

Town Working to Acquire Oswegatchie Hills Land

Protection of Open Space Top Priority for Fraser

by **Eric Parker**
Staff Reporter

Town plans to acquire the 750 acre tract of undeveloped land known as the Oswegatchie Hills area are moving forward with the help of the state Department of Environmental Protection, said First Selectman Wayne Fraser.

The effort to acquire the land, which Fraser called one of his top projects of this term, is currently at the stage where state and local officials are planning their strategies and considering the options on how to best preserve the open space in town.

"The next step is for the DEP to actively negotiate and try to get a meeting together with all the landowners," said Fraser.

In addition to the work being done by the DEP for the project, Fraser also pointed out that the town has fulfilled its role by granting the necessary zoning changes to make an open space acquisition possible.

Current town effort is being focused on Internal Revenue Service regulations to see if tax credits can be granted for land donated to the cause.

Another group who is actively involved in the effort is the East Lyme Land Trust,

who has been working to gain publicity and to generally support the project.

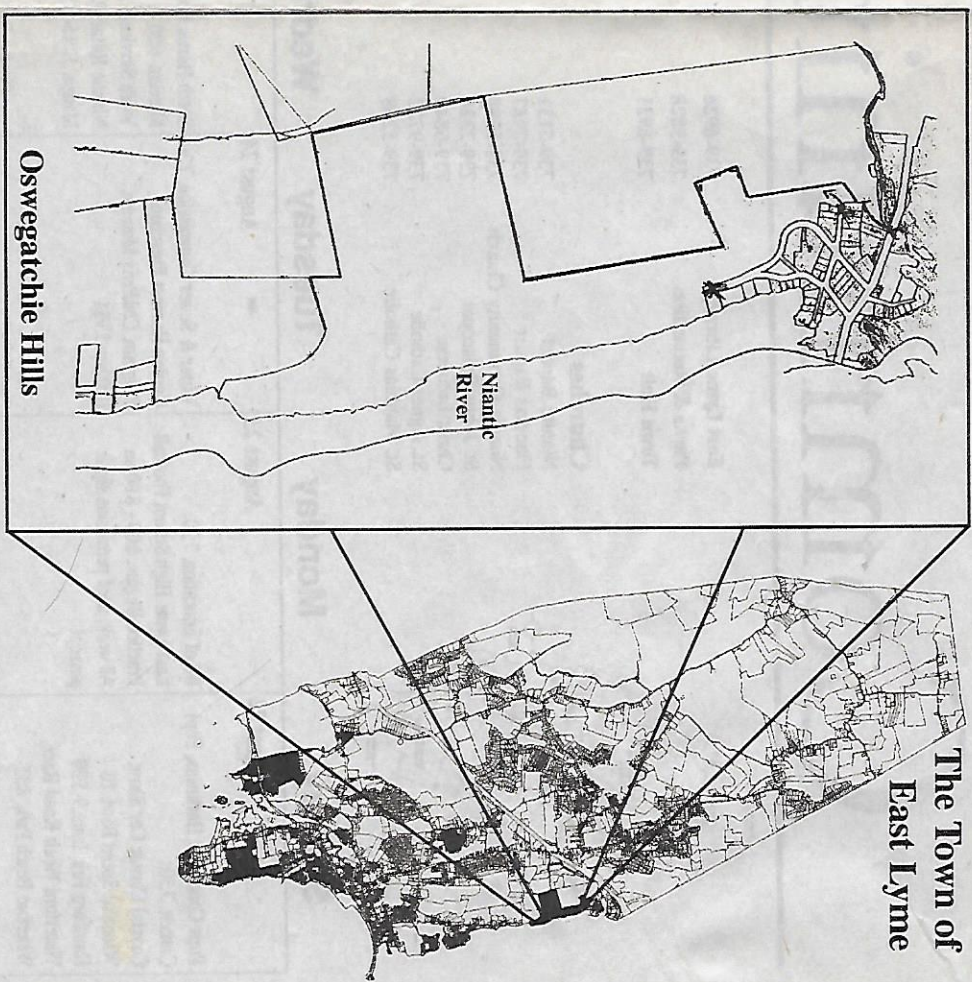
"We'll take on any role they want us to handle, but at this point it really hasn't been decided what that role would be," said Kathryn Burton of the Land Trust, who also pointed out that the trust has been promoting this movement for nearly 20 years.

Burton said that this year the potential for the acquisition of the land suddenly appeared on the horizon, and in recent weeks the group has been most concerned with getting the word out that this effort is taking place. Burton said future action by the group could include the management of the land through volunteers.

"We have so many interested and willing volunteers that I believe we could be able to manage the property," she noted.

Although no decisions or plans have been finalized, Fraser said that he feels the objective will be met in the end.

"I strongly feel that this is going to be a successful effort," he said. "I want my grandchildren to be able to look down the Niantic River and see it just as it appears today. I think that's important."



The Oswegatchie Hills area is located along the upper portion of the Niantic River.

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