall, Town Clerk 

Town Council Calendar 2025 and January 2026
(Routinely the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the Month)

January 7th & 21st

February 4th & 18th

March 4th & 18th

April 8th & 22nd

Budget Referendum April 29th - last Tuesday of April – Town Charter Sec. 7-6(b)

May 6th & 20th

Budget Referendum May 27th – held four weeks after the first referendum – Town Charter Sec. 7-6(e)

June 3rd & 17th

July 8th & 22nd

August – No meetings

September 2nd & 16th

October 7th & 21st

November 25th

Election Day November 4th, 2024

Swearing in ceremony is the 18th (no meeting between election and swearing in)

Thanksgiving will be November 27th.

December 9th

January 6^h & 20th - 2026

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://berlinc-t-gov.zoom.us/j/89185951042?pwd=AVFT62COPXfpSUuT7T8hBKQgZbx8OB.1>

Meeting ID: 891 8595 1042

Passcode: 439824

- +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

**TOWN OF BERLIN
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday, November 20, 2024
Town Council Chambers (in person)
Remote Meeting
6:00 P.M.**

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Kaczynski called the Special Town Council meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

C. ROLL CALL:

Those in attendance were:

Councilor Sandra Coppola
Mayor Mark Kaczynski
Councilor Mark Pruzin
Councilor Peter Rosso
Councilor Donna Veach

Absent:

Councilor Kate Atkinson
Councilor Charles Paonessa

Also in attendance:

Interim Town Manager W. Lee Palmer – <i>via Zoom</i>
Corporation Counsel Jeffrey Donofrio

D. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Topic re: Presentations concerning Bright Feeds.**
 - a. **Mayor Kaczynski and State Representative Veach will provide updates.**
 - b. **DEEP will provide an update.**
 - c. **Attorney Donofrio will comment on any legal matters.**

PUBLIC WILL BE INVITED TO ADDRESS THE TOWN COUNCIL WITH QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS AFTER THE PRESENTATIONS.

Mayor Kaczynski stated that tonight's meeting is intended to provide residents with an update on the noise and odor concerns with Bright Feeds. Representatives from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Town Attorney are also present.

Bright Feeds has been in weekly contact with DEEP along with Mayor Kaczynski and State Representative Donna Veach. They have provided the Mayor with an update in the form of a letter that is attached to these minutes. Points of the letter stated that Bright Feeds expects to install the thermal oxidizer by early March, to further control odor before the thermal oxidizer is installed they are finalizing designs to raise the height of the emissions stack to increase air velocity and dispersion of emissions, they are working with DEEP to prepare for a broad array of stack tests to assess emissions from the facility, they were able to improve the sound pitch level at night by managing the facility's exhaust fan settings, and Bright Feeds reminds residents of the hotline they have set up for complaints.

Bright Feeds stated that they will continue to work closely with residents, local officials and DEEP to fully address all concerns as quickly as possible.

Mayor Kaczynski stated that the Police Department installed their newly received noise monitoring equipment which was in place for about two weeks. Results have been received and Mayor Kaczynski stated that the town will be hiring a sound engineer to interpret those readings. He added that the decibel levels were within the Town's standards.

Representative Veach stated that she and Mayor Kaczynski have been in contact with Bright Feeds and that DEEP has been trying to resolve the issues of concern.

Tracy Babbage, Bureau Chief of the Air Program at DEEP stated that her team is responsible for implementing clean air requirements. This matter is being overseen by their Enforcement Division led by its **Director Jake Felton**.

Ms. Babbage stated that the area where they have jurisdiction is the nuisance regulation. Their enforcement process is well defined and the way that process has been followed in this instance is consistent with how they address other enforcement cases. Ms. Babbage added that they are committed to working through the process and achieving a resolution of this matter.

Mr. Felton provided background on the situation with Bright Feeds and stated that his department is in contact with Bright Feeds on an ongoing basis to continue to reinforce the importance of eliminating nuisance odors and resolving the open violation they have with DEEP.

