



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

Wamphassuc Neck Marshes

Platt Marsh
Stillman Marsh
Lords View Marsh
Marcia Woolworth Porter Preserve

Baseline Documentation File / Property Management Plan

Wamphassuc Road / Lords Hill Road / Noyes Avenue
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 four properties in the area known as Wamphassac Neck in Stonington, CT. Visitors are welcome, but there are no trails except for the CT DEEP Coastal Access point on Woolworth Porter.

The properties are owned by Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc., P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, CT 06372. Avalonia Land Conservancy can be reached by email at avalonialc@yahoo.com, by phone at 860-884-3500, and has a website at <http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org>.

HISTORY

The properties were either donations or required open space set aside required by zoning regulations due to subdivision of property.

SITE INFORMATION

The property: This plan covers the properties off Wamphassac Road, Lords Hill Road and Noyes Road in Stonington, CT. Parcel maps of the properties from the Town of Stonington GIS database are shown below (Stillman Marsh is technically two parcels).

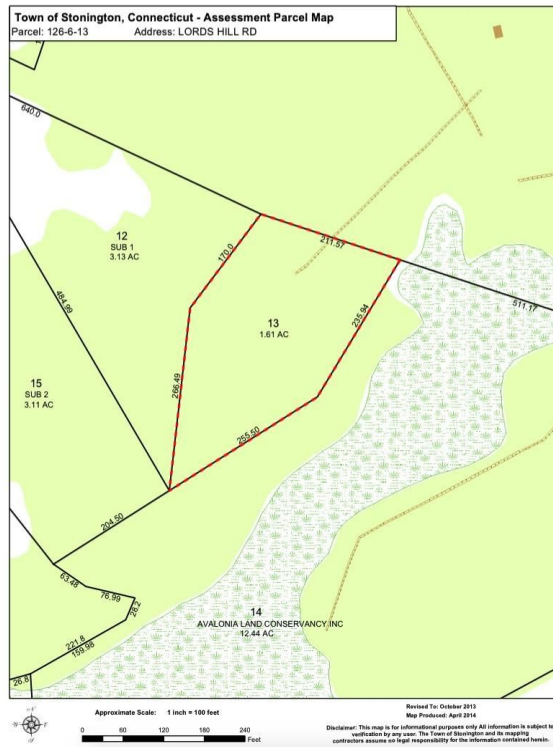
The properties are identified in Stonington land records as:

GIS ID	BOOK	PAGE	Preserve
126-6-1B	277	689	PLATT MARSH
126-6-13	341	577	STILLMAN MARSH
126-6-14	341	577	STILLMAN MARSH
130-5-12	285	120	LORDS VIEW MARSH
127-16-4	452	507	WOOLWORTH PORTER PRESERVE

Platt Marsh

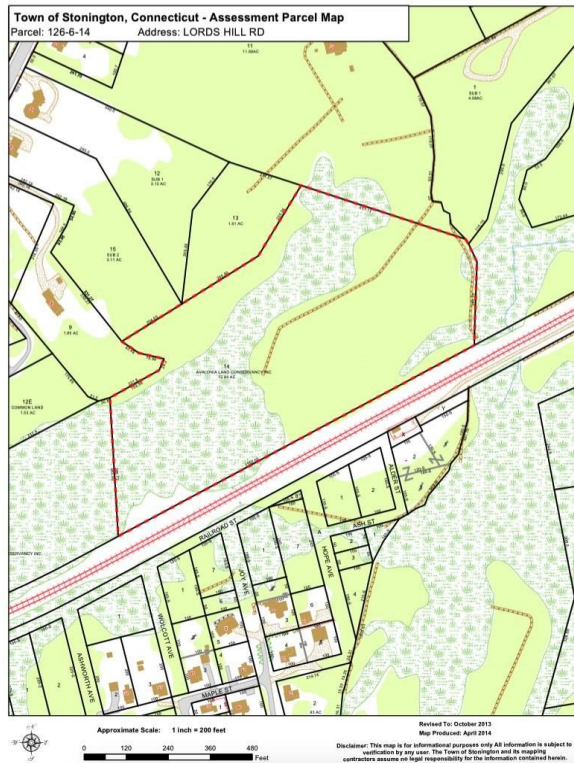


Stillman Marsh



Stillman Marsh

Lords View Marsh



The size of the combined properties is approximately 66.75 acres. There are no trails except for the CT DEEP Coastal Access site onto Woolworth Porter from Wamphassuc Rd. leading over a footbridge to a bench overlooking the marsh.

