

# Connecticut Fund for the Environment joins ‘fight’ to preserve Oswegatchie Hills

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**East Lyme** — The Connecticut Fund for the Environment said it will join the Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve and Save the River - Save the Hills in their long-running fight to stop development of a parcel of land adjacent to Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve.

The Connecticut Fund for the Environment made the announcement in a news release following a Zoning Commission meeting Thursday evening in which the commission was scheduled to receive the latest application from Landmark Development.

Landmark, under developer Glenn Russo, has applied for more than a decade to build residential units, some of them affordable, within the Oswegatchie Hills near the Niantic River and has appealed several town decisions in court.

Landmark's latest application calls for building 840 units and rezoning 123 acres of its 236-acre property in the hills as an affordable housing district. Within that 123-acre parcel, 36 acres would be set aside for development and 87 acres would be designated for open space. The 840 units would be located within 24 buildings.

In 2011, a state Superior Court had ruled in an appeals case from the developer — after the Zoning Commission denied parts of Landmark's 2005 affordable housing application — that the commission should review its affordable housing regulations and the developer should outline the "parameters" of its plan.

About two years ago, the commission revised some of its zoning regulations and removed some items, such as a stipulation that there be a 150-foot buffer between affordable developments and tidal wetlands.

Landmark said in its latest application that it is setting forth its parameters as part of the remand order from Judge Stephen F. Frazzini in the 2011 Superior Court ruling.

Landmark also said in the application that it is seeking 118,000 gallons per day of sewer capacity for the development and is appealing in state Superior Court the Water and Sewer Commission's decision to allocate 14,434 gallons for the development.

In announcing the collaboration in the release, Roger Reynolds, the legal director for Connecticut Fund for the Environment and its program Save the Sound, called protecting the Oswegatchie Hills "a statewide and regional conservation priority."

"The residents of this area know how important these hills and the Niantic River are and have been working for over a decade to protect them," he said in a statement. "Now CFE/Save the Sound is joining the fight. We are going to formally challenge this development proposal and work with Friends of Oswegatchie Hills and Save the River - Save the Hills to finish the job."

"The Friends have been battling for years to preserve this environmental treasure, and now we feel the cavalry has arrived!" Michael Dunn, director of land acquisition and legal defense for Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve Inc., said in a statement. "We couldn't be more thrilled about the legal firepower CFE brings to this important regional cause."

Save the River - Save the Hills President Fred Grimsey said in a statement that the groups are welcoming their "new partners, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound, fresh off their great work on The Preserve in Old Saybrook."

The Connecticut Fund for the Environment was one of the groups involved with the conservation of the The Preserve, which spans 1,000 acres in Old Saybrook, Essex and Westbrook.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said he has been proud as attorney general and now U.S. senator to join with organizations to preserve the Niantic River Estuary and the Oswegatchie Hills.

"With news of an upcoming public hearing regarding development of this property, now more than ever it is imperative that we continue this fight, and work together to preserve this precious resource," Blumenthal said in a statement.