



TOWN OF LEDYARD CONNECTICUT

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339-1551
(860) 464-3203
towncouncil@ledyardct.org

Chairman Kevin J. Dombrowski

(Date)

(DRAFT)

Groton Utilities Commission
295 Meridian Street
Groton, Connecticut 06340

Dear Commission Members:

The Ledyard Town Council would like to restate our long-held position regarding the development of the Tri-Town Trail, in which the Master Plan clearly defined the 14-mile recreation trail traversing through the Groton Reservoir.

We understand your Commission will soon be taking another look at providing public access trails on the reservoir property and would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to support the use of the reservoir property and allow the continued development of the trail.

The Tri-Town Trail Committee began work on this recreational trail initiative in 2008 with the vision of connecting municipalities (Groton, Ledyard, Preston), economic centers, and residential areas for the public to enjoy the beauty of the natural resources we have here in southeastern Connecticut through passive recreation, such as hiking and bicycling.

During the past fourteen years, the Tri-Town Trail Association has tirelessly worked to obtain grant funding and held fund raisers for various phases of the project ranging from the design and engineering work to the construction of this magnificent multi-use trail. In addition, they have received support from companies such as Eversource who will be providing two gravel parking lots for residents to access the Tri-Town Trail. One parking lot will be located at the Clark Farm and one would be located across from the Preston Plains Park.

In years past members of the Groton Utility Commission expressed concerns regarding the impact on the environment and the quality of the drinking water. However, reservoirs throughout the State of Connecticut and the country have allowed public access for passive recreation for many years, with no connection between recreational activity and contaminated water.

The Department of Environmental Protection has designated the Tri-Town Trail as a Connecticut Greenway. The open space provided by the recreational trail is an integral component to healthy livable communities and the Tri-Town Trail is frequently visited and enjoyed by residents.

Before making a decision, we encourage members of the Groton Utility Commission and the City Council to visit the Tri-Town Trail to see first-hand the work of the many dedicated volunteers who have spent countless hours constructing the trails and bridges to make this vision a reality.

The north section of the trail can be accessed at the Preston Plains Park. The Trail is beautiful, and we trust that you will enjoy the two-mile hike and will see the value in allowing public access to the reservoir that would enable the trail to be completed as initially designed in the Master Plan.

Attached please find enclosed the Town of Ledyard's letter to Mayor Galbraith in 2012 along with a summarized list of our points of view for your consideration.

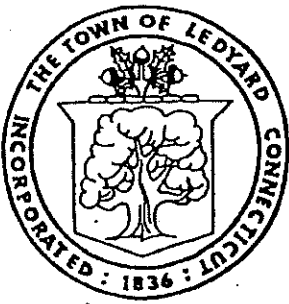
We look forward to our concerted efforts and in working with the Tri-Town Trail Association to make sure all concerns are addressed and ensure the safety and quality of the reservoir's drinking water.

For the Ledyard Town Council

Kevin J. Dombrowski
Chairman

cc: Tri-Town Trail Association

Attachments



TOWN OF LEDYARD CONNECTICUT

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Mayor John A. Rodolico
Chairman Sean Sullivan, Town Council
Chairman Michael Cherry, WPCA

May 2, 2012

Mayor Marian K. Galbraith
City of Groton
295 Meridian Street
Groton, Connecticut 06340

Dear Mayor Galbraith:

Please allow this letter to clearly state our position on the proposed Bluff Point to Preston Trail. The Town of Ledyard has endorsed the Master Plan prepared by the Tri-Town Committee and we consider the implementation of that Plan to be a high priority for the citizens of Ledyard.

Public access to this clearly defined trail on reservoir property would have little or no impact on the environment and no degradation to the quality of public drinking water. Similar trails exist on other reservoir properties across our State and throughout the nation. In those other reservoir areas, water testing and soil conservation studies have verified the preservation of clean water and healthy watersheds.