Bright Feeds has informed DEEP that they will be installing a regenerative thermal oxidizer (RTO) to replace their current odor neutralizing system. The RTO is generally considered more effective than other odor neutralizing technologies. It is a customized system, specifically engineered for the process that it is controlling therefore the estimated installation timeframe of early March 2025 is a reasonable if not aggressive installation period.

In the interim Bright Feeds will be investigating the possibility of modifying certain stack parameters to enhance dispersion. Dispersion enhancements in general are effective in reducing ground level pollutant concentrations, however it is too early for DEEP to determine if these enhancements will be successful in eliminating the odors.

On November 4th DEEP issued a test requirement letter to Bright Feeds requiring them to test their dryer stack for several pollutants including volatile organic compounds and particulate matter. Bright Feeds was required to submit a test protocol within 15 days of the transmittal of that test requirement letter which they did submit. DEEP is in the process of providing feedback on the test protocol to make sure the testing occurs under representative testing conditions and that they are using Federally approved test methods.

Once the testing methods are approved by DEEP, Bright Feeds will be required to conduct testing within 45 days, which should be in December. Testing will be performed by a third-party test contractor and audited by DEEP. Bright Feeds will be required to submit results of the test program within 60 days of the testing.

DEEP's investigation of the matter remains open and active. In general, DEEP does not comment further on enforcement strategy or hypothetical enforcement scenarios, however if at any point they do not believe that Bright Feeds is making earnest and diligent progress toward compliance their enforcement posture would be adjusted accordingly. DEEP is committed to seeing through to the full resolution of this issue.

State Senator Rick Lopes stated that he has been in contact with DEEP and suggested they provide a plan with timelines for Bright Feeds to follow which they have done. He also met with Berlin resident Ryan Malloy to discuss the concerns of Berlin residents affected by the noise and odor concerns, and he has made site visits to the facility. He added that residents with concerns can reach out to him at any time.

Mayor Kaczynski invited audience members to ask questions.

Jim Ostrowski, who works for Tasca Ford, asked why DEEP is not shutting the facility down until the new filtration system is put in place. The odors and noises have been making him sick.

Tyler Ciaffaglione, 520 Worthington Ridge – Mr. Ciaffaglione stated that the smells and sounds from Bright Feeds are horrendous. He has gotten sick from the smell adding that the odors could be detected at Berlin High School.

Ryan Malloy, 84 Juniper Lane – Mr. Malloy stated that he understands that there are processes that need to be followed but he is tired that this has been going on for 14 months and he is upset that Bright Feeds did not show up for tonight's meeting. He believes they should be shut down until all the problems are corrected. Residents in the affected area have had to sleep with noise cancelling earphones and earbuds to get any sleep at all.

He appreciates that the sound testing that was done by the Town needs to be analyzed but he would like to know what actions the Town will take when the pitch is found to be egregious. Corporation Counsel Donofrio stated that under the noise ordinance if there is a violation the company must be sent a cease-and-desist notice of violation. If they do not comply then then the Town can sue them in Superior Court.

Mr. Malloy stated that there is a company in Massachusetts that is having similar issues with residents and the States' Attorney General's office got involved in. Mr. Felton stated that DEEP has been in touch with them.

Mayor Kaczynski stated that residents can file a private nuisance suit against Bright Feeds.

Mr. Malloy stated that the town should have a smell ordinance. Corporation Counsel Donofrio stated that there is an existing statutory scheme for enforcement, so you do not see town odor ordinances. In response to residents' request to shut the business down he added that Bright Feeds does not have a permit to operate from the Town as it is regulated by the State. They are also not in violation of any zoning regulations.

Mr. Malloy added that Bright Feeds admitted that they had identified a pitch problem in their own study, which was remediated for a couple of months, but that pitch issue is back.

Adrian Wolski, 339 Worthington Ridge – Mr. Wolski stated that a representative from Bright Feeds came to his home and while he was there the representative called the facility, some adjustment was made, and the pitch went down a little bit, but it was only for one night. He added that if Bright Feeds has a right to operate don't residents have a right to sleep or enjoy their lives.