Platt Marsh (previous page upper left) is on the west side of Wamphassuc Road just north of the AMTRAK rail line. It consists of a tidal saltwater marsh on one side and a freshwater swamp on the other.

Stillman Marsh (previous page upper right & lower left) connects Lords View and Platt Marshes and consists of a cattail marsh and uplands.

Lords View Marsh (previous page lower right) is east of Noyes Avenue just north of the AMTRAK rail line. It

consists of marsh and some hardwood forest.

Marcia Woolworth Porter Preserve (at right) is south of the AMTRAK rail line on the west side of Wamphassuc Road extending down to the sound. There is a CT DEEP Coastal Access point near the southern boundary with roadside parking. There is a bench at the end of a short trail. Access to the marsh is restricted by deed due to sensitive habitat. It is a saltwater marsh with two wooded islands running nearly the entire length of the marsh.

Acquisition history:

Lords View Marsh – 1987 – 6.59 acres – Lords View LTD Partnership (set aside for single family houses on Noyes and Lords View Roads)

Platt Marsh – 1986 – 5.79 acres – Hugh & Cynthia Platt Jr. (donation)

Marcia Woolworth Porter Preserve – 2000 – 40.32 acres – Marcia W. Porter (donation)

Stillman Marsh - 1992 – 14.06 acres – Robert L. Stillman, Jr. (donation)

Land use history: Mostly wetlands or marshes.

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](#).



Public use resources: The properties are open to the public for all standard Avalonia passive recreational activities, though in practice the only activity is wildlife observation and access is difficult and limited. The properties provide wildlife habitat for neighborhood and typical salt marsh inhabitants.

Public benefit of the protected property: 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

This complex of land is quite diverse and as such is unique in the diversity of habitats it provides for a wide variety of wildlife. The Lord's View / Stillman / Platt marshes are mostly freshwater drainages, impounded by the building of railroad tracks decades ago. Some of the wetlands are healthy ponds, vernal pools and cattail marshes all of which host marsh and wet shrub-land birds, reptiles and amphibians. There is also a good diversity of grasses, sedges and rushes in these healthy freshwater systems. They grow up into Red Maple Swamps and in some areas are bordered by more upland forest habitat. The northern boundary of Lords View parcel abuts house lots and the disturbed area at edge of properties has grown into a dense tangle of mostly invasive shrubs.

Phragmites have become a major issue from the west on Lords View Marsh, along most of the boundary with the rail road tracks and as such, the wetland habitats there are severely degraded. Access is nearly impossible, as it is not advisable to access from RR property. Natural diversity will remain diminished with this invasion.

