



P.O. Box 49
Old Mystic, CT 06372

Avalonia Trails

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING
LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

WINTER 2008-2009

Donald R. Henne Memorial Shunock River Preserve

by Duncan Schweitzer

Trail work has started on the newly acquired Donald R. Henne Memorial Shunock River Preserve in North Stonington. The property was donated by Attorneys Steven Reck, Raymond Trebisacci and Joseph Mascaro as part of their Shunock River Estates development and is named in honor of Don Henne, a biologist active on the North Stonington Conservation Commission, a tireless and dedicated environmentalist and an early advocate of preserving this stretch of the Shunock River. The Shunock River Estates project is horse-owner friendly and the trail that Avalonia volunteers are building will accommodate horse traffic. The trail follows an old "cart path" along the eastern bank of the Shunock River. There are two places where the trail crosses wet areas. The first will involve a 100-foot long walkway strong enough to support horses and the second will only be for hikers as the horses can ford that area.

Preparation for constructing the walkway has been extensive. A cut and fill section was hand dug and buttressed with cedar logs cut from the Avalonia Moore Woodlands in Groton. The grade is shallow enough for horses and runs along the side of what Anne Nalwalk suspects is a glacial esker. About thirty cedar logs have been hauled in to the site of the walkway to form the "corduroy road" base. Pressure-treated 4"x6" timbers are being purchased to complete the walkway structure. This early work has been done by the usual gang of stewards. It is hoped that a larger crew of volunteers can be assembled to complete the carpentry portion of the walkway construction. There is talk of draft horses being used to haul in material. Work may continue in December and January. If you would like to participate or even if you would just like to come by and take pictures, please contact Mac Turner (535-1541).



Sign at the entrance to the Henne Preserve, which is located on the south side of Babcock Road in North Stonington.



Mac Turner works on establishing the new trail through the Henne Preserve.

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Treasurer.....Rowland Stebbins III
Secretary.....Janice Parker

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Stewardship.....David Scott
Finance.....Rowland Stebbins III
Development.....Ellen Fossum
Membership.....Vicky Connor

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Hugo Wilms

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Directors and Volunteers Needed

We have vacancies for directors in Griswold, Voluntown and Preston. If you admire the work that Avalonia does and would like to contribute more actively in this, or in any other capacity, please contact us (address and contact information above). As the article of appreciation on page 3 describes, we have a wide variety of interesting and rewarding volunteer opportunities to offer, many of which require only a very moderate time commitment. On-the-job training provided at no charge!

Website

Our website has been updated and upgraded; check it out at www.avalonialandconservancy.org. Comments are welcome at: avalonialc@yahoo.com. Please include "Avalonia" or "ALC" in the subject line to avoid our spam filter.

New Presidents

Happy New Year 2009!... a new year and a new American President taking office...what exciting times! If you received Avalonia's 2008 year-end annual appeal, you may have noted that I am now Avalonia's new President. What a challenge I face as our former President, Anne Nalwalk, steadfastly led this organization for close on 25 years! I may be a familiar face to some of our membership but I look forward to meeting many more of you as I try, with your help, to transition this organization into our *next* 40 years!

Change is a word we have all repeatedly heard lately and it is not for naught. Technology is indeed changing the way we live, work, play, and do just about everything! As in the natural world, plants and animals either adapt to change or perish. The challenge we face in moving forward involves being mindful of how far we've come while using our past successes as touchstones to the journey ahead.

So yes, you will slowly be seeing changes within our organization as we try to keep pace, stay current, grow, and use all the tools necessary to carry out our mission of land conservation. We are 40 years strong and with your help we can make Avalonia Land Conservancy a household word in the next 40 years.

Our upcoming Winter Potluck Dinner is an excellent opportunity to come together for an evening of celebration and thanks, good food and fellowship among our Board, you our members, and new friends. Do join us. I look forward to seeing you and yours in Preston on January 31st!

