

The Connecticut Environmental Review Team Manual

For
Eastern Connecticut and King's Mark



The Connecticut Environmental Team in the Field

Yesterday and Today...



The first ERT manual was prepared in 1976 by cooperating ERT agencies and staff. Since then, it has been updated periodically. Questions regarding the ERT Manual may be directed to:



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The ERT Concept

The Environmental Review Team (ERT) is a group of environmental specialists drawn together from various federal, state, and regional agencies. The purpose of the ERT is to provide local officials, staff, and commissioners with natural resource data and interpretation, that will aid in making wise land use decisions in order to sustain environmental quality. It is hoped that the environmental considerations outlined in the ERT report are integrated into the land use planning process and that these considerations are utilized in the implementation of development plans by all units of government.

The unique aspect in the evolution of the ERT has been cooperation among several different agencies at various levels of government. Initially brought together under the framework of the Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area*, and subsequently under the King's Mark RC&D Area* (see Figure 1), these agencies have provided staff time to the RC&D committees that developed the ERT concept and procedures, as well as staff for the actual field reviews. Principal participating agencies include: local conservation districts, the University of Connecticut, the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, Connecticut Departments of Environmental Protection, Public Health and Transportation, the Office of State Archaeology, the State Historic Preservation Office and the state's fifteen regional planning agencies/councils of government.

The ERT consists of professionals covering a wide range of disciplines within the fields of natural resources, engineering, and planning. Following approval of a request from a town, the ERT conducts an on-site study of the subject parcel. The distribution, quantity, and quality of the natural resources on the site are evaluated by each discipline with respect to the existing and proposed land use. A wide variety of projects have been reviewed by the Team including subdivisions, industrial parks, commercial developments, recreation proposals, watershed studies, zone changes, excavations and open space studies. The product of each environmental review is a written report.

The Team's written report presents factual information that highlights potential problems, limitations, alternatives, opportunities, and areas of possible trade-off. The ERT does not act as an advocate for one point of view or another, but rather strives for balance and objectivity.

Connecticut's ERTs act only in an advisory capacity, all decisions rest with the town and landowners. The ERTs do not compete with private consultants by providing detailed solutions or finished site plans. Rather, their function is to represent the public interest by indicating the need and advantage of applying sound conservation and environmental planning principles to the land.

Part of the attractiveness of the ERT is the utilization of existing personnel within the resource conservation and development area and the state. Though this presents a cost to the participating agencies, it provides a long-term benefit to the RC&D areas and cooperating agencies. With sound advice early in the planning process, it may be possible for municipalities to avoid long-term, costly, corrective measures in the future. Many Team members also benefit from participation in ERT reviews because of the assistance it provides them in their current position. Team members appreciate working cross-agency with other environmental professionals on behalf of Connecticut towns.

Developers also may benefit from the services of the ERT. When ERT reports offer information about site limitations during the early stages of a project, developers may be able to avoid making expensive mistakes by incorporating appropriate control measures to their site plans.