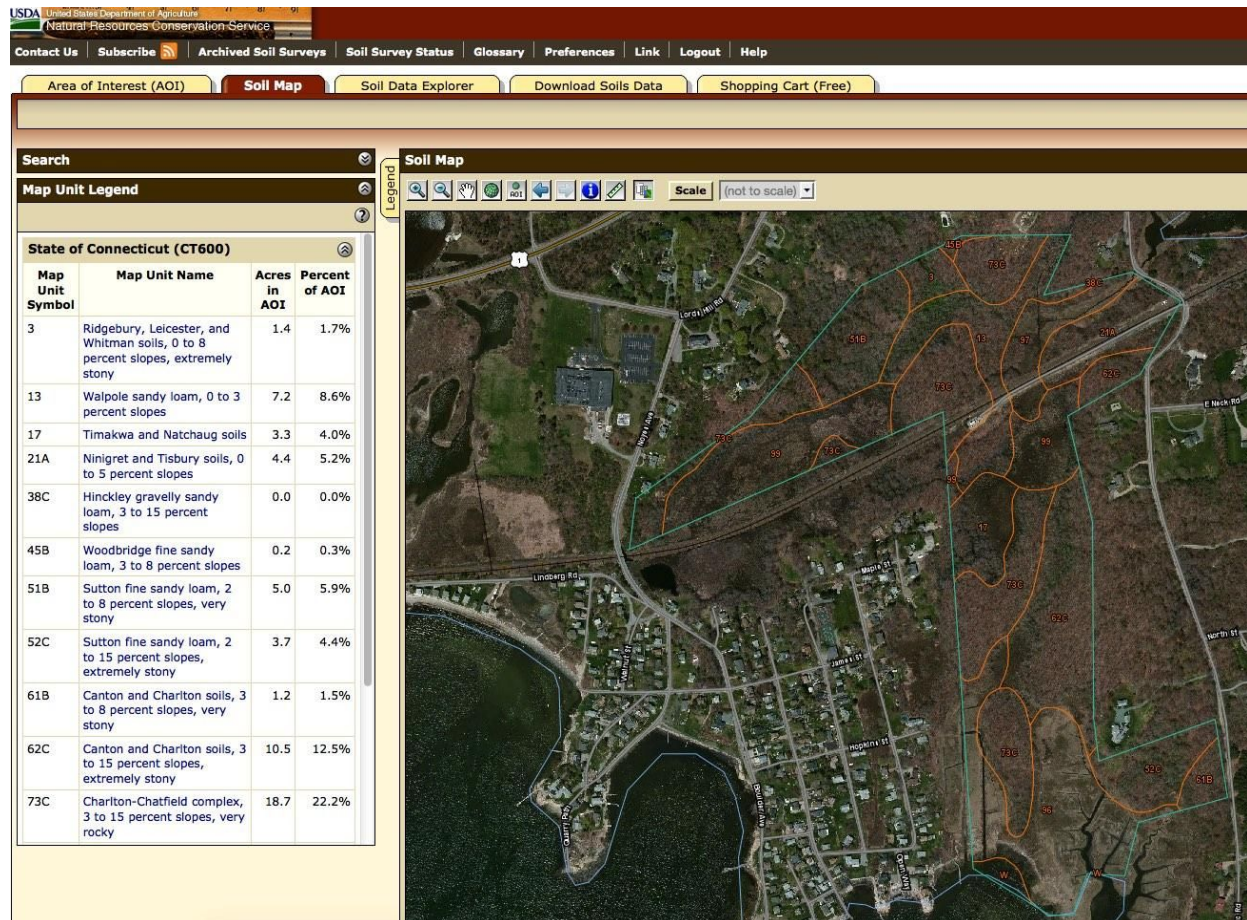
The most eastern portion of this complex Platt Marsh, north of the tracks, contains a small but healthy portion of salt marsh as there is a culvert under Wamphassuc Road draining to western Stonington Harbor. This area provides feeding areas for Herons and Egrets, contains salt marsh species of plants, some fish and invertebrates. There is an unused Osprey platform on this site. It is possible the woodland edge has grown in too close.

The Woolworth Porter Marsh parcel south of the railroad tracks is a healthy salt marsh ecosystem, typical to this area of coastal Connecticut: marsh has formed in a glacially created valley between two ridges of higher elevation land. Located this way and with the railroad track as the northern boundary, the marsh is landlocked with no room to migrate. There is a central area of higher elevation, wooded "islands" within the larger marsh area. The resulting edge habitat is very dynamic and a significant area for breeding and migrating birds. Herons and Egrets roost in trees and feed in the marsh. The elevated islands are habitat for many mammals: Deer, Fox, Coyote, Fisher and Bobcat have been reported. Nesting Night Herons and Great Horned Owls are reported.

The salt marsh itself has been visited by CT DEEP personnel and numerous scientific study groups and is considered to be healthy and productive. Typical salt marsh vegetation is found throughout. Former mosquito ditches are filling in in places. Where they are open, they are filled with Ribbed Mussels, huge populations of Fiddler Crabs and fish and invertebrates come in with the tides.

