

## **Salmon Creek/Housatonic River Land Protection Project**

Grant ID: F11AC00337

Grant Period: March 24, 2011 – March 31, 2016

Final Report: June 28, 2016

Submitted by: Marea Gabriel, The Nature Conservancy

### **Project Background:**

The objective of this project is to acquire permanent conservation easements on riparian agricultural and floodplain forest land within the Housatonic River watershed in Salisbury, CT to compensate for natural resources injured as a result of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) released from the General Electric Company facility in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Restoration is undertaken in accordance with the provisions of a Consent Decree regarding the matter of United States of America, State of Connecticut, Commonwealth of Massachusetts v. General Electric Company.

Funding for this project is supported by a cooperative agreement (No. F11AC00337) from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), on behalf of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration programs of the Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. As the Agreement recipient, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was awarded up to \$557,810.00 of reimbursement funds for 1) the acquisition of permanent conservation easements on 200 acres of riparian agricultural and floodplain forest land along the Housatonic River mainstem and a tributary, Salmon Creek, in Salisbury, CT, and 2) to develop management and restoration plans for these lands. TNC entered into Sub-Award agreements with The Salisbury Association (TSA) and The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) to carry out easement acquisition, associated tasks, and the development of property management plans, with TNC reimbursing TSA and TTOR with Agreement funds.

### **Project Location:**

The subject properties are within the Housatonic River watershed and part of a highly scenic landscape visible from Weatogue Road in Salisbury, CT (see Exhibit A – D). They consist of open agricultural fields with adjacent riparian



habitats, and are bounded on the east by the Housatonic River and the west by Weatogue Road. Riparian areas include mature stands of eastern white pine and a corridor of more typical riparian vegetation, including sycamore, American elm, red maple, and silver maple. The soils are classified as either prime or additional important agricultural soils by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

### **Project Activities:**

TNC worked with The Trustees of Reservations, The Salisbury Association, and the Housatonic Valley Association to identify potential projects that would achieve the goal of conserving 200 acres of land along portions of the Housatonic and/or Salmon Kill rivers in Salisbury, CT before the Agreement expiration date of March 31, 2016.

A total of five projects (138.25 acres) were proposed to and approved by the Connecticut Trustee SubCouncil. Of these, conservation easements (CE) were acquired on three properties totaling 102.25 acres along the mainstem Housatonic River (see Table 1.). Although negotiations were underway on the remaining two properties, totaling approximately 36 acres, these easements did not come to fruition as both owners ultimately could not reconcile the easement terms with the ongoing use of their lands. Additionally, the 80-acre Bok tract was initially included in the 200-acre project total and was to be used towards the \$500,000.00 Agreement match; TTOR, however, agreed their payments for the 70-acre Bottass CE could be used as the match, thus Bok was not needed which explains the reduction in overall project acres.

### **Completed Projects:**

**Bottass / Shady Maple Farm** – The Trustees of Reservations acquired a CE over the 77.32-acre Bottass tract from owner John V. Bottass for the purchase price of \$700,000.00. Through a Sub-Award, TNC reimbursed TTOR \$174,447.00 of FWS funds towards purchase of the CE (and later reimbursed The Salisbury Association an additional \$1,000.00 for the Bottass Management Plan). TTOR agreed that \$500,000.00 of their CE acquisition cost could be used to fulfill the FWS Agreement match. Acquisition of Bottass will protect one mile of frontage on the Housatonic River, floodplain and riparian habitats, and fertile agricultural soils. The specific terms of the conservation easement are aimed, in large part, at conserving the soils of the farm, facilitating long-term, sustainable agricultural use, and allowing for the possibility of future habitat



Evidence of beaver activity on the Bottass property. Photo Credit: Tim Abbott.