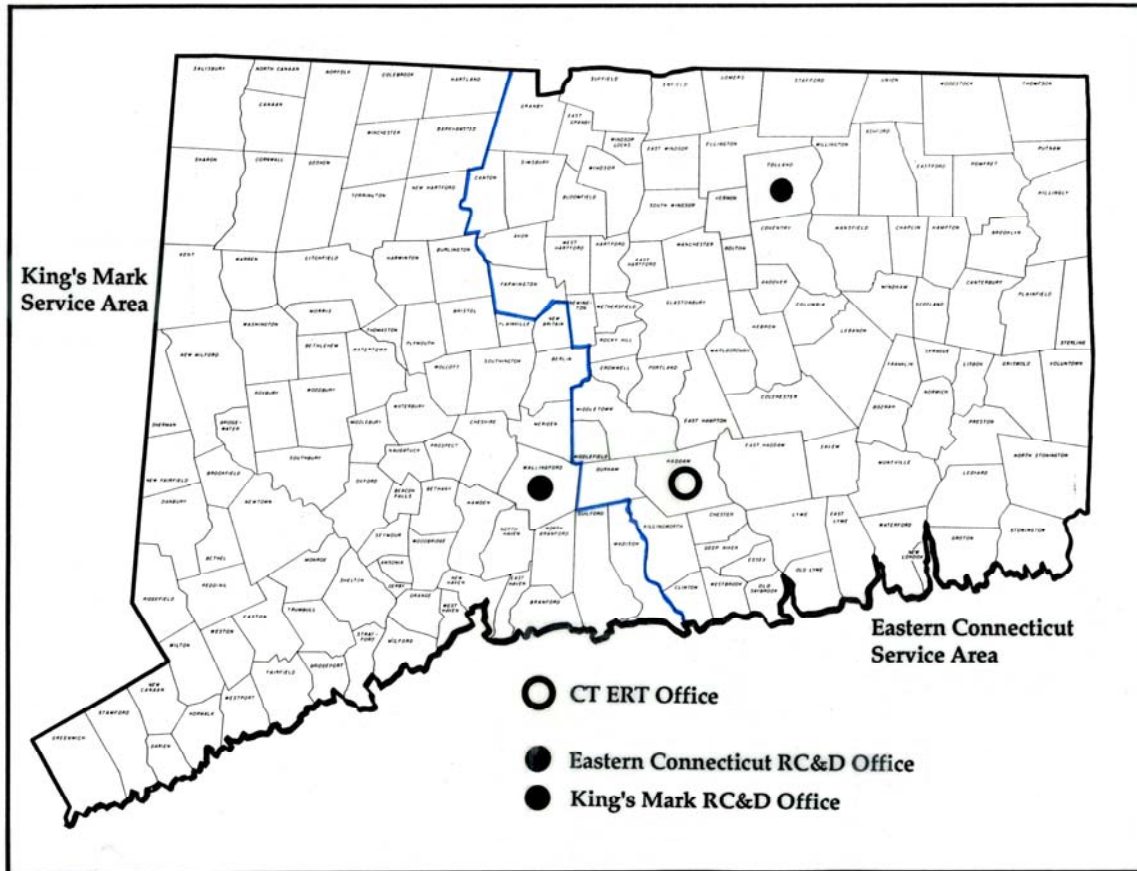
Many major town-initiated land development proposals may be partially funded through various state and federal programs promoting industrial developments, the purchase of recreational/open space lands, establishment of low-income and elderly housing complexes and outdoor classrooms. Towns are required to supply certain technical and environmental impact assessment information about the site proposal to the funding agency. In Connecticut, this presents a problem to many towns operating on low budgets with minimum, if any, technical staff capable of completing the environmental assessment portions of funding applications. The ERTs have directly benefited these towns by providing environmental assessments needed to prepare state and federal funding applications.

The past thirty five years have shown that an interdisciplinary /interagency environmental review team can help municipalities make wiser land use decisions. Often the technical expertise and information, that the Team provides, is not available at the local level.

** Resource Conservation and Development Areas were established in Connecticut under the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962. The Secretary of Agriculture gave the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), then the Soil Conservation Service, responsibility for administering the program. RC&D is based on the assumption that local citizens, with help provided through the USDA, can develop and carry out an action-oriented plan for social, economic, and environmental enrichment of their communities. The Connecticut RC&D's are sponsored by the conservation districts, the regional planning agencies/councils of government and other eligible organizations. The RC&D Area in Eastern Connecticut was established in 1967 and the King's Mark RC&D Area in 1975 (see Figure 1). RC&Ds are a cooperative effort of the above agencies and local individuals, and are eligible for funds allocated by the United States Department of Agriculture. For more information concerning RC&D Programs please contact: Eastern Connecticut RC&D Area Coordinator Elizabeth Rogers at (860) 870-4942 or the King's Mark RC&D Coordinator Mark Cummings at (203) 284-3663.*

Figure 1.

ERT and RC&D Service Areas



ERT History

Prior to the formal establishment of Connecticut's ERTs, several ad hoc reviews, bringing together personnel from different agencies, were conducted to review specific developments. The initial concept of an organized interdisciplinary environmental review approach in Connecticut was suggested in 1968 by Robert C. Young, then Director of the Windham Regional Planning Agency. This idea was developed by the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Area Land and Water Resources Committee in response to the problems presented by the increased numbers of residential subdivisions being proposed and built. Subdivisions were being designed and approved without adequate consideration of the natural environment, resulting in problems with sewage disposal, water supply and drainage, and an overall loss of the natural qualities that contribute to an area's ecological balance and attractiveness.

The ERT in Eastern Connecticut, though first established in 1969, has been most active since 1973, due to funding that provided for a full-time coordinator for the program. From March, 1973 to June, 1974, this funding was provided by the New England Regional Commission through a demonstration grant to the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. From July, 1974 to June, 1975, funding was received from the United States Economic Development Administration through a technical assistance grant to the Eastern Connecticut Development Council. Funding from December, 1975 to February, 1977 was provided by an Innovative Projects grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development under the Housing and Community Development Act. The King's Mark ERT, for the western part of the state, was established in 1977 with its own coordinator. From July, 1977 to June, 1990, the ERTs were funded under state grants provided through the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. The grant amount in 1991 and 1992 was cut drastically, and other means of funding were sought. Some monies were collected from towns, and funds were received from other grant programs and by producing newsletters for other nonprofit organizations. A two year effort to secure stable funding resulted in a "Conservation Fund/Fee Bill" passed by the state legislature.* The fee system went into effect July, 1992, and the fees collected for land use permits at the local level support the ERT program through the DEP Environmental Quality fund. Currently a biannual contract is negotiated with DEP to provide the ERT services for the State. This method of funding allows all towns in the state to be served by the ERT. When the funding was cut in the early 1990s, a decision was made to operate the ERT program with one ERT coordinator for the entire state, but to maintain the traditional separate identities for the ERTs (Eastern CT and King's Mark).