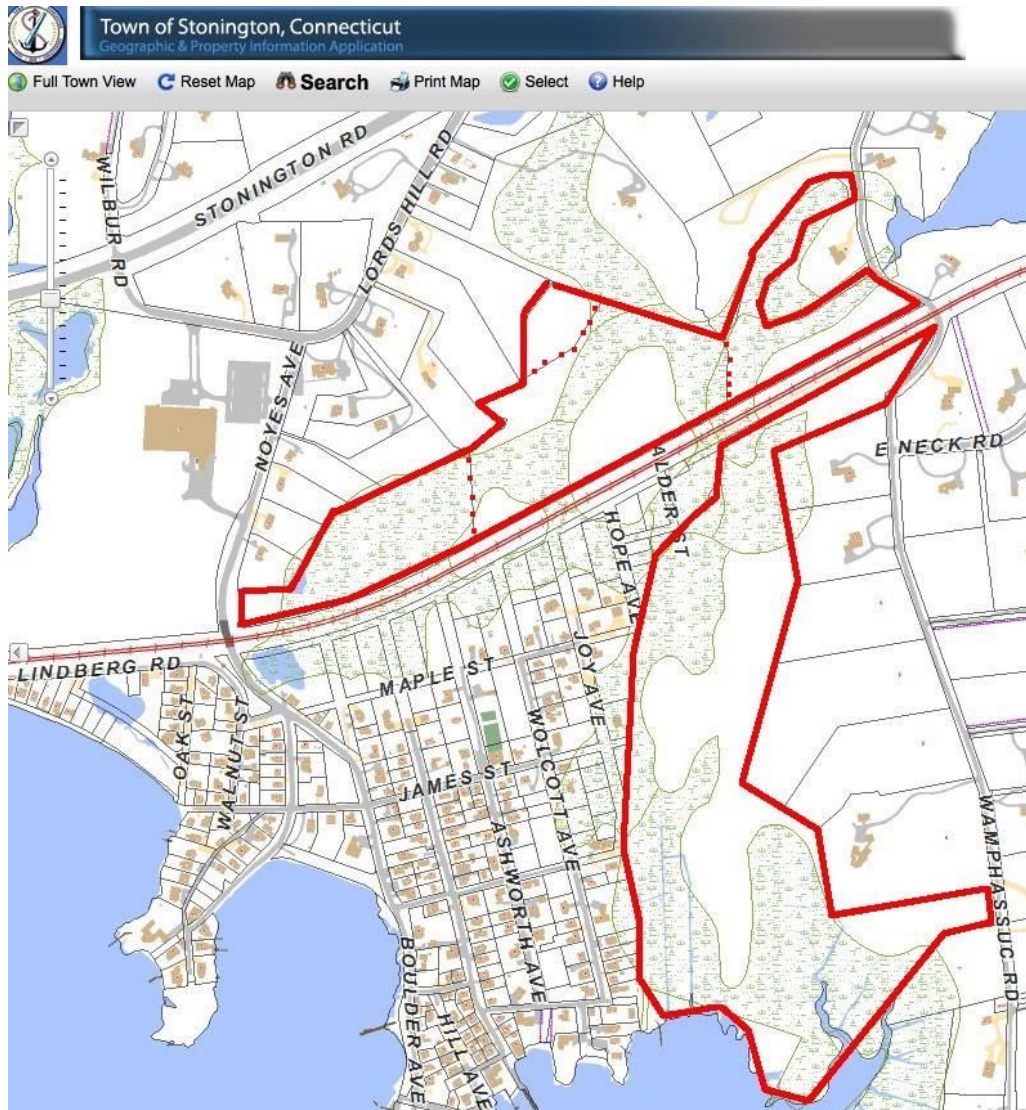
High-density (2009 survey data – CTECO) eelgrass beds are off the southern boundary of Woolworth Porter Preserve.

WEB SOIL SURVEY: Large variety of soils (stony to marsh; well-drained to poorly drained)



HYDROLOGIC FEATURES – Wetlands soils

All drainage flows to adjacent coves and then to the sound (Southeast Coast Drainage Basin). Significant wetlands are on all four properties.



SPECIAL FEATURES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES: Pockets of freshwater marshes, salt marshes and coastal shrub and woodland make for a very diverse habitat attractive to nesting and migrating birds and other wildlife. A healthy salt marsh habitat is a resource that should be understood by more of the public.

