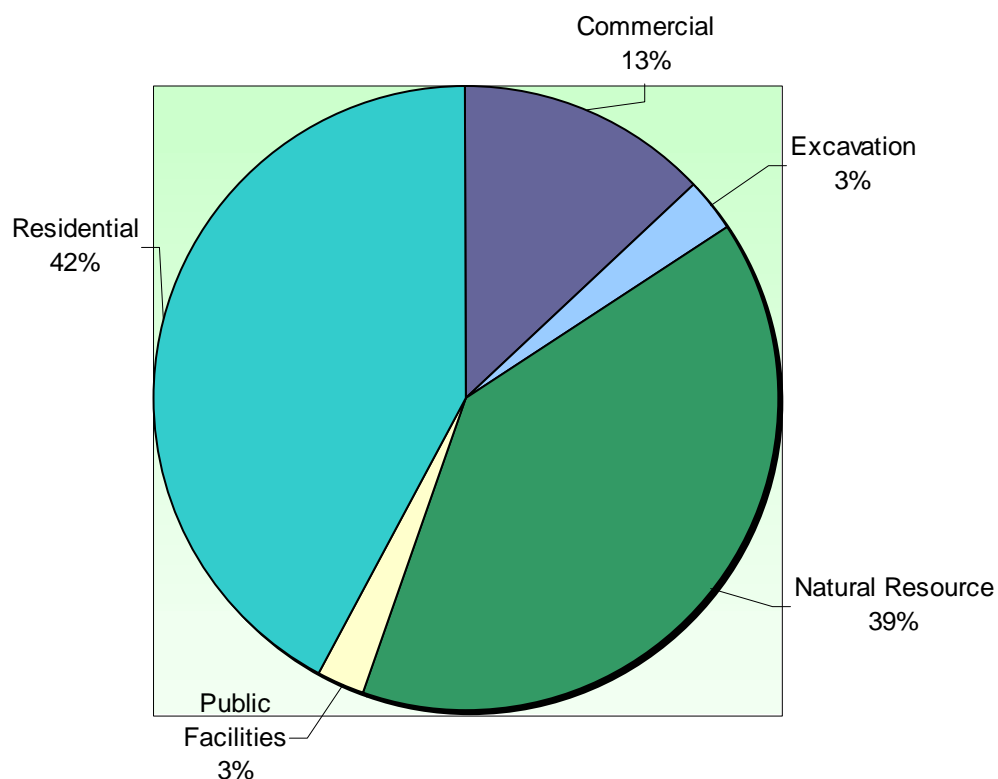


# ERT Survey Results *For Fiscal Years 2001-2003*

Since 1997 the Environmental Review Team has conducted a yearly survey concerning completed ERT reports. The survey is sent to the requesting agency after they have had time to read and review the report. The purpose of the survey is to determine the effectiveness of the ERT program in providing towns with natural resource information and project reviews that can be used in their decision making processes. The information that the surveys provide indicates to us how the towns use the reports, what aspects of the ERT are most valuable to them, their perception of the quality of the report, what kinds of changes or improvements the ERT can make to the program and overall awareness of the ERT program.

In the past three years (2001 - 2003) 38 reviews were conducted. 41 surveys were returned representing 34 of the 38 reviews conducted (89%). In an average year the ERT is able to conduct 12-18 reviews. Of the 38 reviews, 23 were assisting towns in the review of private development projects, and 15 of the reviews were for municipal projects. Two reviews were used in requesting federal/state/ local funding, and one was used to convince the applicant to expend more money on expert research.