The King's Mark ERT serves the 83 towns of western Connecticut. The ERT in Eastern Connecticut serves 86 towns in eastern Connecticut. (see Figure 1) The scope of the ERT's activities has broadened with experience to include many types of land use proposals. Beginning with subdivision reviews in 1969 and 1970, it was soon realized that the needs of towns extended to other types of land use. In response, the ERT expanded its scope to include commercial, industrial, open space, recreation, conservation, and public facility projects. More recently, the ERT has undertaken studies for land trusts in Connecticut (if the town endorses the study) and to assist schools in developing outdoor classrooms. The variety of land use proposals has created interest in the reviews by presenting a range of problems and opportunities for the Team members. Both ERTs have undertaken several lake watershed studies and natural resource inventories, in addition to the typical projects previously mentioned.

***Land Use Application Fees**

P.A. 04-144. Sec. 6. Section 22a-27j of the general statutes, as amended by section 108 of public act 03-6 of the June 30 special session, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2004): (a) Any person, firm or corporation, other than a municipality, making an application for any approval required by chapters 124, 126, 440 and 444 or by regulations adopted pursuant to said chapters shall pay a fee of twenty dollars, in addition to any other fee which may be required, to the municipal agency or legislative body which is authorized to approve the application. On and after July 1, 2004 the fee shall be thirty dollars. Such municipal agency or legislative body shall collect such fees, retaining two dollars of such fee for administrative costs, and shall pay the remainder of such fees quarterly to the Department of Environmental Protection and the receipts shall be deposited into an account of the State Treasurer and credited to the Environmental Quality fund established pursuant to section 22a - 27g. The portion of such fund attributable to the fees established by this section shall be used by the Department of Environmental Protection as follows: (1) Nineteen dollars shall be used for the purpose of funding the environmental review teams program of the Bureau of Water Management within said department, the Council on Soil and Water Conservation established pursuant to section 22a-315 and the eight county soil and water conservation districts, and (2) nine dollars shall be deposited into the hazard mitigation and floodplain management account established pursuant to section 7 of this act used for grants under section 9 of this act. (b) Not later than three months following the close of each fiscal year starting with fiscal year July 1, 2000, the Department of Environmental Protection shall identify those municipalities that are not in compliance with subsection (a) of this section for the previous fiscal year and shall provide the Office of Policy and Management with a list of such municipalities. The list shall be submitted annually and in such manner as the Office of Policy and Management may require. The Office of Policy and Management, when issuing the first payment from the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Fund established pursuant to section 3-55i, in the fiscal year during which said list is received, shall reduce said payment to a municipality by one thousand dollars for each quarter of the preceding fiscal year that the municipality has not been in compliance with subsection (a) of this section to a maximum of four thousand dollars in each fiscal year. The Office of Policy and Management shall certify to the State Comptroller the amount of any funds withheld under this subsection to be transferred to the Environmental Quality Fund for the uses set forth in subsection (a) of this section, and the State Comptroller shall cause said amount to be transferred to such fund.

ERT Organization

The successful operation of the ERT in CT requires an interagency approach, involving cooperation among participating federal, state, and regional agencies, as well as among non-profit conservation organizations and educational institutions. Interagency cooperation is administered through the RC&D and its interagency policy board. The broad public base and interagency approach in the RC&D Programs has led to the successful operation of the ERT in Connecticut. The key personnel provided by the participating agencies under the RC&D Program in Connecticut are as follows:

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (Formerly County Soil and Water Conservation Districts)

- District Manager/Director
- Natural Resource Planner
- Environmental/Field Technician

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- Geologist/Hydrologist
- Forester
- Wildlife Biologist
- Fisheries Biologist
- Wetland Reviewer
- Botanist
- Recreation Planner
- Coastal Planner
- Marine Biologist
- Lake Ecologist/Limnologist
- Air Quality Specialist
- Soil Scientist
- Sanitary Engineer
- Storm Water Engineer
- Watershed Specialist

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- District Conservationist
- Resource Conservationist
- Soil Scientist
- Engineering Specialist
- Water Resources Coordinator

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Sanitary Engineer/Sanitarian
Water Supply Specialist/Planner

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Planner

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Geologist
Landscape Architect
Agricultural Extension Educator
Land Use Management Extension Educator

REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES/COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENT

Land Use Planner/Regional Planner
Transportation Planner
Traffic Engineer

**OFFICE OF STATE ARCHAEOLOGY/ STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION
OFFICE**

Historian
Archaeologist

CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Land Use Planner

Actual Team composition will vary from one review to another and, depending on the nature of the review, additional personnel may be added from other state, federal and local agencies.