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. 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.

There are no plans to do any active management of any of these parcels. Their greatest value lies in being healthy wetlands and coastal buffer zones. At this time there is no plan to manage the Phragmites on the north side of tracks. Phragmites in salt marsh areas seem to be limited by salt water flushing.

Protection: As with all Avalonia properties, the exterior boundaries of these preserves shall be marked with approved Avalonia Land Conservancy boundary signs following the guidance given in Avalonia stewardship policies.

Condition of Boundaries:

- ☐ Corner monuments/pins found (partial)
- ☒ Boundary signs posted (partially complete – some borders lack anywhere to post signs and some areas of marsh and swamp land are impenetrable.)

An annual walk around the boundaries of the properties is required, but difficult, to ensure that boundary signs are in place and that there are no intrusions. Other surveillance should take place using due vigilance on occasional visits to the property. Periodic surveillance by boat/kayak along the marsh edges is suggested.

All motorized vehicles are prohibited on the properties except maintenance.

Hunting is prohibited and any violations should be reported to CT DEEP enforcement. Illegal deer hunting / deer stands have been issues in the past.

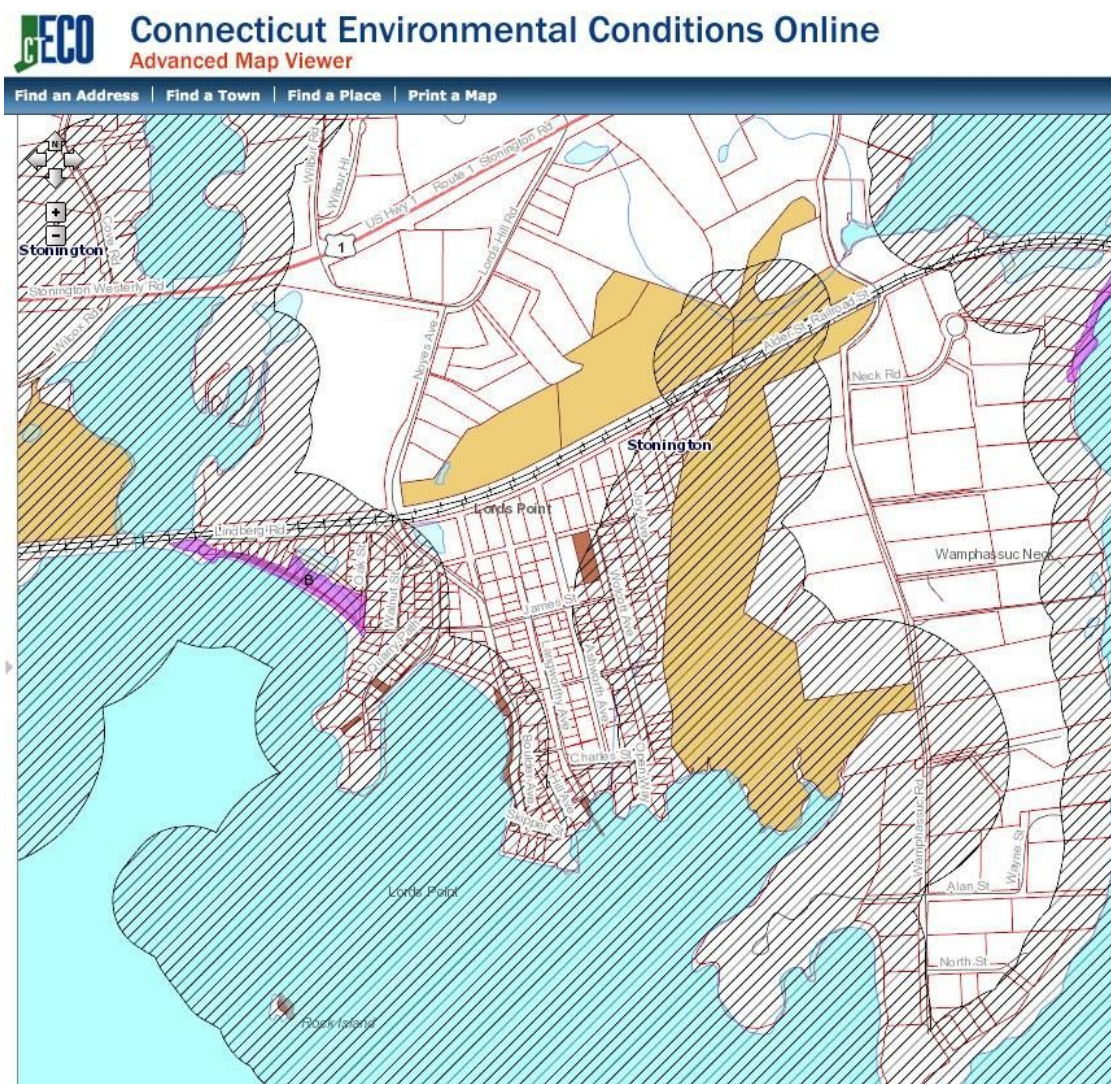
Maintaining properties appearance: Roadside cleanup as required. Maintain CT DEEP Coastal Access area. Keep boardwalk clear and trail open to overlook. Periodically remove Phragmites that grow up in front of observation area.