## Types of ERT Reviews Conducted for 2001-2003

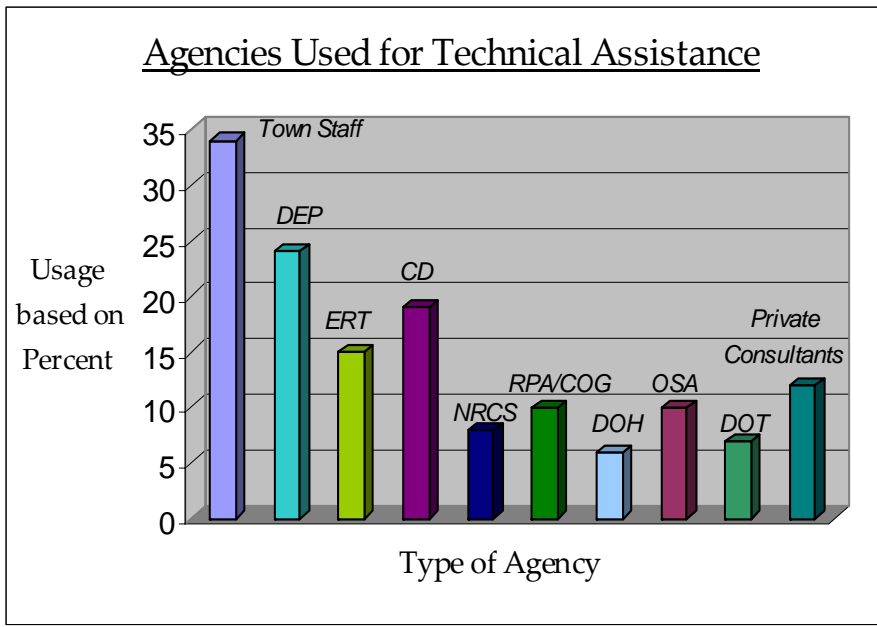


The range of projects reviewed included:

- ◆ Residential (42%)
  - Subdivision (12), Condominium (1), Age Restricted Housing (3)
- ◆ Natural Resource (37%)
  - Natural Resource Inventory (9), Greenway (1), Open Space (3), Outdoor Classroom (1)
- ◆ Commercial (13.5%)
  - Golf courses (3), Retail Business (1), Tennis / Recreation facility (1)
- ◆ Public Facilities ( 5%)
  - Elementary School (1), Athletic fields (1)
- ◆ Excavation (2.5%)
  - Sand and Gravel (1)

The request for reviews came from a variety of municipal officials and other agencies. Some requests were made jointly by two or more town agencies. The inland wetland commissions (34%) made the most number of requests, followed by planning and zoning (30%). Conservation Commission (11%), and Chief Elected Officials (13%). The remaining requests came equally from Park and Recreation Department (2%), Environmental Protection Board (2%), the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (2%), Superintendent of Schools (2%), Council of Government (2%), and Land Trust (2%).

Almost all of the towns that made requests had full time professional staff, as well as part time staff. Staff positions included town planner (45%), environmental planner (11%), town engineer (30%), town sanitarian full or part time ( 34%),combined zoning and wetland officer full or part time ( 29%), zoning enforcement officer full or part time (37%), wetland enforcement officer full or part time (39%), park department head (7%), grant administrator (7%). 18% hired private consultants to review the same application that the ERT was asked to review.



Data in graph is based on survey response when asked what agencies respondents normally contact for technical assistance with the review of projects.

The ERT reports were rated “excellent” by 45% of the survey respondents, 50% rated them “good”, and the remaining 5% rated the report “fair”. 59% of respondents replied that the reports were “very helpful,” 39% responded that the report was “helpful” to them, and one respondent said the report was “not helpful”. Negative comments included: that the report needed more detail and supporting evidence, the review was poorly organized, it took too much time to request a review and receive a report, the report did not provide them with the information requested, there was information that was not included although it was requested, another noted it did not provide them with what they expected, and lastly that the report was too “cut and paste” with no real presentation.

Of the 41 respondents 36 noted that the information provided by the ERT report was easily read and understood. 30 said that the information was pertinent to the proposed project. 25 said that they were able to cite specific concerns and make recommendations. 12 noted that the ERT report was able to answer specific questions adequately. 4 noted that the report was mostly understandable but somewhat technical, 2 noted it was too general, and 2 noted it was inconclusive, the information could be interpreted differently by individuals to arrive at different conclusions. Others noted that some sections were better than others, agreed with some but not all of the information, and lastly one reported that he thought the way in which they received the information was unprofessional.