**Table 1. Salmon Creek/Housatonic River Land Protection Project – five properties proposed to and approved by the CT SubCouncil.**

PROJECT NAME	STATUS	ACRES	CE HOLDER	CE VALUE	CE PURCHASE PRICE	ACQUISITION EXPENSES	USFWS FUNDS USED	COMMENTS
Bottass/ Shady Maple Farm	Complete	77.32	TTOR	\$1,150,000.00	\$700,000 .00		\$174,447.00	CE value per appraisal; landowner had no donative intent. \$500,000.00 of purchase price used as FWS match.
Bottass/ Shady Maple Farm						\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	TSA contracted with the Housatonic Valley Assoc. for the Bottass Management Plan at a later date.
Grossman	Complete	22.05	TSA	\$262,000.00	\$140,000.00	\$11,648.00	\$151,648.00	CE value per appraisal; landowner had no donative intent.
Grossman						\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	TSA contracted with the Housatonic Valley Assoc. for the Grossman Management Plan after all other project expenses had been reimbursed.
Binzen	Complete	2.88	TSA	\$30,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$25,866.22	\$28,866.22	CE value per appraisal; landowner had no donative intent.
Fitch	Incomplete	22.00	N/A	-	-	\$5,454.66	\$5,454.66	Landowner decided not to pursue CE at this time, couldn't reconcile CE terms with his agricultural use of the land.
Whitbeck	Incomplete	13.50	N/A	-	-	-	-	Landowner decided not to pursue CE at this time, couldn't reconcile CE terms with his agricultural use of the land.
TNC Travel				-	-	\$506.24	\$506.24	Travel expenses related to site visits, landowner meetings
TNC Indirect				-	-	\$7,374.32	\$7,374.32	Indirect costs at TNC's federally approved NICRA rate
<b>TOTAL</b>							<b>\$370,296.44</b>	

restoration. Protection of the farm's forested riverbank and use of sustainable agricultural practices will provide important wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion and river sedimentation, improve water quality and aquatic habitats, and help to protect high priority calcareous wetland systems. General

management recommendations include addressing invasive, exotic plant species in the riparian habitats and wooded field buffers and buffering a tributary stream to reduce inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus (for details, see Natural Resource Inventory and Management Plan - Shady Maple Farm, 3/29/16). TTOR will annually monitor the conservation easement and, if necessary, enforce the easement's terms.



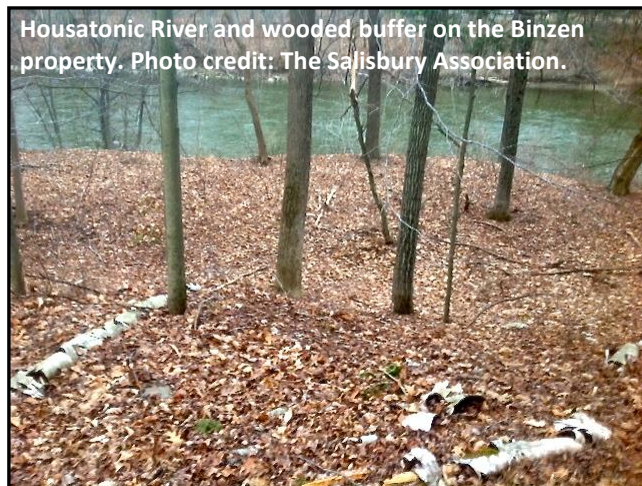
Wooded buffer on the Grossman property. Photo Credit: The Salisbury Association.

**Grossman** – The Salisbury Association acquired a CE over the 22.05-acre Grossman tract from owners Richard Grossman and Ann Aresnberg for the purchase price of \$140,000.00. Through a Sub-Award, TNC reimbursed TSA a total of \$151,648.00 of FWS funds (\$140,000.00 purchase plus \$11,648.00 for project expenses); and then later another \$1,000.00 for the Grossman Management Plan.