Public use: The preserve is open to the public for passive recreational use though much of the area is not accessible due to dense thicket or wetlands north of the Amtrak line. Travel along the railroad property is not advised. Motor vehicles, bicycle riding, and horseback riding 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.

There are no interpretive signs on the property at present and it is not anticipated that any will be erected. Coastal Public Access sign is posted at walkway to marsh overlook.

Woolworth Porter Preserve marsh area is closed except for scientific research per language in deed.

Enhancing wildlife habitat(s): Resource inventory needed prior to doing any enhancement for wildlife other than installation of osprey platforms. Permits for two osprey platforms were approved by CT DEEP LIS office and erected in April of 2015 on Woolworth Porter Marsh. About 80% of the properties are in the CT DEEP Natural Diversity Database area. NDDDB report for Woolworth Porter showed the Salt Marsh Sparrow was the species cited. Closest CT DEEP Critical Habitat areas are beach areas at end of East Neck Road and end of Lindberg Road. These two beach areas are known nesting areas for Horseshoe Crabs.



Controlling invasive species: Control of invasive species will be performed as resources allow. There is significant Phragmites growth on both sides of railroad creating nearly a monoculture in the area of Lords View Parcel. Other patches are on the upper areas of Woolworth Porter Marsh and in the south, central portion that has a slightly higher elevation at the shoreline. Any attempt to control Phragmites would be a significant undertaking needing CT DEEP collaboration. A population of Japanese Stilt grass was discovered (2015) on the Woolworth Porter access way and must be monitored carefully, removing before seeding each year.

Erosion control: UCONN CTECO shows no issues with erosion.

Productive uses: Provides habitat for neighborhood / marsh birds, mammals, insects and plants.

Scientific and educational activities: Woolworth Porter has been used for scientific studies of Salt Marsh Sparrow and other marsh edge/coastal species. Other studies include assessment of sea level rise and marsh migration. In 2015 the Woolworth Porter Marsh was a site of seed collections by New England Wildflower Society for their Seeds of Success program to provide local salt marsh species seeds for restoration activities along the CT and RI coast. This may be ongoing.

Response to large natural disasters: Woolworth Porter southern border susceptible to wave action during storms and from boat wakes. May want to investigate natural protection barriers.

Special management considerations: Sea level rise is an area of concern, especially at Woolworth Porter. The estuary immediately off the southern border out to Rock Island is labeled as “impaired”. There are a few undeveloped lots bordering the property that are for sale and could be used for marsh migration, but pricing is prohibitive. Maintain contact with CT DEEP to discuss health of marsh and assess ditch management if necessary. The Town Of Stonington conducts mosquito management activities in the wetlands along the north side of RR tracks.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Recurring and occasional requirements: Roadside cleanup. Maintain path to viewing area. Monitoring and managing invasives as time a resources allow in the upland areas. Periodically access the upper edge of marsh to pick up debris that has floated in with high storm tides.