Approximately 83% of the respondents said that the ERT was a good method to receive objective information and recommendations to help in the decision-making process. 85% of the respondents said that the ERT was a valuable service that they would use again and recommend. 17% said it provides a good service, but it takes too long, another 2% noted the ERT was a method to delay or deny a project. 10% had other impressions of the ERT, and only one said it was a waste of time and effort, and that they would not request again.

In general when asked if the ERT report was used in the decision-making process 25% replied the ERT report was the basis of the final decision. 49% said that the ERT was partially used in the decision. 4% said it was not used in the decision, another 2.5% said the report was used as a learning tool only. Over 50% said the ERT report was used for general resource management and planning. 12 reported asking for additional assistance from team members.

The impacts that were minimized or avoided because of information included in the ERT report are as follows:

- erosion and sedimentation
- water pollution
- wetland degradation
- wildlife habitat degradation
- fisheries habitat degradation
- flooding
- traffic problems
- sewage disposal or water supply problems
- incompatible land uses
- historic/archaeological degradation

At the time of survey completion, six projects were in the planning stage, eight of the proposals were accepted, seven were modified by request of the agency, seven were modified voluntarily, five proposals were withdrawn voluntarily, eight were taken to court, one was changed in court, and seven proposals were denied.

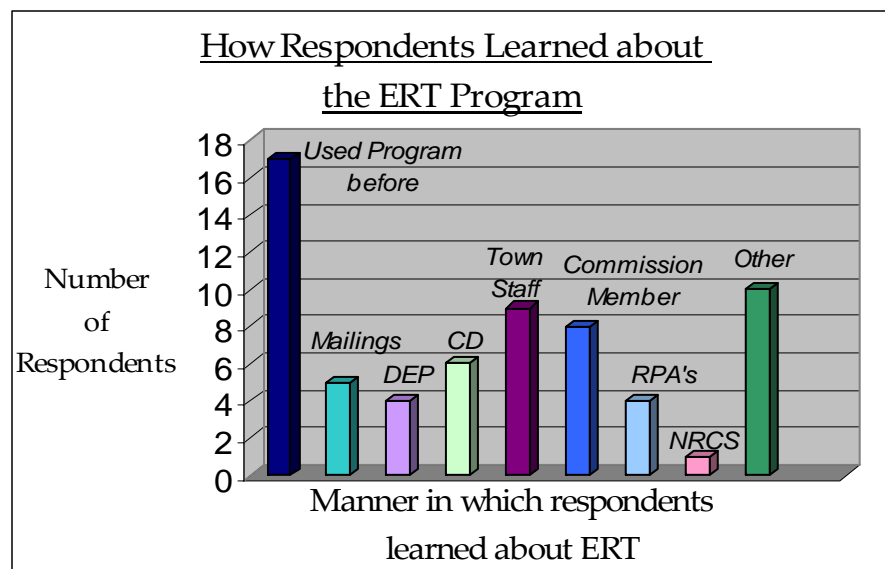
The following are modifications resulting from the ERT report if the project was accepted:

- Decrease in density/size
- Change in lot/ building layout
- Change in road/driveway layout
- Modifications in erosion & sediment control measures
- Modification of storm water management plan
- Change in open space
- Additional testing and/or information was required

34 respondents reported that someone encouraged them to request an ERT, which included: town staff, chief elected official, DEP, commission member, and citizen/citizen's group, Soil and Water Conservation District, applicant, Regional Planning Agency / Council of Government, and a Land Trust. Only seven surveys indicated that someone tried to discourage them from requesting an ERT. Those that did so included: town staff, chief elected official, commission member, citizen/ citizen's group, and the applicant.

Information in graph is based on Respondents reply when asked how they found out about the ERT Program.

Approximately half of those who replied were aware that the ERT program has been functioning in Connecticut since 1969. Another 50% of the respondents knew the program was funded by the "Fee Bill." (Public Act 92-235 (Sect. 4) enacted in July 1992, amended in 2000, 2003 & 2004. CGS 22a-27j)



### Future Action:

The ERT program is currently in its 36th consecutive year of service. It continues to fulfill its objective by providing professional objective reviews of development proposals, natural resource inventories for planning and management and recommending guidelines for sound land use.

