3.13 Promote Dark Skies

5 Points | 15 Points | 20 Points | 30 Points | 35 Points

Action Updates

This action is available for the **current certification cycle** and was newly added in 2021.

Objective

Adopt measures to reduce light pollution to promote human health, provide environmentally sensitive lighting for wildlife protection, ensure adequate light for safety in your municipality, and increase the visibility of stars against a night sky.

Complementary Action:

- Install Efficient Exterior Lighting

What to Do

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Conduct public education and outreach related to light pollution and the importance of dark skies for local businesses, institutions, and residences. **(5 points)**

   Implement a light pollution outreach program in your town that includes, but is not limited to, one or all of the following:

   - Presentations or workshops on the impacts (both local and global) of light pollution;
   - A searchable, navigable space on the municipal website for light pollution awareness and education and associated social media outreach; and/or
   - Educational materials on light pollution and its impacts disseminated in public spaces of your municipality.

   Submit: PDFs or other documentation of the outreach conducted or a hyperlink and a screenshot of the dedicated space on your municipal website and proof of dissemination. Please also provide the methods for, frequency of, and plans to sustain outreach going forward.

   Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Outreach, Education, Programs, Campaigns, Recognition/Designation in External Program, and Funding" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

2. Adopt a policy to analyze lighting needs at municipal facilities, reduce unnecessary lighting, and to replace and install municipal outdoor lighting with products that have the IDA Fixture Seal of Approval (or equivalent), including shielded lighting (where permitted), motion sensor activated lighting, and downward- rather than upward-directing lighting. **(15 points)**

   Submit: A copy of your policy and documentation to prove that your municipality utilizes IDA approved lighting products (e.g., procurement contract, a list of installations). If using an equivalent standard, please describe how it qualifies as a dark skies compliant or otherwise light pollution reducing product standard.

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

3. Require all projects requesting land use approvals for new construction or substantial site modifications to have dark sky compliant fixtures on all exterior lighting. **(15 points)**

   Submit: Any relevant section(s) of your zoning regulations. Please identify the section and page number(s) where this requirement is included.

   Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

Timeframe for Credit

Actions can either be "New" or considered for "Rolling Credit."

New Action Credit. Any action completed within the past three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification) is eligible for potential certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you may not claim New Action Credit for items that previously received credit.

Rolling Credit. For any action older than three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification), you must demonstrate ongoing, currently relevant, and meaningful impact in your community to be considered for certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you must apply for Rolling Credit for any item that previously received credit, even if it was completed within the past three years.

View the "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for detailed submission requirements.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Staff from the planning, building, public works, and purchasing departments could be helpful in implementing this action. In addition, the planning and zoning, conservation, energy, and/or land use commissions, local council of governments, local utility companies, local conservation districts, and local land trusts could help implement this action.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- If applied to Sustainable CT action Conduct Health Impact Assessments: Connecticut Health Foundation

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- The Last Green Valley's Cherish the Night Sky Report
- International Dark Skies Association (IDA) Outdoor Lighting Basics
- IDA Fixture Seal of Approval

- Light Pollution Laws—Connecticut General Assembly
- Dark Skies Awareness
- Connecticut Light Pollution Map
- International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) Resource Page

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- The Last Green Valley
- The International Dark Skies Association
- Clear Dark Sky

Why This Matters

Light pollution is caused by excessive, misdirected and/or misused outdoor lighting that has the potential to harm human health and safety, wildlife, and the environment. Although light pollution is most prevalent in larger cities, even relatively small amounts of light and excess lighting in smaller towns can be noticed and create problems in rural areas.

Light pollution is the silent threat to wildlife and ecosystems. Excess light disrupts the reproduction patterns of many animals, alters migration patterns, and increase deaths by drawing animals away from their habitats and exposing them to predators. Light pollution also threatens aquatic ecosystems by increasing harmful algae blooms. For humans, mismanaged and misdirected lighting can impact quality of life by limiting our ability to view beautiful night skies and disrupting our natural circadian rhythm. However, the needs of the community may be balanced by employing adequate, well-directed lighting to uphold public safety.

Benefits

By mitigating light pollution, residents of municipalities will experience both health and safety benefits. According to the International Dark Skies Association, wildlife in and around your municipality may experience benefits in reproduction, nourishment, sleep and protection from predators and may experience fewer deaths/losses to their populations.

Light pollution reduction produces several co-benefits in addition to improving outcomes for wildlife, ecosystems, and human health and safety. Mitigating light pollution can help reduce carbon dioxide emissions through saving energy—the less and/or more efficiently we light our towns, the less energy is used and the more we are able to reduce the production of harmful greenhouse gases. Additionally, towns may save money on energy bills by removing or upgrading streetlights or by introducing part-night lighting, dimming measures, and lower-energy lighting.