Mr. Wolski stated that they tested the sound one street over and heard nothing. Mayor Kaczynski added that he has contacted numerous residents from the neighborhood, and they do not hear anything which is odd and frustrating.

Mr. Malloy stated that there is a conflict of interest between Bright Feeds and the State as the company was given millions of dollars through the Green Energy program.

Linda Barton, 22 Schultz Place – Ms. Barton inquired if the results of the sound testing are public information as she knows a sound engineer. Mayor Kaczynski stated that that person needs to contact the Town directly to determine if they can be hired as an analyst. He does not want to release raw data until the analysis is complete.

Ron Kokofsky, 77 Circlewood Drive – Mr. Kokofsky stated that he is a school bus driver for New Britain Transportation. The windshield of his bus is always covered with a white sticky substance. He wants to know what that substance is and if it is affecting his health as well as the health of the students he transports.

Scott Footit, 158 Webster Ridge – Mr. Footit stated that he has continued to have to wash his truck twice a week and he is finding the substance on his vehicle every week not just intermittently. He added that the filter in his CPAP machine has been yellow.

Mr. Felton stated that DEEP is requiring testing of volatile organic gasses and the total particulate matter. As far as health effects that is more of a question for the Central Connecticut Health District and the Department of Public Health. Ms. Babbage stated that the Department of Public Health would be responsible for determining if there are any health concerns with what is coming out of the stacks.

Kristen Amodio, Central Connecticut Health District (CCHD) – Ms. Amodio stated that she is the Supervising Sanitarian for the Health District, and she has been working with the inspector for DEEP and has visited the facility. If the Health District were to issue a notice of violation it would be for a public health nuisance as the odor is crossing property lines.

Jim Ostrowski stated that he has been in contact with the Attorney General's office and was told that they can get involved if a complaint is filed. He suggested that residents file complaints with their office.

Alda (?) Johnson, Rocky Hill – Mr. Johnson stated that he visits his father in Berlin and believes the odor issue needs to be looked at from a psychological perspective as a person's body knows to react to those smells as something dangerous. Those smells are causing a stress reaction for people every day. He also questioned if the residue found on vehicles has been swiped for testing.

Kathryn Mease, 15 Main Street EB – Ms. Mease stated that she has smelled the odor at her daughter's daycare on Worthington Ridge and has recently started smelling it at her home. It is her understanding that any company that is omitting emissions must have some type of air quality permitting in place.

Mr. Felton stated that air quality permits are generally issued to chemical plants, petroleum facilities, etc. Bright Feeds does not have the potential emissions to trigger an air quality permit under the Clean Air Act. The permitting thresholds for that is in Section 22a-174-3a of the regulations of Connecticut state agencies. The stack test results will determine if the permitting thresholds are being exceeded.

Corporation Counsel stated that the permit that Bright Feeds has from DEEP is a food waste composting permit.

Gabrielle Frigon, Director of the Waste Engineering and Enforcement Division for DEEP – Ms. Frigon stated that Bright Feeds is a manufacturing facility and what was issued to that facility was a Beneficial Use Determination for the use of solid waste in a manufacturing process which was determined by General Statute 22a-209f which governs the receipt of the solid waste at the facility.

Elaine Andrews – Ms. Andrews stated that they know what is going into the facility, but no one knows what is coming out. She doesn't understand why no one has tested what they are finding on their cars, etc.

Scott Footit, 158 Webster Ridge – Mr. Footit asked if anyone has written to Bright Feeds to ask them for a concession.

Ryan Malloy stated that this issue requires a Project Manager. A plan must be drawn up and followed. He added that time is being wasted due to lack of organization.

June Daly, 67 Homecrest Drive – Ms. Daly inquired what Senator Lopes' roll is in regard to this situation and if he is working with DEEP to find a solution. She inquired if it would be helpful to

have a common form that residents could submit to DEEP to track the issues they are having. Ms. Daly added that a taller smokestack only elevates the emissions, but the smell is still there.