Anne Roberts-Pierson

In Memoriam

We note with regret the death of **Edith Paffard**, who along with her husband, the late Frederic C. Paffard, started a supportive relationship with Avalonia the year after we were founded, almost 40 years ago. In 1969, their generosity allowed Paffard Marsh in Stonington to become Avalonia's second piece of property to be protected in perpetuity. Thirty-four years later, in 2003, Mrs. Paffard's desire to leave yet another legacy of preserved natural lands resulted in working with Avalonia to create the 62-acre preserve, now known as Paffard Woods, also in Stonington.

A note from the editor

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue of "Avalonia Trails". If you would like to contribute an article, notice or photo to our next issue, please send it to me at janiceparker@netscape.net by **April 3rd, 2009**. If you have a comment or "Letter to the Editor" we can accommodate those, too. We are limited for space so please keep articles to less than 400 words. Thank you.

Janice Parker

Good Grub For Our Good Cause!



Dog Watch Café Fundraiser

by Ellen Fossum

Have you been to the Dog Watch Café in Stonington Borough? It has a lovely waterside setting with great food and casual atmosphere. We can benefit from your meal out on Wednesday, February 25th, 2009, 11.30 a.m. - 9p.m. **Just tell your server you are there for Avalonia and we receive 15% of the check.** The snow date is Tuesday March 24th. There is one varied menu all day and evening, no cut-off for lunch hours or beginning dinner hours. Come any time and order what you want.

Dog Watch Café is at 194 Water Street, Stonington, at Dodson's Boatyard (where Boom used to be). Their website (with menu details and prices) is at www.dogwatchcafe.com and phone is 415-4510.

Enjoy a bite out at this enjoyable eatery and benefit Avalonia on February 25th. Bring your friends. Make it a party!

Thank you, to all our volunteers!

by Joellen Anderson, on behalf of a grateful Board and Membership



40 YEARS OF ALL-VOLUNTEER EFFORTS! Avalonia would not be the organization it is today without the continued support of dedicated volunteers. Throughout the year, volunteers contribute their time and energy on the

Board of Directors, on various organizational committees, perform a myriad of property-related tasks such as surveying and posting new properties, monitoring property boundaries, building new trails, maintaining existing trails, leading hikes and paddles, producing our newsletter, writing both publicity and newsletter articles, assisting with our annual appeal mailing, our annual pot luck dinner and annual meeting, and in many other ways. **We simply cannot thank our volunteers often enough.**

Above, Duncan Schweitzer breaks trail on the Henne Preserve; right, Dr. Scott Warren teaches a group of volunteers to identify invasives at Poquetanuck Cove.

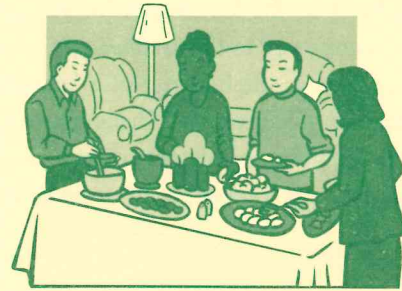


Avalonia Land Conservancy Property List

As a cost saving measure, and in the interests of keeping our membership informed and up-to-date, a complete listing of Avalonia properties is now available on the website at: www.avalonialandconservancy.org. Members who would like a paper copy mailed to them, as has been our custom in the past, can request one by calling (860) 887-6786 or by writing to Avalonia at P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic CT 06372.

ALC Annual Winter Potluck Dinner

This year's annual winter potluck dinner will be held **Saturday January 31st 2009** at Preston Plains School, at the corner Rte 164 and Rte 2, Preston, CT. In the event of snow, the alternate date is February 7th. This is always a fun get-together and mid-winter feast. Please bring a dish of your choice to share. Dinner at 6.00 p m, program at 7.30 p m. Our speaker this year will be Dr. David Bingham. The title of his talk will be: "Open Space - How much land is needed? Should the Norwich State Hospital's forest be saved?"



Poquetanuck Cove *Phragmites*

Eradication Update by Anne Roberts-Pierson



Herbicide spraying by CT DEP personnel at Poquetanuck Cove, September 2008.

