



# Avalonia Trails

Fall 2017

Your land trust since 1968 ... preserving natural habitats in southeastern Connecticut by acquiring and protecting lands and by communicating the value of these irreplaceable resources.



## Avalonia to Launch a Multi-Year Land Acquisition and Capital Campaign



*Aerial View of The Last Green Valley Photo by G. Leslie Sweetnam, TLGV*

Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC) is launching a five-year capital campaign to finance the acquisition of over 2,000 acres of high conservation-value land in southeastern Connecticut. That process began last year with five land donations of over 200 acres. Purchase of a key 409-acre property is planned for this year, followed by more than 200 acres in 2018. The acquisition of these properties will bring Avalonia's total acreage to over 4,200 acres by the end of 2018. Your accredited, 22-town conservancy is becoming one of Connecticut's largest land trusts in land holdings!

We anticipate that state and federal grants will provide primary funding for the properties in process. Other grants

have been and will be applied for, but Avalonia will need to raise more money to fund the acquisitions. The funds raised from individual contributions, multi-year pledges, major donors and foundations will cover the cost of acquiring the land as well as long term stewardship, legal, and other expenses not covered by state and federal grants.

Avalonia is launching this campaign while only months away from initiating the celebration of its 50th anniversary year in 2018. A number of fundraising and celebratory events are planned. For more information about how you can support Avalonia's efforts, call 860-884-3500 Tuesday through Thursday from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm or visit [avalonialandconservancy.org](http://avalonialandconservancy.org).

## Board of Directors 2017-2018

### Officers

Dennis Main.....	President
Sue Sutherland.....	Vice-President/ Treasurer
Rick Newton.....	Assistant Treasurer
Binti Ackley.....	Secretary
Maureen Dewire.....	Assistant Secretary

### Directors-at-Large

Karen Askins	Bob Leuba
Richard Conant Jr.	Russell Morrison
Scott Dawley	Rick Newton
Maureen Dewire	Mike Pernal
Julie DuPont-Woody	Gerry Stefon
Mark Hibbard	David Young

### Honorary Directors

Carole Clark  
Anne Nalwalk

### Director of Development and Programs

Chuck Toal

### Administrative Assistant

Amy Mocarsky

### Standing Committee Chairs

Acquisition.....	Sue Sutherland
Communication and Outreach...	Maureen Dewire
Development.....	Dick Conant
Finance.....	Sue Sutherland
Governance.....	Mike Pernal
Personnel.....	Dick Conant
Stewardship.....	Karen Askins

### Town Committee Chairs

Griswold.....	Dick Conant
Groton.....	Bob Leuba
Ledyard.....	Karen Askins
North Stonington.....	Pat Turner
Preston.....	Bob Chapin, Margaret Gibson
Stonington.....	Beth Sullivan

**Website:** [www.avalonialandconservancy.org](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org)

**E-mail:** [avalonialc@yahoo.com](mailto:avalonialc@yahoo.com)

**Office phone:** 860-884-3500

**Office hours:** Tue. - Thu. 10 am - 2 pm

## Annual Meeting News

Avalonia held its annual meeting at the Project O building at Avery Point on June 22 to elect an expanded Board of Directors (BOD) and to recognize four volunteers for their outstanding service.

Fifteen directors are now serving on Avalonia's board, seven of them new. The additional board positions give ALC added capacity and a talented team to accomplish the goals of the organization as it undertakes a major acquisition and stewardship funding initiative. The newly-elected board positions include: Maureen Dewire, a native of Stonington and an environmental education coordinator; Dr. Julie DuPont-Woody, vice chair of Ledyard's Conservation Commission and a quality assurance officer of a Connecticut certified environmental analysis laboratory; Mark Hibbard, a Stonington native and financial analyst; recently retired Superior Court Judge Robert (Bob) Leuba; Rick Newton, wildlife photographer and financial analyst; Gerry Stefon, a licensed land surveyor; and David Young, an investment manager who serves on several corporate boards. "The new members of our board bring an extraordinary level of skills to our land trust. We are fortunate to have them and appreciate their commitment to Avalonia," said Dennis Main, board president. In addition to the seven newly-elected members, seven board members including Karen Askins, Dick Conant, Scott Dawley, Dennis Main, Rusty Morrison, Mike Pernal and Sue Sutherland were reelected to terms that begin on January 1, 2018.