Suggested Activities by Discipline

This list is meant to be representative of the many types of professionals that can be asked to participate on a review. The suggested activities allow those who request a review to know what kind of review and information to expect from each expert.

Archaeologist

State Archaeologist

1. Review Connecticut's existing statewide inventory of prehistoric, historic, and industrial archaeological resources and evaluate the archaeological sensitivity of previously unsurveyed ERT study areas.
2. Conduct field review to identify and evaluate archaeological Resources and archaeologically sensitive areas within the ERT study area.
3. Provide guidance and recommendations for the conservation, protection, and/or need for further professional studies regarding Connecticut's archaeological heritage.
4. When appropriate provide information on educational opportunities for students and the general public.

Staff Archaeologist for State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

1. Review National and State Registers of Historic Places, local Historic district files, town-based inventories, and historic, architectural, industrial, engineering, and archaeological databases for significant cultural resources that may be located within, or in close proximity, to the ERT study area.
2. Conduct field review to identify and evaluate previously-unreported historic, architectural and archaeological resources. Provide guidance and recommendations for pertinent preservation, protection and/or further professional treatment of important cultural resources.

Community Planner

1. Review and summarize elements of the master plan and existing zoning that apply to the site.
2. Summarize surrounding land use and current use of site, pointing out considerations which should be considered in site design and use.
3. Summarize local transportation facilities, pointing out how these should influence site design and use.
4. Discuss existing infrastructure (location, capacity, and adequacy) and identify new needs. Include discussion of water supply, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal, storm drainage, and energy resources.

5. Comment on whether proper services to support development exist or can be reasonably developed or expanded (safety, education, commercial, employment, recreation).
6. Discuss the consistency of the proposed plan, and its relationship to any existing local state and regional plans.

Fish Biologist

1. Comment on quality of any existing water bodies and their ability to support aquatic populations.
2. Identify and describe interesting, unusual, and valuable aquatic populations including species stocked.
3. Comment on feasibility of enhancing water bodies to improve support of fish populations.
4. Comment on effect proposed activity may have on existing aquatic resources.

Forester / Forest Management

1. Prepare general vegetation map of the site, summarize major vegetation types, including vegetation types on any wetlands.
2. Identify and describe interesting, unusual, and valuable vegetation types or conditions.
3. Describe limiting conditions which determine the potential for design and maintenance of vegetative cover including the presence of non-native invasive plant species.
4. Discuss alternative management techniques to enhance, maintain, and protect a healthy and productive ecosystem (e.g. suggestions for plantings, thinnings, clearings, buffers).

Geologist

1. Describe and summarize general surficial and bedrock geology, topography, physiography, and slope of site, including interesting or unusual features.
2. Describe any geologic limitations or opportunities for development.
3. For sites characterized by shallow soils, evaluate the potential for underlying bedrock that could cause acid drainage and potentially adverse impacts from blasting. Both on-site and off-site impacts.

Hydrologist

1. Describe and summarize surface water drainage and surface water quality, including special conditions such as flood prone areas and wetlands.
2. Discuss extent to which the proposed project will alter the hydrologic balance. Calculate run-off changes which will occur due to urbanization and estimate any impacts on peak stream flow and flooding. Recommend any management measures needed to mitigate effects of run-off including those from pesticides.
3. Conduct a preliminary assessment of whether there are any concerns relating to known areas of pollution where ground water may be impacted by releases. Especially when ground water will be used for development of on-site wells.
4. Evaluate sites where ground water withdrawals may exceed 50,000 gal/day. Comment on the potential for mutual interference between a pumping well, and a known source of pollution near the site.

Landscape Architect

1. Comment on potential site design, identifying fragile and unique topographic and vegetative conditions and notable viewsheds on the site, and how they may be incorporated or protected.
2. Comment on roadway layout and connection with main traffic arteries, on parking needs and design, as well as on internal pedestrian circulation.
3. Comment on types of vegetation that could be incorporated in the final design for aesthetic appeal, wildlife benefit, soil stabilization, and for vegetative buffer strategies.
4. Comment on the connection the proposed design has in relationship to its surrounding area.
5. Comment on the project's open space planning and design, and opportunities for open space maximization, especially for sites with valuable natural resources.

Natural Diversity Data Base

1. Review State NDDB maps and files to determine if there are any State or Federal Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern species occurring in or near the project site.
2. Brief description of any listed plants, animals or ecosystems.
3. Referral if necessary to a botanist or wildlife biologist.