The first year of herbicide treatment has recently been completed in September by the CT DEP Wetland Habitat and Mosquito Management staff. Consulting Botanist Bill Moorhead provided data from the outcome of his year long floristic survey to the DEP WHAMM, whose staff made efforts to protect the non-target plants from overspray. Twenty-four volunteers were trained in August 2008 to assist with monitoring the project success. Dr. Scott Warren of Connecticut College field trained these volunteers in plant identification and monitoring techniques. Funding for two additional years of herbicide treatments has been secured.

To follow the complete history of this award-winning land stewardship project, read previous issues of this newsletter online at www.avalonialandconservancy.org. Click on "Archived".

Eagle Scout Honored for PSWC Project

by Anne Roberts-Pierson

On October 25, 2008, **Nickolas L. Vassallo**, of the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 55, Gales Ferry, CT, was awarded the much-coveted title of Eagle Scout during an Eagle Scout Court of Honor. It was a very solemn and celebratory event that brought together family, friends, fellow scouts, scout leaders, and distinguished members of the community. It was an honor to be among the well-wishers. Thanks to Nick's desire to work on the Harry Leiser Tract of the Pine Swamp Wildlife Corridor on Vinegar Hill Road in Gales Ferry as the location of his Eagle Scout Project, Avalonia now has quite an entryway to this trailhead. Nick designed, participated in, and supervised others in the building of a beautiful rock stairway that allows easier access to this property. Thank you Nick for this rather elegant and oh-so-sturdy addition to this part of our nature preserve! The entire community will now and forever benefit from your labors. Congratulations!



Eagle Scout Nick Vassallo (third from left) flanked by his Dad, Scout Leader George Vassallo (far left) his Mom, Lisa Vassallo, (second from left) and Avalonia President, Anne Roberts-Pierson (right). Photo by Joellen Anderson.



A view of the steps at the trailhead of the Harry Leiser Tract of the Pine Swamp Wildlife Corridor, constructed by Eagle Scout Nick Vassallo. Photos by Joellen Anderson.

Wills and Bequests of Land

While Avalonia appreciates bequests of all kinds, we would like to suggest that you notify us when you leave natural land to Avalonia when you write your will. This would help to clarify matters should complications arise in the probate process. Thank you for your consideration in this matter should you decide to leave us a legacy in this fashion.



Looking forward to SPRING 2009...

The Last Green Valley in Danielson, CT, sponsors of the popular fall Walking Weekends (now Walktober), is planning a new initiative. Beginning April 17, 2009 on the Quinebaug River, a canoe donated by L.L. Bean will be "connecting the drops" from all the various watersheds along the way until the Quinebaug, Shetucket and Yantic Rivers join together with the main stem of the Thames River in Norwich and the last few drops drip off the paddlers' blades at Avery Point on June 13, 2009.

So, if you have "*absolutely nothing – half as much worth doing as simply messing about in boats...*" (a quote from Kenneth Grahame's book, *The Wind in the Willows*), do join in by participating in a variety of events. To stay current with the lead canoe's progress down the various associated watercourses, select an event of your choosing by "surfing" the www.lastgreenvalley.org website.

Avalonia will be sponsoring a few events in support of the Last Green Valley's efforts to increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation for not only the various watershed brooks, streams and rivers along the way but for the Thames River Basin's main stem watersheds from Norwich to Long Island Sound. A paddle in Poquetanuck Cove is planned for June and various other watershed activities are in the planning stages by Avalonia, the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority, Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center and Project Oceanology.

Stay tuned – dust off those canoes, kayaks, paddles, life vests, hiking boots, etc. over the winter months and join in the fun events along our Thames River Basin Connecticut water courses from Massachusetts to Long Island Sound next spring– mid April to mid June, 2009.

Stewardship Committee Requests Help

by Rick Newton

We, as members of Avalonia, collectively manage over 2,640 acres on more than 82 tracts of land. We are responsible for the preservation, maintenance, and well-being of these properties that have been entrusted to our care.

As Avalonia is an all-volunteer organization and the resources of the Stewardship Committee are limited, we request the membership (and visitors) provide input when visiting preserves and ask that the membership make a commitment to be the eyes and ears of Avalonia.