The BOD also took the opportunity to recognize four volunteers for their years of dedicated service by awarding each of them the ALC Nature's Hero award. Frank Eppinger, of O'Brien Stuart Eppinger & Collier, LLC, was honored for his long tenure as legal counsel for Avalonia; Bruce Fellman was recognized for his ability to connect people of all ages to the outdoors and his outstanding photography; Kent Fuller, ALC's web master, was recognized for an outstanding job; and Janice Parker was honored for her management skills and years of service as executive director.

## Avalonia Meets \$20,000 Challenge Grant

Avalonia has met (and exceeded!) the \$20,000 challenge grant offered in November 2016 by an anonymous donor.

Over 100 donors made an average gift of \$180.

**You made this fundraiser a resounding success.**

**Thank you!**

## President's Update

It is hard to believe that fall is here and we are approaching the end of another year...already. It went by in a blink! That does become more understandable when one reviews what your Board of Directors and Avalonia volunteers have accomplished: the recent closings on two exciting new parcels (see p. 5), the extraordinary 2000-acre capital campaign now gathering momentum (see p.1), the absolutely wonderful stewardship activity going on at our preserves (see p.4), and the near doubling of the board size with the attendant influx of additional talent, energy, and experience (see p. 2).



Many more accomplishments could be equally touted. BOD member Mark Hibbard, Development Director Chuck Toal, and a group of volunteers have worked hard to select and implement a new software package that will enable us to more efficiently and effectively manage our activities. A newly reconstituted Communications and Outreach Committee (ComCom), with a fresh cadre of talented and creative volunteers chaired by Maureen Dewire, has been ratcheting up the capabilities and functionality of Avalonia in our communication efforts.

Part of ComCom's efforts will be to recognize Avalonia's upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (February 21, 2018) with a continual series of events. While we celebrate Avalonia's founding, we are also saddened by the passing last month of one of the original founders of Avalonia, Lois Tefft Van Deusen (see below).

Because of collective board and volunteer diligence (and work done by BOD Secretary, Binti Ackley, BOD VP and Treasurer, Sue Sutherland, and BOD member and stewardship chair, Karen Askins, all of whom honchoed the Land Trust Alliance accreditation process), we are officially accredited and I will be in Denver October 26<sup>th</sup> to attend the LTA Rally and accept the accreditation recognition. Hats off to all the volunteers and board members who made the accreditation a reality!

Another groundbreaking undertaking of your BOD is that Avalonia has agreed to enter into and sign a "letter of intent" with one of the local land trusts to work toward all possible collaborative efforts. Additionally, ALC's calendar of events (see p. 6) will be enhanced as we go forward; I invite you to join us in any or all of those activities. One event of particular interest to me will be the President's Walk, which is on the drawing board, to show off our newest acquisitions over the coming months. Stay tuned for details!

*Dennis A. Tefft*



## In Memoriam

The families of Avalonia Land Conservancy were sad to learn that Lois Tefft Van Deusen, 90, passed away on September 21, 2017. Lois was a founder and incorporator of the Mashantucket Land Trust (now Avalonia Land Conservancy) in 1968. She served loyally and ably on Avalonia's Board of Directors for many years as secretary and membership chair and was recognized for her dedication by being named a lifetime honorary director.