Acquisition of Grossman will protect 1180 feet of frontage on the Housatonic River, floodplain and

riparian habitats, and open agricultural fields. The purposes of the CE are to maintain the property in its natural, scenic, and open condition, protect its ecological, agricultural, and aesthetic qualities, and to prevent impairments to its conservation values or scenic views. The use of sustainable agricultural will help conserve riverine habitat and enhance water quality, contributing to the high priority calcareous wetland systems down river, and provide important wildlife habitat. General management recommendations include development of a Farm Plan if there are changes to agricultural use; addressing invasive exotic plant species in the hedgerows, forested riparian buffers, and riverbank; possible expansion of forested riparian buffer in certain areas; and a hayfield mowing regime that accommodates nesting birds (for details see Natural Resource Inventory and Management Plan - Grossman Easement, 3/30/16). TSA will regularly monitor the CE and, if necessary, enforce its terms.

**Binzen** – The Salisbury Association acquired a CE over the 2.88-acre Binzen tract from owner Gaile Binzen for the purchase price of \$3,000.00. Through a Sub-Award, TNC reimbursed TSA \$28,866.22 of FWS funds (\$3,000.00 plus \$25,866.22.00 for project expenses). Although only 2.88 acres, the Binzen tract protects approximately 600 feet of frontage on the Housatonic River, floodplain and riparian habitats, and open agricultural fields. A derelict cabin on the premises has been removed and the site has been



Housatonic River and wooded buffer on the Binzen property. Photo credit: The Salisbury Association.

restored with native vegetation. The facilitation of sustainable agricultural use will help conserve riverine habitat. Binzen abuts the 22-acre former Grossman tract, and together they protect nearly 1800 feet of river frontage, providing important riparian buffer for water quality protection



and wildlife habitat. The purposes of the CE are to maintain the property in its natural, scenic, and open condition, protect its ecological, agricultural, and aesthetic qualities, and to prevent impairments to its conservation values or scenic views. General management recommendations include addressing invasive exotic plant species on the property and monitoring areas restored with native plantings for new incursions of invasives (for details see Natural Resource Inventory and Management Plan – Binzen Easement, 3/30/16). TSA will regularly monitor the CE and, if necessary, enforce its terms.