Resource Conservationist

1. Identify special soil conditions such as wetlands, flood prone areas, and land with significant potential for agriculture.
3. Comment on suitability of soil conditions for various land uses, pointing out favorable and unfavorable conditions. Prepare soils limitation chart.
4. Comment on grading operations needed to prepare site for development.
5. Identify any existing erosion or sedimentation problems, recommending any needed erosion or sediment control measures.
6. Comment on what effects the proposed project may have on soil loss, sedimentation and run-off. Discuss how these impacts will affect existing water bodies. Suggest development techniques to mitigate negative soil impact.
7. Provide comments, recommendations and information on non-point source contaminants as they relate to the land use activity.
8. Provide storm water review.
9. Provide water quality information.

Sanitary Engineer / Environmental Sanitarian

(It is desirable to have the local health departments involved in the ERT review process. The Department of Public Health Environmental Engineering Program (EE) reviews are best done at the final plan stage, rather than the conceptual.)

1. Provide comments on whether or not the proposed development meets the criteria in the health code for on-site water supply and sewage disposal.
2. The EE Program identifies areas of concern and non-code compliant design system layouts.
3. The EE Program may also identify concerns with the local health department's role with the project review.

Storm Water Engineer

1. Describe and summarize special topographic, ground material, stormwater, and drainage conditions which are of particular importance for general design.
2. Describe potential erosion and sedimentation problems and any stormwater management measures that may be necessary.
3. Note any necessary permits that are needed.

Transportation Planner (Regional/ State)

1. Classify and describe roads associated with a project. Review location of potential new roads and discuss their affect on adjacent State Roads, as necessary.
2. Review any traffic studies submitted and note any deficiencies in methodology or analysis.
3. Review and discuss Conn DOT or local town data as necessary.
4. Classify and describe road network associated with and potentially impacted by a project.
5. Review any traffic studies submitted and note any deficiencies in methodology, analysis and findings.
6. Determine and assess the potential impact traffic generated by a project will have on the adjacent road network, including, but not limited to, intersection levels of service, safety, and need for new traffic control devices (stop signs, traffic signals).
7. Evaluate planned or recommend roadway improvements to determine if they are sufficient for accommodating post-project traffic flow and ensuring operational safety for both vehicles and pedestrians.
8. Review access plans to a project and discuss adequacy of plans in terms of sight lines, location, and capacity.
9. Discuss alternative design elements that would reduce conflict points (fewer or consolidated driveways), provide pedestrian and bicycle friendly environments, slow or calm traffic speeds, and accommodate features that are more in context with the surrounding area.
10. Review and discuss traffic and transportation data as may be available from the Connecticut Department of Transportation, regional planning organization or town.

Watershed Manager

1. Comprehensively assess proposed land and water activities with respect to a given watershed area.
2. Identify and assess surface and ground water resource values including, water quality, water quantity, water use, river / stream riparian areas and other watershed resources.
3. Identify potential water resource impacts or concerns, including cumulative non-point source pollution. Recommend measures to mitigate or minimize impacts including: pollution control/prevention, site design, low impact development alternatives, best management practices, and general land use and watershed management measures.
4. Identify potentially required state and federal water resource related permits, authorizations or approvals.

Wetland Reviewer

1. Identify and describe the existing wetlands and wetland systems in the area of the study site.
2. Discuss probable effects of the proposed plan on the existing wetland systems, specifically addressing: wetland recharge, habitat, and stormwater inputs within the project watershed.
3. Make recommendations to the proposed plan that would:
 - a. maintain or benefit the functions and values of the on-site wetlands
 - b. maintain the integrity of the wetland systems preserving both the habitat and hydrology within the watershed(s).

Wildlife Biologist

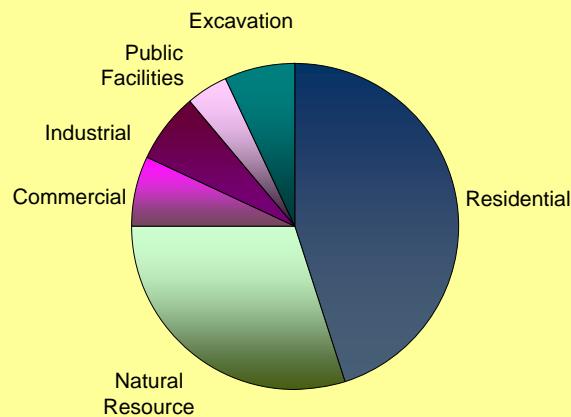
1. Describe existing major habitats, and habitat features and their value in supporting various wildlife species.
2. Provide examples of species supported by or potentially supported by the various habitats on site.
3. Comment on effect(s) the proposed activity will have on the habitat(s) present and the impact on various wildlife species.
4. Provide comments/recommendations on ways to reduce (if possible) the impacts caused by the proposed land use change on wildlife habitat and wildlife.

Projects ERT will Review

The ERT is designed to be a flexible program that will assist in the review of many types of projects. The ERT has reviewed the following kinds of projects but it is not limited to these and is always open to new requests. Projects have ranged in size from .5 acres to several thousand acres.