As a longtime supporter of land conservation, when a 77-acre Girl Scout camp enjoyed by generations of scouts and families came up for sale in North Stonington, Lois had the vision to purchase the land to preserve it from development. She named it Tefftweald at Bircheturn and donated it to Avalonia in 1994 so many more generations could enjoy it. Our deepest condolences go out to her many friends and family. She will be greatly missed at Avalonia. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Avalonia Land Conservancy or the Center for Hospice Care Southeast Connecticut in memory of Lois. A celebration of her life was held on Oct. 1 at the Allingham home in Preston.





Students from the Marine Science Magnet School in Groton work at Dodge Pad-dock & Beal Preserve to remove invasive *Phragmites* debris and create space for native plants. Photo by MaryEllen Mateleska

## The Importance of Stewardship

**Stewardship:** *the conducting, supervising, or managing of something, especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.*

For a land trust, the acquisition of new land to preserve and protect is exciting, but once the land is ours, the hard work of stewardship begins.

All boundaries need to be posted with our name and then walked annually to check for encroachments—in perpetuity. If it is a property where we think there should be trails for the enjoyment of the public, we need to clear, blaze, map, and con-

stantly maintain them—in perpetuity. If there are invasive species of plants present we need to try to eliminate them and then keep them off our properties—in perpetuity. If the habitat has been degraded or is no longer healthy (as seen in the photo above) we find a way to restore it—in perpetuity. Clearly, stewardship is a lot of work! It is not easy and it is not always cheap.

Because all stewardship of Avalonia properties is performed by volunteers, we always welcome new volunteers and other types of support for our stewardship needs. As you'll read below, our stewardship efforts are much appreciated! If you are interested in helping, please email [stewardship@avalonialc.org](mailto:stewardship@avalonialc.org) or call the Avalonia office at 860-884-3500.

## A "Huge Shout Out" to Avalonia's Land Stewards

A letter from Beth Moore, who regularly walks ALC preserves, to Beth Sullivan, Stonington Town Committee Chair

"I've been meaning to give you and the entire Stonington Town Committee Team a huge SHOUT OUT for all the (mostly and regrettably UNSUNG) work that you do: the mowing, the bushwacking, the boundary walks, the negotiations, the planting, the nesting, THE BLOG!, the bridge building (both literally and figuratively), the advocacy for our preserves and the flora and fauna that inhabit them — battling ticks and mosquitos and mud and thorns all the while. Each time Wrigley and I visit our personal favorite preserve, we notice improvements that make our experience all the more delightful. Oh the Monarchs this year! And we have you all to thank for that. It wouldn't be enough to sing praises from the fields each day to begin to show our appreciation for all of your efforts. Please accept a grateful bow to your goodness and a sincere, Thank You, to each one of you."



Photo by B. Sullivan

## Another Great Year for Purple Martins at Knox Preserve

By Beth Sullivan "I have shared my journey and passion (maybe obsession) with these birds for several years now, since our first grant award in 2013 from Audubon Connecticut....Martins are the only species of bird that is completely reliant on humans for their survival. We provide adequate nesting sites which are hollows, in a colonial setting. We just don't have enough empty tree holes in close enough proximity to satisfy the needs of dozens of pairs of these birds. Since pre-colonial days, Native Americans provided natural gourds for Purple Martins. Now there is an entire industry built around attracting and providing for colonies of these birds, and the effort has brought the species back from the brink...." To read more, go to Beth's blog at [avaloniaetrails.blogspot.com](http://avaloniaetrails.blogspot.com)

## Avalonia Gratefully Receives Land Donations in Stonington and Griswold



*Inviting entrance to The Woodlot Preserve Sanctuary in Stonington. A partnership between two families made this 28-acre donation possible. Photo by B. Sullivan*

Thanks to a passion for the environment and a longtime friendship between two local families, Avalonia Land Conservancy has received a gift of land in Stonington. The 28-acre gift is a portion of a much bigger forest. Narrow back roads surround the entire property, separating it from other forested areas and 375 acres of land surrounding the Deans Mill Reservoir owned by the Aquarion Water Company.