The statewide ERT subcommittee intends to continue to maintain the ERT Program's reputation as a highly regarded resource for Connecticut communities. They will continue to meet and develop strategies to enhance current procedures so that towns can receive the information they need in a timely and useful manner in order to make their decision. The ERT relies on the voluntary participation of federal, state, and local agency personnel so interagency cooperation and communication is key in maintaining expert professional Team Members.

### Additional Comments from the Surveys:

- ◆ "Thank you for your timely assistance once again."
- ◆ "1. For natural resource inventories, consideration should be given to reformatting the report so that all of the information for a particular parcel is in one place (e.g. rather than discuss the soils for four parcels, and then the vegetation of the four parcels, discuss each parcel individually). This will help the "management team" for a particular parcel.  
2. Consider investing in Arch View so that soil maps, topography, and other data layers can be more clearly presented."
- ◆ "Great organization."
- ◆ "When we received the report it became the foundation upon which we set out, we referenced all the report but some aspects became more relevant as we proceeded. In conclusion I would state we were very fortunate to have the report and we referred to it and used it throughout the decision making."
- ◆ "We subsequently sought another ERT on a private parcel under development."
- ◆ "All "experts" provided were helpful, dependable, and quick to respond to any of our concerns or questions."
- ◆ "The unbiased professional review that the ERT did for the Town of Litchfield was a very valuable tool used to guide the commissions in their review of the project and questions to the developer. Without this direction, the inland wetland commission would have been severely hampered in finding relevant alternatives and technical information as well as determining their final decision."
- ◆ "I was impressed with the frankness of the report. The information is quite useful to the IWWC. It concurred with what they felt intuitively was a potentially harmful project, and they were gratified to find that the ERT staff was in agreement. Thank you!"
- ◆ "The report was excellent. This survey was difficult to respond to because we are in the very beginning stages of thoroughly reviewing the report and prioritizing what we hope to do as a result of the report."
- ◆ "I believe your report contains an excellent outline to help the Town develop a management plan for this area."
- ◆ "Very good project, thorough, timely, useful in assisting both applicant and commission in project review."
- ◆ "I was very pleased with the process and the report. I especially appreciated the effort that was made to enlist people with a wide range of expertise that was necessary for an objective look at this site and proposed project. In our town, staff spent some time making our volunteer boards aware of what information from the whole of the report pertained to each of their statutory authorizations. I am left wondering who does that function in a town with limited staff. Without that, boards could run amuck. Thank you."
- ◆ "Decrease in time frame for review would be helpful."
- ◆ "When detailed plans and reports are available and not reviewed by team members, their reports should clearly state this. My previous experiences with ERT were good— but they were done prior to submission of detailed plans."
- ◆ "The ERT study was particularly well done and the report is very useful."
- ◆ "I think the ERT program is a great service and hope that it is strengthened. Perhaps having more experts on your roster would help."
- ◆ "Thank you for your fine work!"
- ◆ "I got the sense that the portions of the report done by DEP staff walk the political line rather than telling it like it is. This is not very helpful."
- ◆ "Nice job, Thank you!"
- ◆ "In the future we will use private consultants. The commission has lost all credibility, for the ERT program. Very unsatisfied."

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Principle author of this report was Amanda Fargo-Johnson, ERT Program Assistant.

