



AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY, Inc.  
P.O. Box 49,  
Old Mystic, CT 06372

# Knox Family Farm Preserve

## Property Management Plan

Stonington Road (Route 1)  
Stonington, New London County, Connecticut

Stonington Town Committee is responsible  
for the stewardship of this property

Plan Prepared by:  
Richard Newton & Beth Sullivan  
Fall 2015

Approved by Stonington Town Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by Stewardship Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

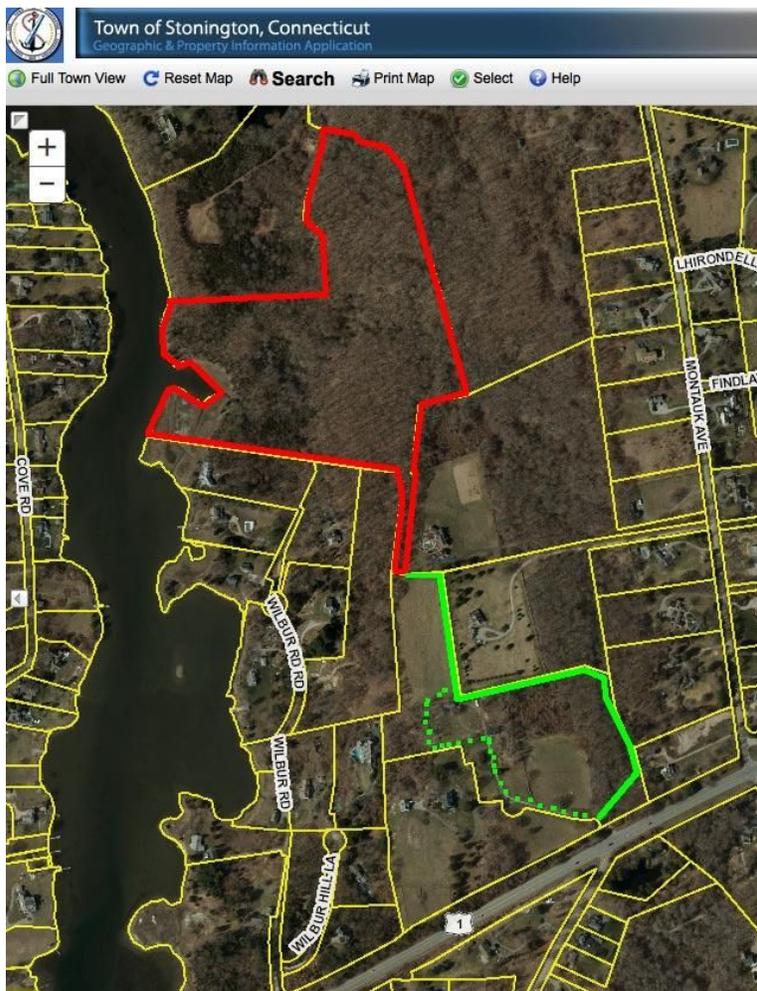


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## SUMMARY

This plan is for a property off Stonington Road in Stonington, CT. This is a trailed property of coastal woodlands. See the photos and map that follows. Visitors are welcome.

Property is owned by Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc., P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, CT 06372. Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC) can be reached by email at [avalonialc@yahoo.com](mailto:avalonialc@yahoo.com), by phone at 860-884-3500, and has a website at <http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org>.



## HISTORY

The Knox Family Farm Preserve is located in the Town of Stonington southern area of town. Residential housing, marsh, Quiambaug Cove and undeveloped parcels surround the property. Access is via a pedestrian right-of-way beginning at the entrance to Darling Hill Farm or via the water.

## SITE INFORMATION

### The property

A parcel map of the property from the Town of Stonington GIS database is shown to the left. The property is identified as Map/Book/Lot/Unit 138-3-4B. GIS acreage is 26.78

acres. The solid green line is the pedestrian right of way and the dotted green line is the small

vehicle maintenance right of way.

### Acquisition history

Acquired from Patricia C. Kitchings in February, 2008.

### Land use history

This sloped parcel was farmland / grazing land on the western portion that grew into mostly forested land and was forested on the northeastern portion with rocky terrain and wetlands.

## Neighborhood Change in Connecticut, 1934 to Present

Want to compare 1934, 1990, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2012 using a transparency tool? [Check out our Connecticut Aerial Photography Interactive Map Interface](#)



Attention ArcGIS and other GIS software users! The 1934 Aerial Photography layer is available via [MAGIC's WMS](#).