The George and Nancy Bates family generously donated funds to cover the cost of Avalonia's purchase of two valuable house lots, part of a larger property owned by the Frohn family on Pellegrino Road. The property will be known as "The Woodlot Preserve Sanctuary."

William and Ann Frohn and the Frohn Trust generously donated the balance of the land, which was of almost equal value to the two building lots. The generosity of these families will conserve land that not only protects a large underground aquifer that supplies drinking water to area residents, but also provides a key refuge for wildlife.

The property features unique rock outcrops and glacial erratics. On both the east and west sides the land descends into significant wetland areas. The eastern wetlands drain generally south and ultimately make their way to Stonington Harbor; the western wetland drains directly into the reservoir. Large and small mammals, amphibians, and a wide variety of birds, including various woodpeckers, hawks, and owls, have been identified, including three state-listed threatened species. It is an excellent woodland for migrating spring warblers as well.

The sanctuary will be open for passive recreation such as hiking (on established trails) and bird watching. Avalonia is very grateful to the Bates and Frohn families for making this acquisition possible.



*View of Pachaug Pond from Dutka waterfront property in Griswold. Avalonia and the Dutka family have completed an agreement to perpetually preserve 68 acres. Photo by S. Sutherland*

The Dutka family of Griswold have also very generously donated seven waterfront lots on Pachaug Pond to Avalonia and offered a bargain sale on another 61.5-acre parcel near Pachaug State Forest. In addition to the seven lots, Mary Dutka will donate two more parcels upon the closing on the 61.5 acres. The combined 68 acres will be one of the most environmentally significant woodland properties remaining on Pachaug Pond with its pine forests, wetlands, and native shrubs full of wildlife. Pachaug Pond is the largest public lake east of the Connecticut River and its shoreline is becoming increasingly developed. It is known for excellent fishing including largemouth, smallmouth and calico bass, yellow perch and northern pike.

In addition to passive recreation, the site will eventually provide a public launching point for kayaks and canoes. Paddlers can visit Avalonia's Scola Preserve on Burton's Island, less than 1,000 feet away and only accessible by water. The acquisition of the Dutka property will add to existing Avalonia and State of Connecticut preserved properties on the pond, while providing community value in the form of public access for recreation and stewardship of areas of refuge for wildlife. Avalonia is very grateful to the Dutka family for making this acquisition possible.



Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.  
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Non-Profit Organization

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Mystic, CT

Permit No. 126

## Upcoming Events

### Bird Banding Event at Knox Preserve

Sunday, October 22, 8:00 - 11:00 am

Wilcox Rd., Stonington, south side of road, 200' south of Rte. 1.

Bob Dewire & Beth Sullivan will demonstrate the process of federal bird banding of fall migrants passing through Knox Preserve where banding has occurred for almost 30 years. This is a hands-on experience for the whole family.

### Hike and Seek at Knox Preserve

Sunday, October 29, 1 - 3 pm

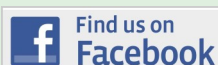
Wilcox Rd., Stonington, south side of road, 200' south of Rte. 1.

Call 860-884-3500 to register.

Join us on an easy, family-friendly treasure hunt for animal habitats. A lot to see in a small area including stone walls, birds and coastal vistas. Bring a smartphone or tablet and link to Avalonia's Hike and Seek project webpage for the full program at <http://avalonialandconservancy.org/hike-and-seek/>. Trails are mowed. Bring binoculars to see birds and their habitat. 2 hours, 1 mile. A Last Green Valley *Walktober* event sponsored by Avalonia Land Conservancy.



Visit our website



## Save Some Trees!

We are pleased to share this paper version of our newly-designed newsletter with all our members. We hope you will enjoy it. If you prefer to save some trees by subscribing to the electronic version only, please visit our website and let us know:

<http://avalonialandconservancy.org/newsletter/>