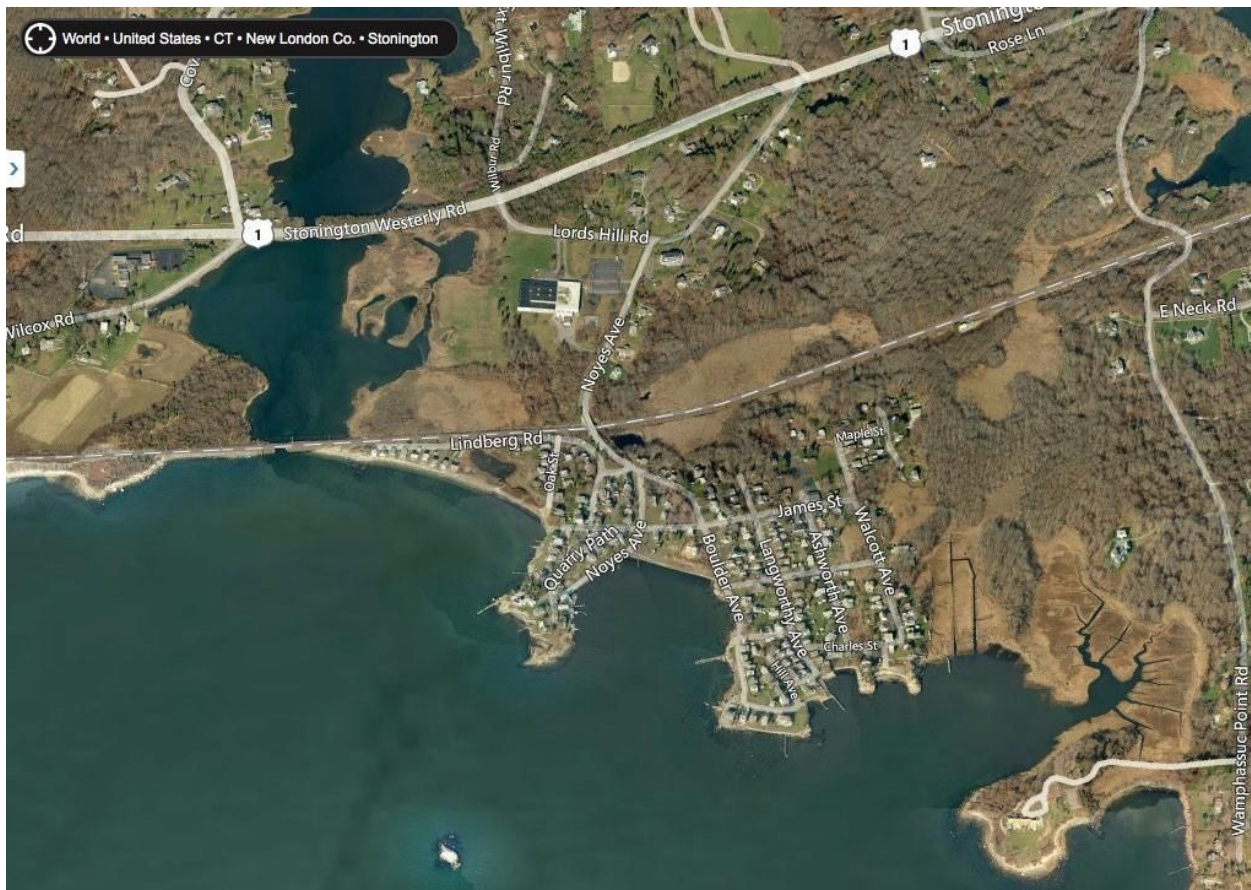
Annual obligations: A boundary walk around the outside perimeter the property is required to look for intrusions and to ensure that the boundary is marked with Avalonia Land Conservancy signs. Due to wetlands and inaccessibility of some of the areas, partial boundary surveys may need to be sufficient.