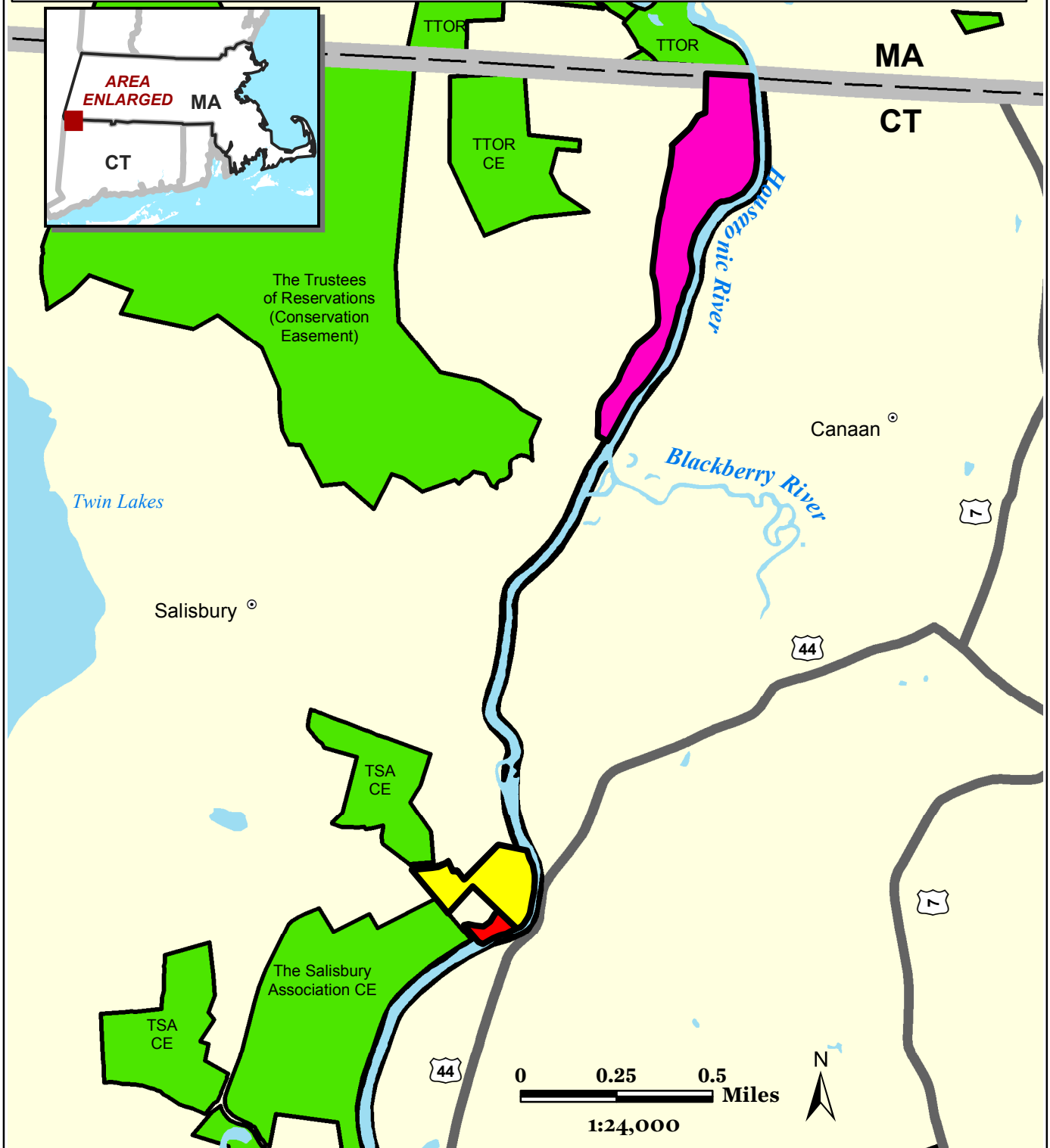
**Conclusion:**

Under FWS Cooperative Agreement (No. F11AC00337), TNC reimbursed The Trustees of Reservations and The Salisbury Association a total of \$362,415.88 to protect 102 acres on three properties through acquisition of conservation easements and management recommendations as part of the Salmon Creek/Housatonic River Land Protection Project. TNC invoiced the FWS another \$506.24 for TNC project-related travel and \$7374.32 for TNC indirect costs, for a project total cost of \$370,296.44.

The Salisbury Association has conserved more than 350 acres of riparian land along the Housatonic River and The Trustees of Reservations own and manage the 329-acre Bartholomew’s Cobble Reservation,



which abuts the Bottass tract. The protection of Bottass, Grossman, and Binzen will yield significant public benefit by adding to these previously protected lands, enhancing the magnitude and effect of Salisbury’s conservation and protected open space, and help to expand and link more than five miles of permanently protected open space along the river running from the CT/MA state line to a point opposite the mouth of the Hollenbeck River, a tributary of the Housatonic.