## **ERT Reviews for Fiscal Year 2001– 2003**

### **Eastern Connecticut Project List:**

Number	TOWN	COUNTY	REPORT	TYPE	TYPE II	ACREAGE	REVIEW	REPORT	FY
561	Killingworth	Middlesex	Bosco Property	Open Space		133	7/20/00	10/00	2001
562	Old Saybrook	Middlesex	Home Depot Sterling Development	Commercial		24.4	9/22/00	11/00	2001
563	Canterbury	Windham	Subdivision	Subdivision		240	10/3/00	12/00	2001
564	Bolton	Tolland	Coccino Property Subdivision	Subdivision		40.6	6/6/01	7/01	2001
565	Westbrook	Middlesex	Deer ridge Subdivision	Subdivision		142	7/11/01	9/01	2002
566	Enfield	Hartford	Autumn Fields Development	Senior Housing		80	8/1/01	9/01	2002
567	Old Saybrook	Middlesex	Great Cedar Swamp	NRI		300	11/14/01	9/01	2002
568	East Hampton	Middlesex	Laurel Ridge Elderly Housing	Senior Housing		50	11/27/01	01/02	2002
569	Killingworth	Middlesex	The Ridges of Deer Lake III	Subdivision		172	1/15/02	03/02	2002
570	Vernon	Tolland	Valley Falls Park	NRI, Pond Excav.		192	3/6/02	6/02	2002
571	Suffield	Hartford	Hilltop Farm	NRI		76	4/24/02	8/02	2002
572	Marlborough	Hartford	Nature Trail	Outdoor Class- room	NRI	147	6/5/02	8/03	2002
573	Killingworth	Middlesex	Hefft Brook Estates	Subdivision		62	8/15/02	10/02	2003
574	Durham	Middlesex	Field Property	NRI		106	10/22/02	10/02	2003
575	Windsor	Hartford	Phelps Brook Watershed	Watershed		177	10/29/02	1/03	2003
576	Lyme	New London	D&J Earthworks Excavation	Excavation		70	3/13/03	4/03	2003
577	Chester	Middlesex	Chester Forest Estates	Subdivision			3/25/03	4/03	2003
578	East Hampton	Middlesex	Royal Oaks	Subdivision	Afford- able	32	4/29/03	5/03	2003
579	N.Stonington	New London	Billings Lake Subdivision	Subdivision			6/4/03	8/03	2003

### **King's Mark Project List:**

Number	TOWN	COUNTY	REPORT	TYPE	TYPE II	ACREAGE	REVIEW	REPORT	FY
303	Sherman	Fairfield	River Oaks at Sherman	Golf Course	Subdivision	345	8/30/00	11/00	2001
304	Litchfield	Litchfield	Litchfield Woods	Condominium		77	10/ 17/00	12/00	2001
305	Watertown	Litchfield	Nonewaug Falls Open Space & Ag Preservation Area	NRI	Open Space & Agriculture	3000	01/23/01	9/01	2001
306	Wallingford	New Haven	Galko Farm	NRI	Open Space	50	01/30/01	6/01	2001
307	Cheshire	New Haven	Sherwood Acres Subdivision	Subdivision		67	05/07/01	8/01	2001
308	Cornwall	Litchfield	4 Land Trust Properties	NRI			05/31/01	12/01	2001
309	Wallingford	New Haven	Muddy River/Tyler Mill Preserve	NRI		1400	10/11/01	4/02	2002
310	Goshen	Litchfield	Charter Oak Golf Club	Golf Course		625	10/23/01	3/02	2002
311	Litchfield	Litchfield	Litchfield Family Estates	Subdivision		115	12/20/01	2/02	2002
312	Fairfield	Fairfield	Burr Street Elementary School	School		16	3/28/02	6/02	2002
313	Madison	New Haven	Madison Landing	Residential	Age Restricted	48	4/10/02	6/02	2002
314	Guilford	New Haven	Bittner Park	NRI		148	6/11/02	09/04	2002
315	Litchfield	Litchfield	Milton View & Milton Woods	Subdivisions		50, 50	07/16/02	10/02	2003
316	Torrington	Litchfield	Naugatuck River Greenway	NRI	Greenway		07/25/02	05/03	2003
317	Newtown	Fairfield	Pond Brook Estates	Subdivision		53	08/06/02	11/02	2003
318	Derby	New Haven	Witek Park	Recreation		144	12/17/02	01/03	2003
319	Stamford	Fairfield	The Courts at Birch Meadow	Tennis Facility	Recreation	80	04/03/03	05/03	2003
320	Bristol	Hartford	The Hoppers/Birge Pond	NRI		200	05/14/03	09/03	2003
321	Norfolk	Litchfield	Yale Farm Golf Club	Golf Course		575	06/16/03	08/03	2003