One way that you can help would be to complete and submit the form below whenever you visit one of our properties. This form is also available on our website at : www.avalonialandconservancy.org.

Preserve Visitation Guidelines: For preserves open to public access we allow passive recreational uses such as hiking, bird watching, photography, nature observation, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

The following activities are prohibited: motorized vehicles, hunting, firearms, camping, fires, dumping, construction of any kind of structure or removal of any natural materials (plants, stonewalls, wood etc.).

What to look for: Note general conditions of the preserve's natural features, signage, trail markers or anything unusual. Inspect as much of the preserve as possible using marked trails if they exist. Pick up any litter as you walk the trails and in the parking areas and road frontage. Look for evidence of motorized vehicles or bike tracks; check trail markers and note any that need to be replaced. Provide approximate location of blow-downs obstructing the path or erosion issues. Note any missing signs or damage.

Violators – DO NOT CONFRONT VIOLATORS. If you observe inappropriate activity note as much information as possible: descriptions of person(s) or vehicle, license plate, date, time and description of activity, then notify Avalonia as soon as possible.

Ideally, we'd like to get reports on each property 4 times per year. Some people may want to take responsibility for one preserve – others may want to visit many preserves – any help you can give would be appreciated.

We also appreciate non-member input. Thanks in advance for your time.

PRESERVE MONITORING REPORT

Preserve Name:

Date of Visit:

Time in/out:

Monitor's Name:

Phone:

email:

Were all signs, map boxes, gates in place and in good condition?

Are the trails (if any) in good condition?

Any blow downs, obstructions, erosion or other problems?

What is the condition of bog bridges (if any)? (loose boards / nails; rotting wood; replacement necessary)

Were there any problems or signs of: (check any that are appropriate):

Fires

Vandalism

Motorized vehicles

Bicycles

Camping

Litter

Safety hazards

Damaged/removed plantings

Dumping

Hunting

Disease / pest infestation

Flooding

Erosion

Access restrictions

Other (describe)

Please explain:

Were there any significant changes in natural features? (Such as fire, dramatic changes in water level, adjoining property owner encroachment or distressed vegetation).

Did you notice any changes in surrounding land use or status?

Did you notice any other problems or potential liability factors?

Did you notice any unusual plants or wildlife?

THIS INFORMATION IS VERY USEFUL.

Return to: Avalonia Land Conservancy – PMReport, P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, CT 06372

or copy / attach to an email and send to avalonialc@yahoo.com



AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY, INC.

P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, CT 06372

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Upcoming Events

ALC Winter Potluck, Saturday January 31st 2009

for more details see *page 3*.

Sunday, February 1st, 2009, the day following the ALC Winter Potluck, there will be a walk on the Preston Nature Preserve in memory of Joyce Steffensen., and in conjunction with the Ledyard Libraries Family Fitness program. We will meet at 1:00 p.m. at the entrance to the Preston Nature Preserve on Krug Road (turn onto the first road to the left from the intersection of Routes 164 and 165, if heading from Preston toward Griswold), near the Preston Fire Station; go 1/2 mile to Preston Nature Preserve, on left.) Margaret Gibson will lead the walk and read poems that depict winter, owls and deer and hawks, farms and wetlands, forests and stone walls, and generous human spirits like Joyce, who loved the land. Refreshments will be served. Dress warmly! Snow date February 8th. Contact: Margaret, 886-1777.

Wednesday, February 25th, 2009. Dog Watch Café Fundraiser. Good Grub for our Good Cause! See page 3 for details.

Saturday, March 14th, 2009. Hike on the Pine Swamp Wildlife Corridor loop trail, rain date March 15th, in conjunction with Ledyard Libraries walking series. We will meet at the 113 Whalehead entrance at 1:00 p.m. Contact: Mike Goodwin, 464-2685

Friday, April 17th, 2009. Source to Sea events will kick off at 2 p.m. with a paddle at Mashpaug Pond in Bigelow Hollow State Park in Union. For other Source to Sea events go to www.thelastgreenvalley.org. See also article on page 4.