Mr. Felton stated that complaints can be submitted via email to DEEP. If concerns are about specific health effects, then the CCHD should be contacted. He added that what Bright Feeds is exploring doing with the thermal oxidizer would enhance dispersion it would not reduce the mass of the air contaminates omitted but the ground level concentrations would be much lower, hopefully to below an odor detection threshold.

Mary-Kathryn LaRose, 26 Woodruff Lane – Ms. LaRose stated that the public health nuisance due to odors crossing property lines should be further investigated. She added that it is disappointing that Bright Feeds did not attend tonight's meeting.

Kathryn Mease, 15 Main Street EB – Ms. Mease inquired if the Beneficial Use Determination that Bright Feeds received from DEEP was public information. Ms. Frigon of DEEP stated that it was and is available in their Records Center at 79 Elm Street in Hartford. She does not believe that file is currently available electronically.

Ms. Mease stated that there are environmental standards in the town's zoning regulations, and she is curious why that does not give the Town more standing. Corporation Counsel Donofrio stated that he will have a conversation with the Town Planner about that this week.

Jenna Calvo, Old Farms Place – Ms. Calvo stated that although she is not affected by the noise or odor, she is present to support those who are. She added that she agrees with Mr. Malloy that a Project Manager is needed.

Tracy Babbage reiterated that DEEP has been listening to everything that has been said and she wants to reassure everyone that they have a process that they must adhere to, and their goal is to move towards compliance and resolution. Information will be forthcoming regarding the testing being done and we've learned tonight that it will be helpful to coordinate with the local health district and the Department of Public Health.

Ryan Malloy asked Mayor Kaczynski to get a Project Manager for this issue. The Mayor stated that he and Representative Veach are managing it along with assistance from Town staff. Mr. Malloy stated that he would like to see the plan in writing. Representative Veach stated that everyone is moving as fast as possible to get this resolved.

Carol Salerno, Main Street – Ms. Salerno inquired about who is going to be responsible for taking the obtained samples and reporting back. Also, when will those results be available to the public.

Mr. Felton stated that DEEP will be sampling the stack emissions as total particulate matter which will not give the speciation.

Mayor Kaczynski stated that the action plan before the next meeting is to analyze the information obtained from the new noise meter, DEEP will continue with their investigation, and contact will be made with DPH to inquire about analyzing the matter on vehicles.

After discussion about when to hold the next meeting, it was agreed that an email status update will be sent out and posted on the Town's Facebook page the week of December 16th. The next in-person meeting will be held on Wednesday January 15, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Kaczynski stated that residents should call or email the Town Manager's office with detailed information regarding issues they are having with odors and noise as a way of tracking. The Town Manager's Assistant can be emailed at csullivan@berlinct.gov.

E. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

1. Pending Litigations – C.G.S.S. Sec. 1-200 (6) (B) strategy and negotiations with respect to pending claims or pending litigation – Riggins vs. Town

Councilor Veach moved to go into Executive Session; Pending Litigations – C.G.S.S. Sec. 1-200 (6) (B) strategy and negotiations with respect to pending claims or pending litigation – Riggins vs. Town at 8:25 p.m. Invited in: Corporation Counsel Donofrio.

Seconded by Councilor Rosso

Those voting in favor: Councilor Coppola, Councilor Pruzin, Councilor Rosso, Councilor Veach, Mayor Kaczynski

Vote being 5-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

Executive Session ended at 9:00 p.m.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Veach moved to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

Seconded by Councilor Rosso.