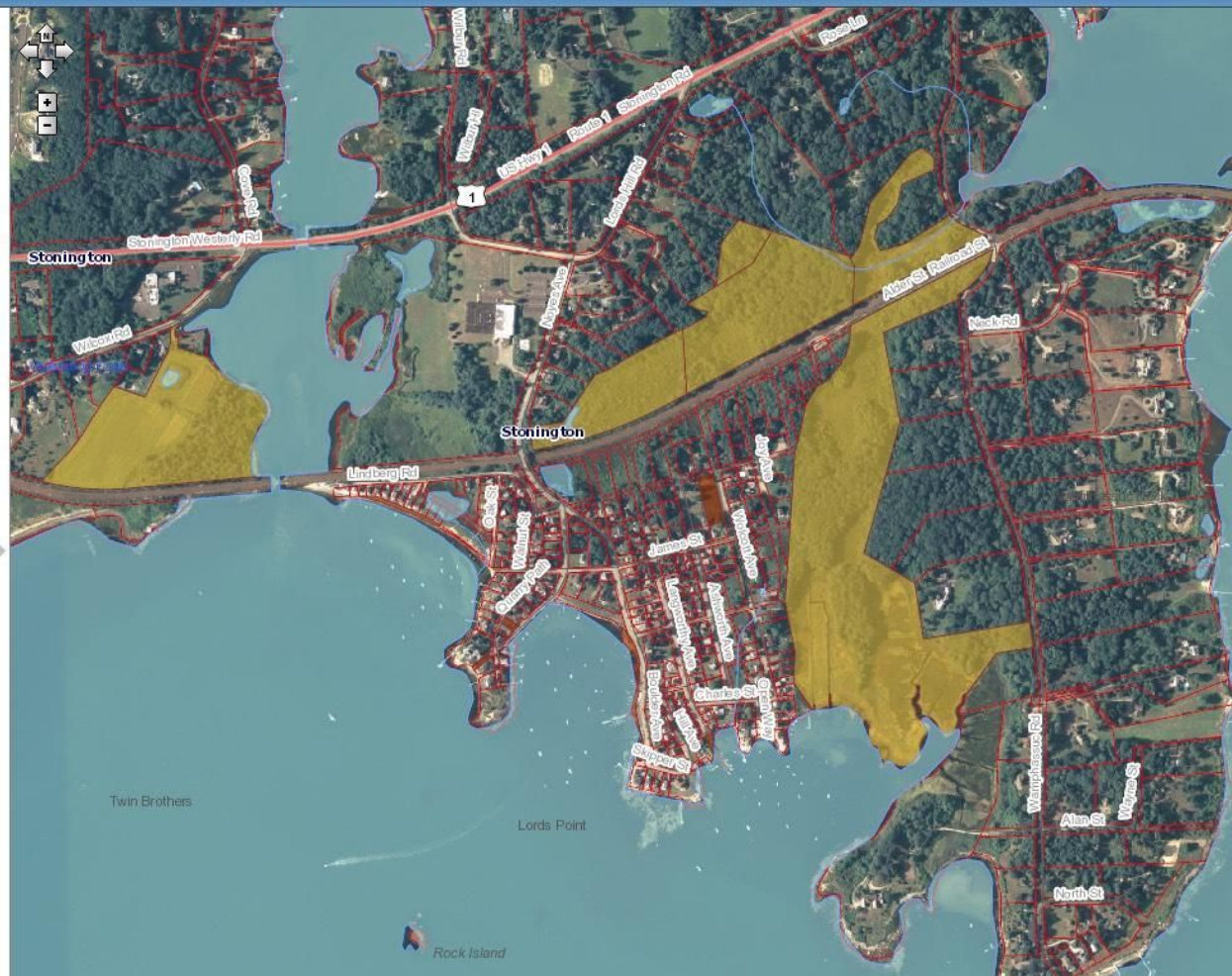
Short term plan (1 – 5 years): Monitor osprey platforms for structure and stability. Support scientific research on sea level rise and coastal impacts on flora and fauna.

Long term plan (5+ years): DEEP assesses function of remaining ditches on coastal marshes. They may see fit to reopen some if areas are deemed at risk due to impaired drainage. Otherwise none required at this time.

Schedule for revising this plan: This plan shall be reviewed at least every five years and updated as necessary.

bing.com/maps (birdseye view):





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>