**Legend**

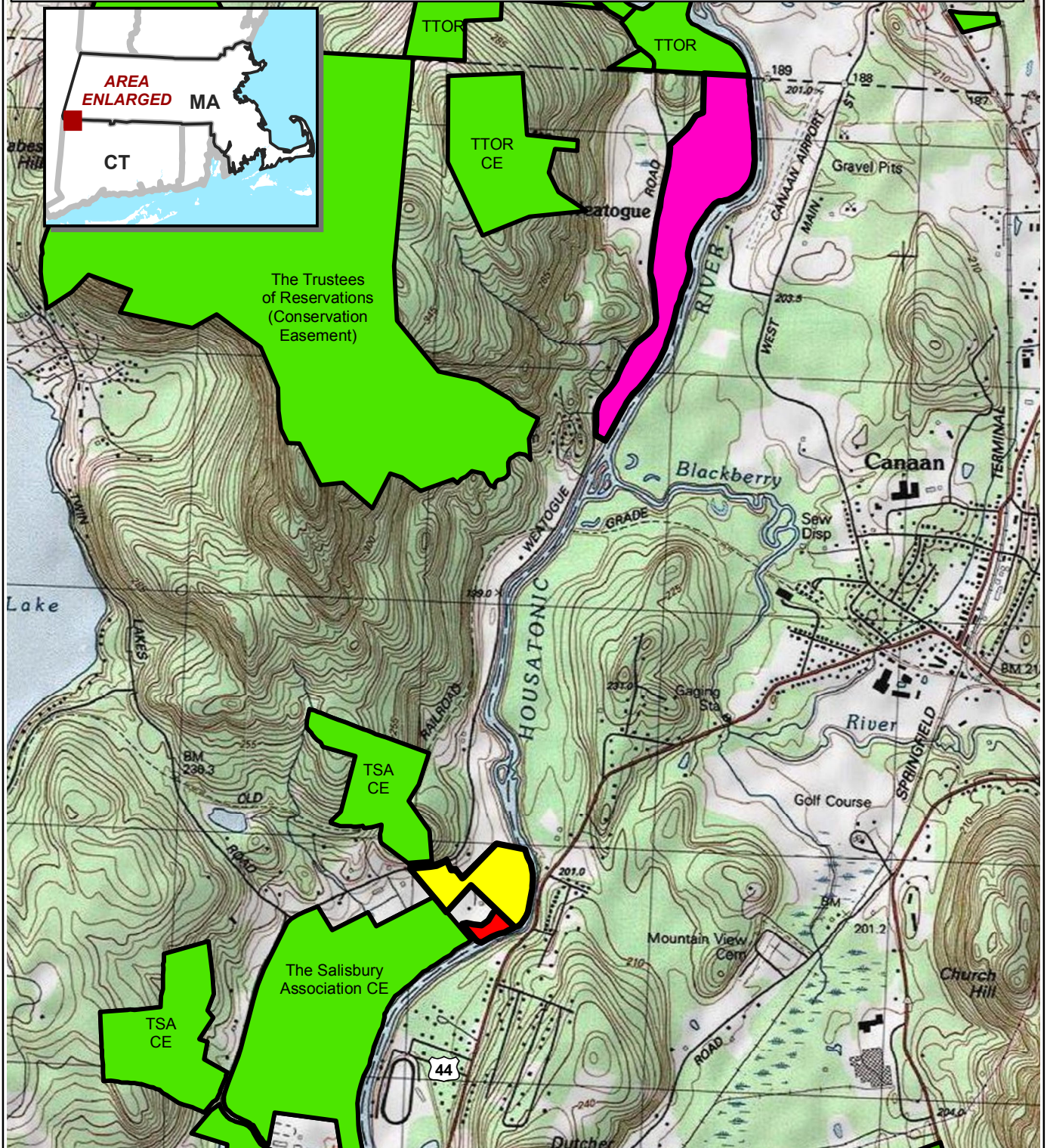
- Bottass/Shady Maple Farm
- Grossman
- Binzen
- Private Protected
- Town Boundary
- Primary & Secondary Roads
- CE - Conservation Easement
- TSA - The Salisbury Association
- TTOR - The Trustees of Reservations

Map Created by: M. Gabriel, TNC, June 9, 2016

Data Sources:  
 Protected Openspace, Political Boundaries - CT DEEP GIS (2015), TTOR; Hydrology - MassGIS (2015); Tract Boundary - TNC GIS (2015).