Those voting in favor: Councilor Coppola, Councilor Pruzin, Councilor Rosso, Councilor Veach, Mayor Kaczynski

Vote being 5-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

Submitted by,

Lisa J. Bush
Clerk of the Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://berlinc-t-gov.zoom.us/j/82289378282?pwd=SB3Z4GahQB00Cdy3tJG52fDh3YMaJc.1>

Meeting ID: 822 8937 8282

Passcode: 741376

• +1 646 931 3860 US

**TOWN OF BERLIN
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, November 26, 2024
Town Council Chambers (in person)
Remote Meeting
7:00 P.M.**

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Kaczynski called the Town Council meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

C. ROLL CALL:

Those in attendance were:	Councilor Kate Atkinson Councilor Sandra Coppola Mayor Mark Kaczynski Councilor Charles Paonessa Councilor Mark Pruzin Councilor Peter Rosso Councilor Donna Veach
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Also in attendance:	Interim Town Manager W. Lee Palmer Corporation Counsel Jeffrey Donofrio
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D. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:

Officer Drew O’Leary, Berlin Police – Officer O’Leary stated that during the current renovation of the Police Department it was discovered that new gym equipment for the fitness room was not included in the budgeting process according to the Public Building Commission (PBC).

As Vice President of the Police Union, Officer O’Leary wrote a letter to the Town Council providing several quotes for gym equipment. He added that the PBC told him that early on there was discussion that the union was going to pay for that equipment and Officer O’Leary stated that Union President John Flynn is unaware of agreeing to that and the union will not be paying for it.

Office O’Leary added that the PBC stated that there was a liability for the Town in owning that equipment, so Officer O’Leary reached out to the Middletown Police Union which had the same

issue and was told that they had developed a waiver of liability form which he reformatted to use in Berlin. Mayor Kaczynski stated he would have Corporation Counsel review the form. Corporation Counsel Donofrio added that it comes down to what the insurance carrier wants as waivers are not always enforceable. Officer O'Leary added that he would also look at what other towns have done.

Mayor Kaczynski stated that the Town would reach out to the insurance company.

E. MAYOR'S UPDATE:

Mayor Kaczynski stated that he visited Bright Feeds after a video of the sound emanating from the facility was posted on Facebook. The manager stated that they would be lowering the velocity of the fans which would change the pitch. The noise was not heard after that, and no complaints were posted on social media.

A variance is needed to raise the stack height and that will be on the Zoning Board of Appeals' agenda. The planned installation of the thermal oxidizer was also discussed and that should help with the odor issues.

Mayor Kaczynski stated that the Town will be hiring a sound engineer to analyze the results obtained from the new sound equipment that was put in place by the Police Department to monitor the noise concerns at Bright Feeds.

F. MEETING AGENDA – Immediately Following the Mayor's Update

Councilor Paonessa moved to add an item to the Consent Agenda: Approve waiving the Police Traffic Control fees in the estimated amount of \$400.00 for the Powder Puff Flag Football Fundraiser that will take place on November 26, 2024 at Sage park-Scalise Field. – Police Department

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

G. CONSENT AGENDA:

- 1. Topic re: Accept monetary donations totaling \$1,087.43 and deposit \$630.00 into the Unrestricted Donations account for the library's greatest need and deposit \$457.43 into the Friends of the Library Miscellaneous account for the purchase of a program, program supplies, a prize for library card sign up month and an annual museum pass renewal. – Berlin-Peck Memorial Library**
- 2. Topic re: Authorize a resolution that the Berlin Town Council may adopt the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2024-2029 as the official plan of the Town of Berlin. The respective officials identified in the mitigation strategy of the Plan are hereby directed to pursue implementation of the recommended actions assigned to them; Future revisions and Plan maintenance required by 44 CFR 201.6 and FEMA are hereby adopted as a part of this resolution for a period of five (5) years from the date of this resolution; An annual report on**

the progress of the implementation elements of the Plan shall be presented to the Town Council; and further resolve that W. Lee Palmer Jr., as Interim Town Manager of the Town of Berlin, is authorized and directed to execute and deliver any and all documents on behalf of the Berlin Town Council and to do and perform all acts and things he/she deems to be necessary or appropriate to carry out the terms of such documents, including, but not limited to, executing and delivering all agreements and documents contemplated by such documents. – Emergency Management

3. **Topic re: Approve waiving the Police Fees in the approximate amount of \$1,074.80 for the Holiday Shop and Stroll Event that took place on Saturday, November 16, 2024 at Griswold School from 9am -2pm. - Police Department**
4. **Topic re: Approve waiving the Police Traffic Control fees in the estimated amount of \$ 400.00 for the Powder Puff Flag Football Fundraiser that will take place on November 26, 2024 at Sage park-Scalise Field. – Police Department**

Councilor Paonessa moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

H. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Topic re: Authorize the Interim Town Manager to sign a three-year agreement (up to a total cost of \$124,201) with OpenGov/Vertosoft for the purchase of cloud-based procurement software utilizing Sourcewell contract #121923-SHI. – Finance**

Finance Director Kevin Delaney stated that this request is to move from the current manual RFP procedure to a cloud-based platform.