**Use the search box below to locate an address in Connecticut.**

stonington road, stonington ct

**Toggle map layers**

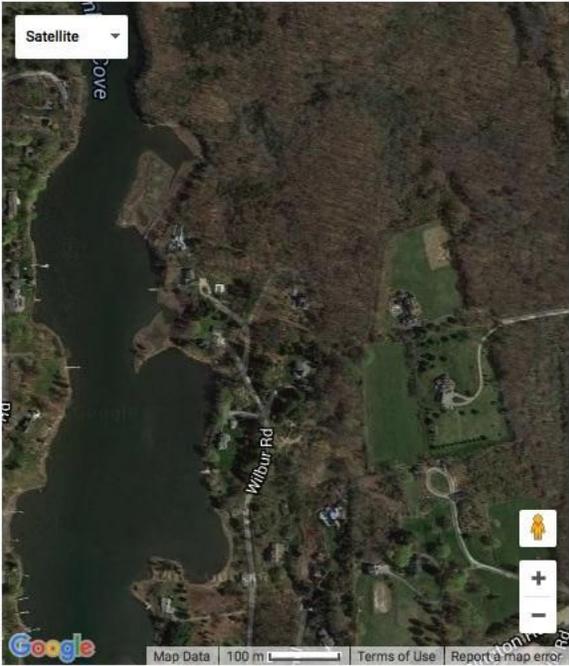
CT Towns

1934



100 m | Terms of Use

Satellite



100 m | Terms of Use | Report a map error

### Public use resources

Property provides access to Quiambaug Cove and has one main loop trail and another side loop. Parking is essentially on the shoulder / grass of Stonington Road near driveway to Darling Hill Farm. Technically there are two parking spaces at the entrance area. There is also a kayak landing spot and tie up on the west bank of the preserve, just north of small saltmarsh

inlet on Quiambaug Cove and from there, access to trails.  
Visitors are reminded to respect the private areas while on the ROW access.

Public benefit of the protected property:

Primarily serves as wildlife habitat, a buffer to residential parcels and protection of marsh and cove. Provides scenic coastal access.

The property is a significant natural area that qualifies as being preserved for a “conservation purpose” under 26 US Code 170(h)(4):

**(4) Conservation purpose defined**

**(A) In general**

For purposes of this subsection, the term “conservation purpose” means—

- (i)** the preservation of land areas for outdoor recreation by, or the education of, the general public,
- (ii)** the protection of a relatively natural habitat of fish, wildlife, or plants, or similar ecosystem,
- (iii)** the preservation of open space (including farmland and forest land) where such preservation is—
  - (I)** for the scenic enjoyment of the general public, or
  - (II)** pursuant to a clearly delineated Federal, State, or local governmental conservation policy, and will yield a significant public benefit, or
- (iv)** the preservation of an historically important land area or a certified historic structure.

Natural resources

There are several distinct habitat zones in the preserve. A large portion is dry, upland woods dominated by Oak and Hickory. It has rocky outcrops and glacial deposits. This area supports usual upland species of wildlife. Some areas have good understory, but much appears to be grazed by deer. Some understory is composed of non-native Barberry. Much of the area is former farm fields that have grown into cedar groves, some remain as dense stands and support owls and evergreen loving birdlife. Deciduous trees have long overtopped other cedar areas and the cedars have died off.

