

SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Northeast Soil Survey Region and Connecticut NRCS

Amherst, Massachusetts, Northeast Soil Survey Regional Office and Connecticut NRCS

SPSD and NRCS Staff Monitor Meadow Establishment on Conservation Easements

Purpose

Jim Cole, Connecticut NRCS ecologist and easement specialist, along with the assistance of Nels Barrett, Northeast Soil Survey Region senior ecologist, conducted periodic monitoring visits to several conservation easements in West Haven, CT, in mid-May 2023 to follow up on the condition of previously established meadow restorations.

Background

The conservation easements were originated by the Town of West Haven with assistance from NRCS to achieve better coastal resiliency for the area. These conservation easements enabled participants to relinquish properties in a hazardous flood zone, which, in turn, allowed for the restoration of native settings with many benefits including aesthetic appeal, stewardship opportunities, flood control, low maintenance, and ecological function, such as providing native vegetation, local pollinator benefits, and wildlife habitat.

Key Outcomes

A lovely, open meadow—replete with grasses and colorful wildflowers, heady with scent of spring, and the surrounding buzz of insects—flourishes at a conservation easement set in a quiet residential neighborhood in West Haven. Creating a meadow is somewhat difficult task. Waiting several years while hoping for forgiving weather are needed to allow for successful plant establishment and survival. Although restoration results varied, and invasive plants notwithstanding, meadow sites at conservation easements planned with generous seed mixes and plantings succeeded remarkably well (figure 1).



Figure 1. NRCS ecologists conducting a plant inventory of an ecologically diverse meadows created at a conservation easement site.