Security for the reservoir will be maintained by the continued vigilance of the Ledyard Police and by a system of volunteer trail deputies. It goes without saying that the best protection against vandalism and other mischief is to encourage more law abiding citizens to be in the area. Some of our civic groups and youth organizations have already offered to help with litter patrols.

State Statutes give strong protection to water companies and municipalities against liability for injuries incurred during passive recreational use. Our legislators clearly sought to encourage the establishment of trails when they crafted the most recent law. Also, the potential infusion of grant money and private fundraising should minimize, and perhaps negate altogether, any additional expenses to the Utility.

The prospect of an improved quality of life for all our citizens clearly outweighs any concerns. The Bluff Point to Preston Trail will provide a tremendous recreational resource, create a safe and convenient means of alternative transportation, boost tourism and enhance property values. The natural beauty of southern New England can be made available for generations to come.

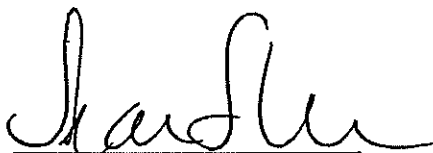
The Town of Ledyard has a long and successful relationship with Groton Utilities grounded in the spirit of partnership and mutual trust. We expect our common goals will continue to draw us together. We understand that public access to reservoirs is an issue demanding careful consideration and mutual assurances.

As a next step we propose detailed discussions take place over the next few months, and we respectfully request you respond within thirty days with potential dates this summer when all interested parties can meet to develop a way forward.

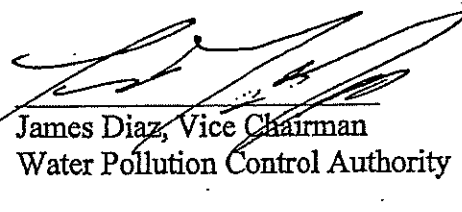
Together we can enhance the quality of life in our towns while ensuring the Bluff Point to Preston Trail is consistent with the benefits of a clean water supply. We look forward to your response.



John A. Rodolico
Mayor of Ledyard



Sean Sullivan, Chairman
Ledyard Town Council



James Diaz, Vice Chairman
Water Pollution Control Authority

Summary of Ledyard's Points of View for Groton Utilities Consideration

Trails bring benefits to communities:

- ✓ Several studies across the country show that established trail systems generate millions of dollars in economic activity.
- ✓ Trails encourage a healthier quality of life, safer pedestrian and bicycle movement, appreciation of the natural environment, and higher property values.
- ✓ According to real estate publications, "*Trails consistently remain the number one community amenity sought by prospective homeowners.*"

Trails will provide benefits for Groton Utilities:

- ✓ Trail access would be a public relations bonanza for Groton Utilities. Other water companies in Connecticut have cited dozens of benefits that they derive from a positive relationship with their neighbors and with the municipalities.
- ✓ Through interpretive signage and trail brochures the public will be educated on healthy watersheds and the filtration process.
- ✓ The larger presence of law-abiding citizens on reservoir properties has shown to reduce vandalism and other mischief.
- ✓ Grants are available from the State of Connecticut to buy open space and watershed lands.
- ✓ Ledyard has a growing Open Space purchase fund. If public access could be assured, there would be opportunities for Groton Utilities to coordinate with government and conservation groups to purchase additional watershed lands.

Arguments against trails on reservoir properties have little basis:

- ✓ Trails are not a real threat to clean water. In looking closely at the water testing that has been done over the past 20 years at other reservoirs in Connecticut, the findings have shown that there has never been a connection between recreational activity and contaminated water.
- ✓ Groton Utilities would have almost no liability exposure from personal injuries. In fact, Connecticut has a very strong statute protecting water companies from liability unless the company commits willful or wanton acts.
- ✓ Litter removal and trail obstructions are easily solvable issues. Several civic groups have already come forward to help local trail groups with litter removal and trail maintenance. There will be no shortage of volunteers for these tasks.
- ✓ Other water companies report that there has been no significant increase in costs resulting from new trails. In fact, trail grants and fund-raising activities often help to alleviate costs that had previously been the sole responsibility of the water companies.