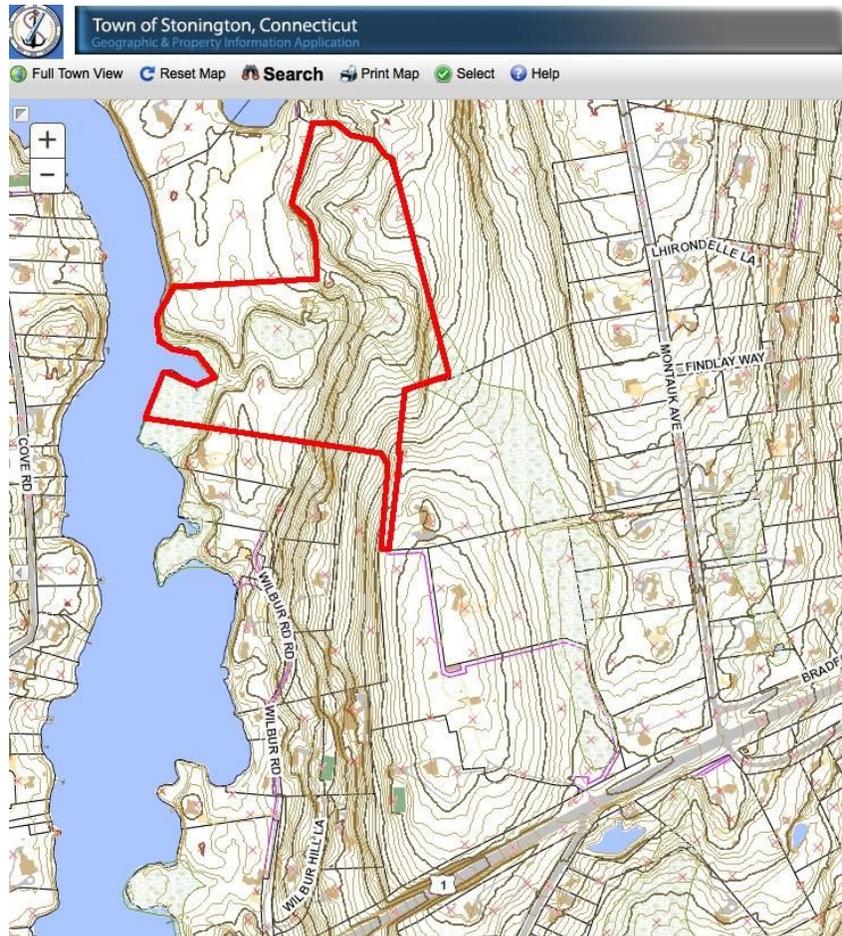
On the far north end of the property there is a natural spring seepage into a small wetland which flows off the property into an old cistern and into another larger wetland area west of our boundary.

There is a central kettle hole wetland dominated by low wetland shrubs and good thicket habitat. It drains via a small stream southward under a stone bridge into cove.

The northern, western edge of the property along the cove is a glacial esker of gravel and small stone. This is an excellent vantage point for wildlife watching. The land drops down, southward, to a small healthy salt-marsh cove that supports saltmarsh plants, and wildlife. Herons and Egrets frequent it in summer and waterfowl during winter season. This cove edge

area is in the CT DEEP NDDDB area, as is all of Quiambaug cove.

## ELEVATIONS / WETLANDS



## SPECIAL FEATURES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Numerous stone walls and Cedar groves in old fields, indicate the agricultural history and usage of the area. There is a stone bridge over a stream running into cove: rock mounds or cairns are present in other areas of the property. A glacial kettle hole is central to the property and remains wet with shrub-land vegetation throughout the year. The very northern tip of the property has a natural spring seepage that flows off the property and into an old well or cistern.

## MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

## Stewardship policies

Avalonia Land Conservancy Fee Land Stewardship Principles were approved on December 16, 2009 and the document is available at the Conservancy's office on Hatch Street in Mystic, CT. This document sets forth the general principles governing stewardship of all Avalonia properties. The document or any approved successor is hereby incorporated as part of this management plan.

### **Special Management Considerations: Access Right of Way.**

Current (2015) property owner: John & Lee Holstein, residents of the big farm house.

Contact : son-in-law Harry Boardsen is resident of secondary home on property. (860-536-9651) [harryb@noankshipyard.com](mailto:harryb@noankshipyard.com)

A condition of the land donation to Avalonia, was the creation of a 20' pedestrian Right of Way through the eastern portion of Darling Hill Farm, along the property boundary, to get access to the actual Avalonia property. Another, more direct, maintenance Right of Way was also created to allow for small vehicles and machines such as mowers to gain access to the preserve, and requires prior notification of landowner or contact. The management and stewardship of the ROW area has proven challenging. The pedestrian ROW passes through a wetland and an Eagle Scout created a footbridge through the area. The next portion of the trail follows a stone wall, but is through a dense area of invasive vines. Maintenance is difficult. Herbicide use is prohibited according to wording of ROW documents, and the trail is too rocky to bring in even small mower. Spring and summer growth is rapid and difficult to keep up with by hand. The trail presently passes in front of several outbuildings, through an open yard with loose animals, and through a gate that is frequently obstructed and overgrown. Originally the owner did not want directional signs posted. The trail continues along the east side of a field in which horses roam freely. Mr. Boardsen mows the trail along the side to guide hikers, and there are cedar posts with Avalonia signs. A bar-way blocks the north end of field, at the Avalonia Preserve trailhead, that deters hikers and is often obstructed, with the explanation that it was for the horses.

History of Issues: Issues have been on going since acquisition with complaints from hikers:

- Horse trailer blocking public access Fall 2014. Discussion, removal of horse trailer, and additional signage added 2015
- Ropes, intended to corral horses, blocking access (2013-14). Signs added to ropeway to direct hikers through.
- Bar-way barrier at Avalonia trailhead, blocking access (2013-15). Created in a way that

keeps horses in fields, but is a deterrent to hikers, constant attention to vegetation is needed to keep narrow side path access open.