Map Projection:  
 NAD 1983 StatePlane Massachusetts FIPS 2001 (meters)

**EXHIBIT B**  
**Salmon Creek/Housatonic River Land Protection Project**  
**USFWS Cooperative Agreement # F11AC00337**



**Legend**

- Bottass/Shady Maple Farm
- Grossman
- Binzen
- Private Protected

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

1:24,000



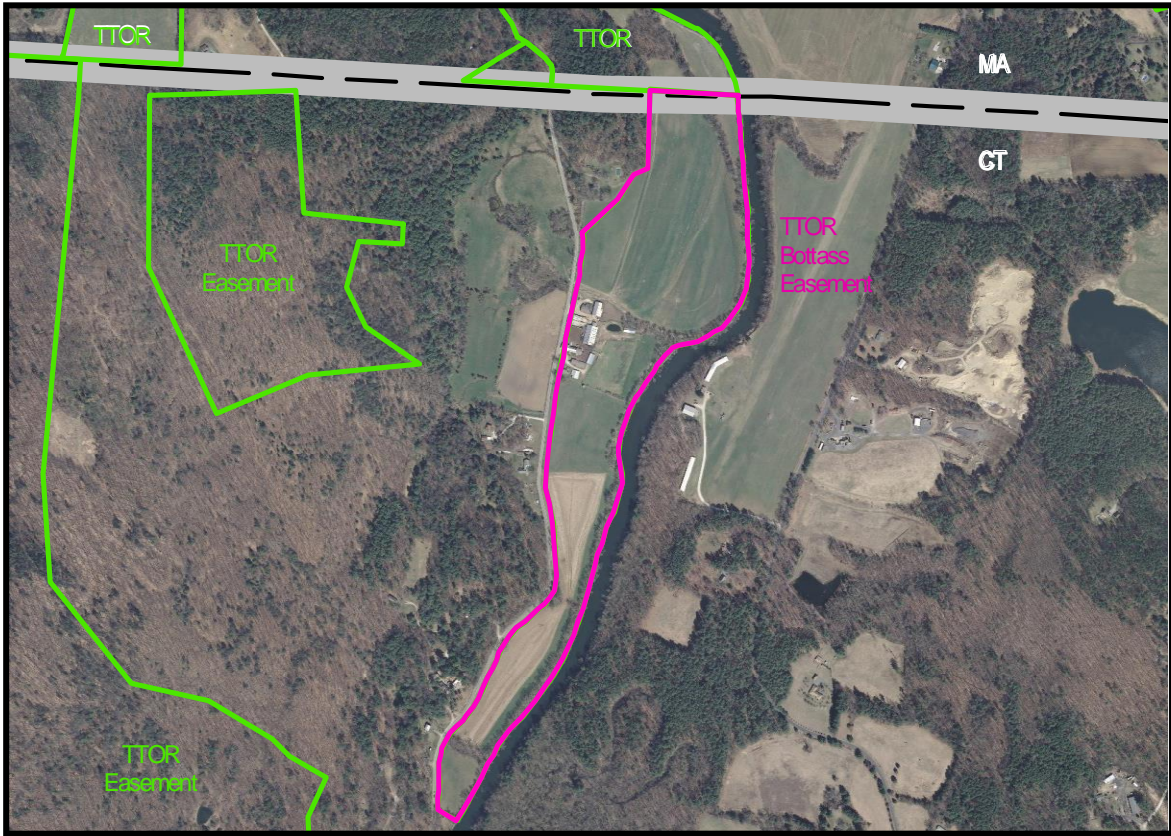
CE - Conservation Easement  
TSA - The Salisbury Association  
TTOR - The Trustees of Reservations

Map Created by: M. Gabriel, TNC, June 9, 2016

Data Sources:  
Protected Openspace - CT DEEP GIS (2015), TTOR,  
TNC GIS; Topographic Map - ESRI ArcGIS Online &  
data partners including USGS & © 2007 National  
Geographic Society.

Map Projection:  
NAD 1983 StatePlane Massachusetts FIPS 2001 (meters)

**Exhibit C. The Bottass Conservation Easement held by The Trustees of Reservations and other nearby lands they protect.**



**Exhibit D. The Grossman and Binzen Conservation Easements held by The Salisbury Association and other adjacent lands they protect.**