- Subdivisions, Condominiums
- Active Adult Communities, Affordable Housing
- Shopping Centers, Malls
- Industrial Parks, Professional Parks
- Schools, Town Offices, Public Facilities
- Golf Courses, Race Tracks, Marinas
- Roads, Parking Lots, Sewer Extensions
- Playing fields, Nature Trails
- Outdoor Classrooms
- Sand, Gravel, Stone, Peat Excavations
- Watershed, Lake and Stream Studies
- Septage Lagoons, Landfills
- Zone Changes, Cemeteries, Bike Trails
- Coastal Management, Boat Launches
- Parks, Open Space, Camps, Campgrounds
- Indian Reservations, Critical Areas

Types of Reviews Conducted 1969 - 2004



Review Process

The major responsibilities of the ERT coordinator are project application processing, scheduling and coordinating field reviews, final report preparation, and follow-up of the final report. These duties and the review process are summarized in Figure 2 and are discussed in detail below.

Once a request for an ERT is approved, the ERT coordinator notifies the municipality and developer/applicant to arrange for a field review date. Generally, this is within one month of the request approval date. Once a field review date is agreed upon, the ERT Coordinator designs a work program for the project and contacts the Team members required for the review.

A “pre-review” packet is then compiled by the ERT coordinator and sent to Team members, the town and applicant at least two weeks prior to a review. Included in this packet is the time and place of the review, a general description of the proposed project, any particular concerns of the town, soil and topographic maps of the site, and any mapped or technical information provided by the town/developer (e.g. site plan, test hole data, etc.). Both the Eastern Connecticut and King's Mark ERTs have generally scheduled field reviews on a specific weekday (e.g. reviews usually occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but scheduling remains flexible to accommodate town staff, commission members and the applicant).

The range of disciplines and personnel on the Team will vary depending on the specific review, availability of personnel, and site characteristics. The personnel usually available are listed on pages 8 and 9. In some cases involving small parcels of land, there have been as few as three Team members involved. In other cases, as many as 14 members have been used on a review.

There is a significant benefit from using the personnel of existing agencies on a request basis rather than having a single Team conducting reviews on a full-time basis. Any one Team member will still spend the majority of his or her time working for his or her respective agency. He or she will thus be familiar with other developments in the state that might relate to or have an impact on a specific project. Also, the Team experience provides for an interaction among agencies that might not otherwise occur, and allows these agencies to accumulate additional data on the sites reviewed.

On the day of the review, the Team members, town representatives, the developer and other interested parties meet at the town hall or other location convenient to the site. The ERT coordinator moderates a preliminary meeting before going out to the site, the purpose of which is to review the background information sent with the “pre-review” packet and to allow the applicant and/or town to present the proposal. It also gives all parties involved the opportunity to ask questions. If a development is being proposed, it is particularly desirable to have the developer, town staff and/or commission members present to answer specific questions on the proposal and have the proposal accurately presented.

The actual site review consists of the ERT Coordinator guiding the town officials, developer, and Team members over the site as a group. The coordinator suggests areas the Team should study. The time spent on a site will vary according to its size and variety, and reviews have ranged from two to five hours. The emphasis in the field is on an exchange of ideas, plans, concerns, alternatives, etc., among all the persons present. Being on site also gives Team members a chance to double check mapped information such as soils, wetland boundaries, topography, and surficial and bedrock geology, and to identify other resources such as the existing vegetation and wildlife habitat. The professional conduct of the Team members in the field and the quality of their individual reports are critical to the acceptance and use of their findings. Objectivity is a crucial element, and factual information should be the basis for any comments or suggestions made. Conduct in the field may also affect how the town and developer perceive the objectivity in the final report.

Following the field review, a summary meeting is sometimes held at the site (or indoors during inclement weather). This meeting is primarily for Team members, though the developer and town representatives may remain for it. The various aspects of the development are discussed, with consideration given to potential problems, means of prevention or correction, alternatives, and possible trade-offs. This meeting helps individual Team members to identify those areas that should be covered in their reports and what additional information may be needed. Some Team members may also need to make additional site visits.

Figure 2.

The Review Process

1. Pre-review



- RC&D and conservation district approves request
- ERT coordinator determines Team composition and work plan
- ERT coordinator schedules field review
- ERT coordinator prepares and mails pre-review packet to Team members, town and developer

2. The Review

- Pre-field walk meeting with Team, town and developer/landowner at town hall
- Field walk
- Post-field Team meeting/discussion

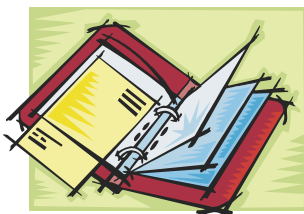


3. Report Preparation

- Team members submit individual reports
- ERT coordinator compiles composite report
- Report published and distributed

4. Follow-up and Evaluation

- ERT coordinator acts as contact person for questions or report requests
- Annual survey prepared and mailed
- Annual survey results published
- ERT coordinator leads discussion of results with RC&D councils



Request Review Procedure



The procedure adopted by both ERTs in Connecticut for conducting reviews has some aspects peculiar to the state and the relationships existing among agencies. However, the process as a whole is based on the cooperation and involvement of all parties: the town, landowner and/or developer, and Team participants.