- Complaints by property owner that visitors wander the private areas, interact with livestock and are a nuisance, have been ongoing over the years. There are signs and maps posted in two areas on ROW with directions to visitors regarding behavior, restrictions and access.
- June, 2015 meeting with Harry Boardsen and two Avalonia members to discuss possible resolution. He may remove sheds that are in disrepair and we agreed we could then reroute the trail behind the shed, with a possible rail type fence to keep people directed to trail and away from homes. Directional trail sign was posted at entrance to ROW. Signs placed at ropeways and bar-ways to guide hikers through.

### Protection

#### Condition of Boundaries:

- Corner monuments/pins found
- Boundary signs posted. ROW signs posted.

There are directional signs posted at entrance of ROW, as well as map and instructions for usage of ROW. There are directional signs along the ROW in the private areas. There is a trailhead sign at the property entrance.

All motorized vehicles are prohibited on the properties except for maintenance.

#### Maintaining property's appearance

The most problematic area of maintenance is the pedestrian right of way. Wilbur Road neighbor and volunteer Tote Smith assists with mowing the main trails of the preserve and assists with maintenance.

Invasive species in several areas degrade habitat and appearance. Hand maintenance is done as possible. There are some old farm dumps, but it was decided to let nature cover them over.

### Public use

The preserve is open to the public for passive recreation. Motor vehicles, bicycle riding, and horseback riding (except by the owners of Darling Hill Farm) are not permitted. Hunting and the use of firearms on the property, including bow hunting and target practice, are not permitted. Camping is not allowed. Dogs must be kept on a leash no longer than 7 feet long.

Visitors are not allowed to pick vegetation or disturb wildlife excessively. Visitors are advised to not interact with horses or pets on farm. Access for organized nighttime hikes requires prior notification to the landowner of Darling Hill Farm.

Mostly undeveloped parcels bound the northern boundary, one with access from Cove Road and one with access from Montauk Avenue. The Montauk Avenue parcel is currently for sale (2015 - \$850,000 – 33.1 acres – 2 dilapidated buildings) and might provide better access to the property.

#### Enhancing wildlife habitat(s)

There was an osprey platform on the small marsh, just outside Avalonia property boundary, which was destroyed several years ago. Avalonia could apply to restore one to that general area.

Leaving downed trees on site provides cover for wildlife.

#### Controlling invasive species

The preserve has several areas that are seriously degraded by invasives: along the entry pentway there is Barberry and Winged Euonymus, Autumn Olive and Bittersweet, among others. In areas of wetlands there is a large amount of Barberry.

Removal of invasive species by manual means will be accomplished as resources permit. Communicate with neighbors to help control invasive plants near their boundaries and along walls and hedgerows.

#### Erosion control and flooding

No issues.

#### Productive uses

Provides habitat for local wildlife as a large area within an, as yet, undeveloped block of forested land, upland from the cove.

#### Scientific and educational activities

None planned.

#### Response to large natural disasters

Removal of any hazards will be undertaken as necessary.

### Special management considerations

None on Avalonia owned preserve. See considerations for ROW management.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

### Recurring and occasional requirements

Stonington Town Committee members visit the site on a limited basis. Monitoring the ROW access is necessary as property owners have periodically obstructed the path, or erected fences and ropeways that discourage hikers. Making sure ROW is well signed and kept open is necessary. Communication with owner or contact person as needed.

### Annual obligations

A boundary walk around the outside perimeter the property is required.

### Short-term plan (1 – 5 years)

Annual boundary walk. Work with property owner/contact is ongoing to rectify difficult access issues. Contact/Boardsen has discussed removal of the sheds near the farmyard to allow the trail to be rerouted behind the shed or further along the stonewall, thus eliminating need for people to approach the dwellings. Install trail/preserve sign to a post on cove side by kayak landing for greater visibility and welcoming access point. Neighbor, Tote Smith and family are willing stewards: they will create extended loop into North Portion and maintain and blaze the trail.

### Long term plan (5+ years)

Monitor site. Work with neighbor and volunteers to help keep ROW open and control invasive plants especially along the ROW northern stonewall. Continue to think of alternative access possibilities.

### Schedule for revising this plan

This plan shall be reviewed at least every five years and updated as necessary.

## APPENDICES

- I. Zoning map for property and surrounding area is available at the Stonington Town Hall or online at <http://gis.stonington-ct.gov>.

Deeds are available in Avalonia files, Stonington Town Hall and online at

<https://connecticut-townclerks-records.com/User/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fIndex.aspx>