

Please add this letter to the official record for the November 18, 2025 public hearing on Ledyard Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission permit application (IWWC#25-19SITE) ("Lambtown Road Ext. culvert replacement with new custom inlet control structure at Ed Lamb Brook).

I'm concerned about the environmental and scenic impact of the proposed culvert replacement project on Lambtown Road Extension. I appreciate that the culvert needs to be replaced for improved drainage and stability, but it's important to maintain the current average water level in the pond and marshes on the upstream side of the road. The road has been converted into a pedestrian trail that is heavily used by walkers and bicyclists, and the pond is the central attraction of the site. Lambtown Extension is tied into a much larger trail system in the Avery Farm Nature Preserve, and the trail system will soon be extended south into the new Center Groton Preserve.

Currently the 38-acre pond is characterized by a diverse mix of emergent marsh grasses and shrubs, shallow open water and mudflats. If the level of the pond is substantially lowered, then it will become a densely vegetated marsh or wet meadow. The small patches of invasive reed (*Phragmites*) that now occur along the shore would probably spread across the entire drained pond, reducing the biological diversity of the area and eliminating the view of open water with its reflected forest backdrop. The value of the site as a natural area would be substantially degraded.

I visit the Lambtown Extension pond three or four times each month to watch birds and I covered this area for the recent statewide breeding bird atlas. I record the birds I see during each visit and submit a checklist to Cornell University's eBird program. Other birders also visit the site and submit checklists, so we have an exceptionally good record of which species use the site at different times of year. The records from 729 visits to the site are summarized in a graph on the eBird website (<https://ebird.org/barchart?r=L416508>). The graph shows that the pond and marshes have an exceptionally high diversity of ducks and other waterbirds. During the summer, wood ducks and mallards are common nesting species. They are joined by small groups of Green-winged Teal and large flocks of American black ducks during the fall and spring migrations. During winter American black ducks, ring-necked ducks and hooded mergansers are present and actively feeding whenever the pond has open water. Shorebirds are also attracted to the pond, where they probe for insects on mudflats and the edge of small islands. Killdeer and Wilson's snipes visit in surprisingly large numbers during migration. Sometimes several dozen snipes or killdeer may be present feeding alongside solitary sandpipers, greater yellowlegs and other species of sandpipers. This is one of the few freshwater sites in the region where these species can stop to rest and feed before continuing on their long migratory journeys. Great blue herons and great egrets are regular visitors during summer, and during the last three years great blue herons nested in trees bordering the southern end of the pond. The pond also supports other birds that thrive in areas with open water such as belted kingfishers, eastern kingbirds, tree swallows and red-winged blackbirds. In addition, river otters, beavers, spotted and painted turtles, and northern water snakes occur regularly in the pond. It is one of most interesting natural areas in southeastern Connecticut, and is a perfect

destination for class field trips. Before I retired it was one of the destinations for my class in ornithology. If the open water is drained out of this system, it will no longer support this kind of diversity. Both the beautiful view and the conservation value of the site will be lost. The engineering plan should address the impact of the project on the water level in the pond and adjacent marshes.

Robert Askins
Professor Emeritus of Biology, Connecticut College
103 Mathewson Mill Road
Ledyard, CT 06339