The first step in a review is the formal written request application from a town for an ERT study (please see the Appendix for copies of the official request forms). The request may come from the chief elected official of a municipality or the chairman of an administrative agency with responsibility for land use issues, such as planning and zoning, conservation, or inland wetlands. The local commission making the request should be the one with the decision-making responsibilities. An endorsement by the chief elected official of the town is recommended, or the request should come from the decision-making party. An official request form should be used to expedite matters, or the request should include a letter from the requesting agency stating the intended use of the land and area of concern; permission from the landowner for the Team to enter the property; a location map of the subject site; a surveyed plot plan/site plan for a proposed development (a site plan is required for development projects).

The request form (or letter of request) is submitted concurrently to the applicable conservation district* and the ERT coordinator for the RC&D's consideration as an ERT project. This process allows district board members with local knowledge about projects in their communities to perform a screening function for each request that will be acted upon by the RC&D Council/ERT Subcommittee. Upon receipt of a request, the district technical staff and the ERT coordinator may schedule a pre-review discussion with the town. The conservation district board evaluates the request in terms of complexity, size, scope or services needed, and priority, as does the RC&D ERT Subcommittee.

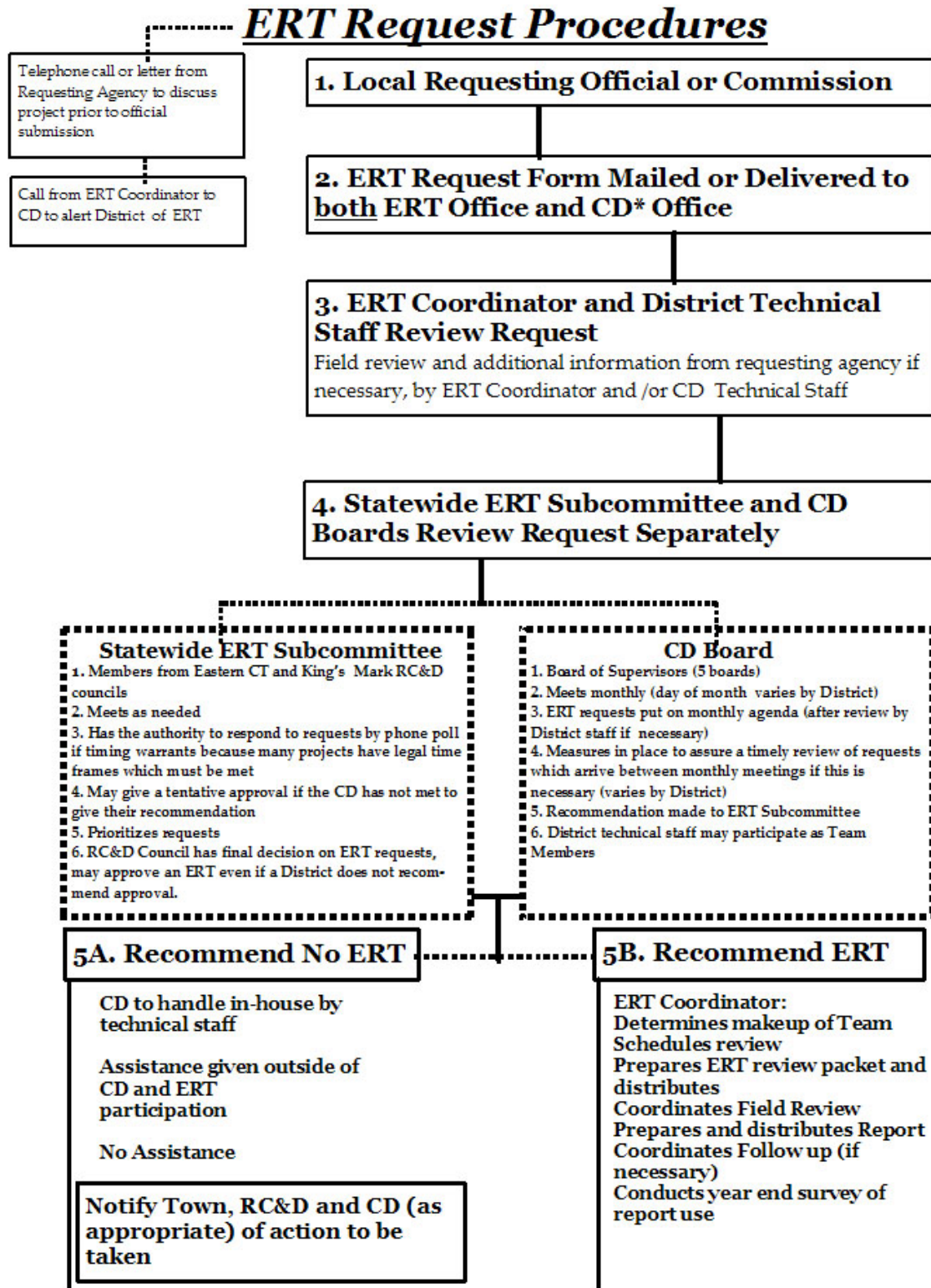
*Connecticut's Conservation Districts are locally led, natural resource based organizations. District programs are implemented by staff at the direction of each of the five Districts locally elected Board of Directors. Districts were created to provide timely and unbiased technical and educational services on local land use issues, for municipal land use decision makers and land owners. The 5 districts are: Northwest, Southwest, North Central, CT River Coastal, and Eastern CT.