The three-year agreement would provide notable benefits to the Town including giving access to any RFP to over 7,000 vendors registered on OpenGov which increases the number of potential bidders, allowing for the online creation of RFPs and the opening and awarding of bids, providing alerts of expiring contracts, and allowing the uploading of larger files which would eliminate the file size limitation of the current process.

OpenGov works with many Connecticut towns. The installation process takes about five months to complete including loading current vendors and contracts as well the ability to house new contracts. Berlin's Purchasing Agent reached out to several towns regarding the system, and they all provided positive references. The Town also researched other options but found that OpenGov provided the best services.

Councilor Paonessa moved to authorize the Interim Town Manager to sign a three-year agreement (up to a total cost of \$124,201) with OpenGov/Vertosoft for the purchase of cloud-based procurement software utilizing Sourcewell contract #121923-SHI.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

2. **Topic re: Award Contract #2025-02 (Routine Repairs, Emergency Repairs, and Minor Construction of the Water and Sanitary Sewer Systems) in the amount of \$170,750.00 to Earth Contractors. – Water Control**

Water Control Manager Ray Jarema stated that only one bid was received regarding the request for outside services to perform routine and emergency repairs which the Town does not have the capacity to accomplish on its own within the Berlin Water Control district.

This contract is for the period of January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2026. Earth Contractors, LLC is the current contractor for the Berlin Water Control Commission and is always responsive to requests for service.

Councilor Paonessa moved to award Contract #2025-02 (Routine Repairs, Emergency Repairs, and Minor Construction of the Water and Sanitary Sewer Systems) in the amount of \$170,750.00 to Earth Contractors.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

3. **Topic re: Waive the Town's bidding process to purchase a spare pump from Carlson System, LLC for the Deming Road Pump Station in the amount of \$38,350.00, as this in the best interest of the Town. – Water Control**

Water Control Manager Jarema stated that the Berlin Water Control is completing the Deming Road Pump Station. The new design of this station calls for two larger horsepower pumps however it was decided that it would be a good idea to purchase a backup pump to have on hand to avoid delivery time issues if a pump were to fail.

Councilor Paonessa moved to waive the Town's bidding process to purchase a spare pump from Carlson System, LLC for the Deming Road Pump Station in the amount of \$38,350.00, as this in the best interest of the Town.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

I. APPOINTMENTS:

1. **Constables – 4 Vacancies – Terms would be until December 2025. Can be filled with R, D or U with no more than a bare majority to be from one political party (Section 8-6).**

2. **Economic Development Commission – Vacancy – Keith Bostrom resigned. Replacement term would be until January 31, 2029. Can be filled with a D, R or U.**
3. **Inland Wetlands & Water Courses Commission – Vacancy – John Russo resigned. Replacement term would be until January 31, 2027. Can be filled with a D or U.**
4. **Inland Wetlands & Water Courses Commission – Vacancy – Alternate - Replacement term would be until January 31, 2026. Can be filled with a D or U.**
5. **Mattabassett District – Vacancy – Replacement term would be until September 1, 2026. Can be filled with a D, R or U.**

Councilor Paonessa placed in nomination the name of Nicholas Stevens (U) of 148 Hartland Terrace for appointment to the Mattabassett District.

Mayor Kaczynski asked if there were any further nominations. There being no further nominations, he declared the nominations closed.

Vote being 7-0 in favor of Nicholas Stevens (U) to serve on the Mattabassett District. Term ending September 1, 2026.

6. **Plainville Area Cable Television Advisory Council (PACTAC) – 2 Vacancies – New terms would be until June 30, 2025. Can be filled with a D, R or U. There are only two members from Berlin for this board.**
7. **Public Building Commission – Vacancy – Replacement term would be until January 31, 2029. Can be filled with a D, R or U.**

Councilor Paonessa placed in nomination the name of J. Stephen Hinchliffe, Jr (U) of 176 Burgandy Drive for appointment to the Public Building Commission.

Mayor Kaczynski asked if there were any further nominations. There being no further nominations, he declared the nominations closed.

Vote being 7-0 in favor of J. Stephen Hinchliffe, Jr (U) to serve on the Public Building Commission. Term ending January 31, 2029.

8. **Veterans' Commission – Vacancy – Replacement term would be until January 31, 2027. Can be filled with a D, R or U.**
9. **VNA – Vacancy - Replacement term would be until January 31, 2027. Can be filled with a D, R or U.**

10. VNA –Vacancy - Replacement term would be until January 31, 2027. Can be filled with a D, R or U.
11. VNA –Vacancy - Replacement term would be until January 31, 2027. Can be filled with a D, R or U (Depending on the above appointments).
12. Water Control Commission – Alternate – Vacancy –Term would be until January 31, 2027. Can be filled with a D, R or U.
13. Youth Services Advisory Board (Youth Agency Representative) – Vacancy – Adam Marzi resigned. Replacement term would be until January 31, 2025.
14. Youth Services Advisory Board (School Representative) – Vacancy – Jan Zagorski resigned. Replacement term would be until January 31, 2025.
15. Youth Services Advisory Board (Service Consumer) – Vacancy – Cyndi McKinnon resigned. Replacement term would be until January 31, 2027.

Councilor Paonessa placed in nomination the name of Michael Urrunaga (U) of 1075 Orchard Road for appointment to the Youth Services Advisory Board (Service Consumer).

Mayor Kaczynski asked if there were any further nominations. There being no further nominations, he declared the nominations closed.

Vote being 7-0 in favor of Michael Urrunaga (U) to serve on the Youth Services Advisory Board (Service Consumer). Term ending January 31, 2027.

J. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT:

Interim Town Manager Palmer stated that the Town Employment Guide has been updated, reviewed by Corporation Counsel, and distributed to all employees.

K. SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Councilor Coppola stated that the Town Council calendar draft for 2025 was provided to Council members in their packet this evening. She asked that it be reviewed, and it can be voted on at the December meeting.

L. COUNCILORS’ COMMUNICATION:

Councilor Atkinson stated that the Berlin Bears won the Nutmeg State Youth Football Championship.

M. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

November 12, 2024

Councilor Paonessa moved to accept the November 12, 2024 Town Council meeting minutes as presented.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

N. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

I. Personnel Matters – Conn. General State Statute Sec. 1-200 (6) (A) concerning the appointment, employment, performance, evaluation of a public employee – Town Manager

Councilor Paonessa moved to go into Executive Session; Personnel Matters – Conn. General State Statute Sec. 1-200 (6) (A) concerning the appointment, employment, performance, evaluation of a public employee – Town Manager at 7:35 p.m. Invited in; Corporation Counsel Donofrio and Randi Frank of Randi Frank Consultants.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

Executive Session ended at 7:49 p.m.

Councilor Paonessa moved to appoint Ryan Curley to serve as Town Manager, approve the agreement between the Town of Berlin and Ryan Curley as Town Manager, and further move that Mayor Mark Kaczynski be authorized to execute the agreement on behalf of the Town of Berlin.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

Councilor Paonessa moved that as of January 2, 2025, Ryan J. Curley as Town Manager is authorized to sign all contracts, etc. for the Town of Berlin.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

O. ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Paonessa moved to adjourn at 7:53 p.m.

Seconded by Councilor Veach.

2024-11-26 Town Council Meeting Minutes

Vote being 7-0 (MOTION CARRIED)

Submitted by,

Kathryn J. Wall

Clerk of the Meeting