Criteria used to select or approve ERT requests:



- Rural towns with limited or no “in-house” professional staff or other resources have priority; town lacks professional staff to conduct an environmental study on proposed development sites.
- ERT request addresses a significant change in land use (i.e. proposed subdivision development).
- The ERT request is within the knowledge, scope, and expertise of available Team members.
- The ERT can be conducted within a reasonable time frame to meet legal deadlines.
- The ERT will serve a useful purpose and provide information to the town that will be utilized or implemented.

Figure 3.



* Conservation District

The ERT Report

The format of individual Team member reports varies from one review to another depending on site conditions, project proposals, and concerns. Generally, the ERT Coordinator provides some guidance to individual Team members through the use of a list of concerns and questions generated by the town. This approach ensures that all major concerns are addressed and prevents duplication of effort by individual Team members. Items in the prepared packet vary depending on the review project, and Team members are encouraged to add or delete concerns as site conditions, proposals, or professional expertise dictates.

Team members are requested to submit their reports to the ERT coordinator within two weeks following the review, but this time frame may be expanded if the project is particularly large, complex and sensitive. Once the reports are received, the coordinator compiles the final report. The format of the final report varies, depending on those concerns pertinent to the project, but it generally encompasses the following headings:

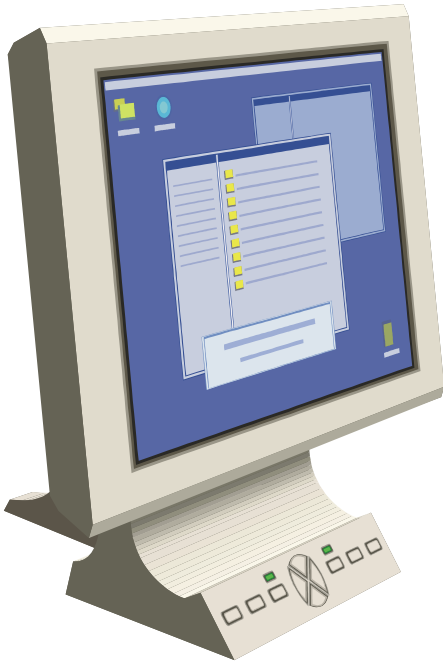
- Introduction
- Topography
- Geology
- Soils
- Hydrology
- Wetlands
- Vegetation/Forestry
- Aquatic Habitat
- Wildlife Habitat
- Water Supply
- Sewage Disposal
- Archaeological Review
- Planning Considerations

It is important to maintain flexibility in the format of the ERT report for different types of reviews. For example, an alternate format has been used in environmental assessments for federal funding applications.

A soils map and chart showing the proportional extent of soils and their interpretations for various uses may be presented in the appendix of each ERT report, along with the other technical information too lengthy or involved to place within the body of the report. In addition to the soils map, other illustrations may include topographic, vegetation, and geologic maps.

When the final report is completed, it is delivered to the requesting commission, with copies to the applicant and Team members. The Team's involvement with a project usually ends at this point. However, questions can be directed to Team members concerning their section of the report. Further action on the project is then up to the town. On occasion, an individual Team member may be able to follow through on a specific aspect of the project within the jurisdiction of their regular position.

Program Evaluation



The main purpose of this aspect of the ERT process is to evaluate how well the ERT's objectives are being met. In order to evaluate the ERT's effectiveness in fulfilling its objectives, it is necessary to determine the usefulness of the ERT reports. This is done through an annual survey, covering the following areas:

- Natural resource protection information for land use planning and
- Land use decision-making.

The surveys are then used to develop a written report, highlighting how towns used the services of the ERT and the ERT report, what decisions were made, and the value of the report in making those decisions. The results provide insight for improvements of environmental services to Connecticut's towns and also demonstrates to Team members and their agencies the continued importance of their participation.

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Appendix

Connecticut ERT Request Form