



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

Wequetquock Cove Preserve

Property Management Plan

Palmer Neck Road
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

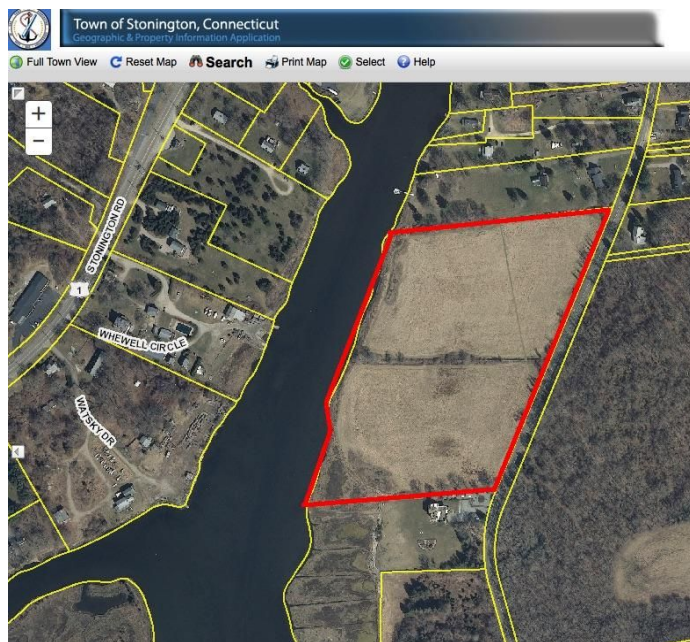
This plan is for a property on Palmer Neck Road in Stonington, CT. This is a non-trailed property of coastal grassland and a small amount of wetlands. See the photos and map that follows. Visitors are welcome.

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, by phone at 860-884-3500, and has a website at <http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org>.

HISTORY

The Wequetquock Cove Preserve is located in the Town of Stonington south-central area of town. Residential housing and undeveloped properties surround the property. It abuts the Barn Island "Crowley I" acquisition by the CT DEEP. The Barn Island Wildlife Management Area along with Avalonia holdings and other protected properties creates over 1,000 acres of contiguous protected open space between the Pawcatuck River and Wequetquock Cove.

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 57-3-5. Combined GIS acreage is 16.08 acres.

Acquisition history

This property was acquired from the Crowley family in May 2011 in a partnership put together by CT DEEP. Major funding was provided by a grant through the U. S. Department of

Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Grassland Reserve Program. CT DEEP holds a conservation easement on the property and couldn't also be the owner, so they asked Avalonia to be the property holder.

Land use history

Historical photos show the property is fairly unchanged, maybe with less wetland, with most other adjoining farmland (except for the Barn Island property) having been developed into residential housing.

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.
palmer neck road, stonington, ct Find Address

Toggle map layers
☐ CT Towns



1934 Satellite

100 m Terms of Use

Map Data 100 m Terms of Use Report a map error

Public use resources

Avalonia accepted the property to assist CT DEEP in preserving properties near the Barn Island Wildlife Management Area. The primary goal of preserving this parcel is to allow for marsh migration due to sea level rise. It is believed this entire property will eventually become saltwater marsh. It also provides rare, coastal field habitat for nesting and migrating birds.

Public benefit of the protected property:

Approximately 50% of the property (that area near the cove) is within a Natural Diversity Database area. A formal NDDB inquiry has not been made. Bobolinks, a species of concern on the CT DEEP Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern lists, is known to nest on this 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

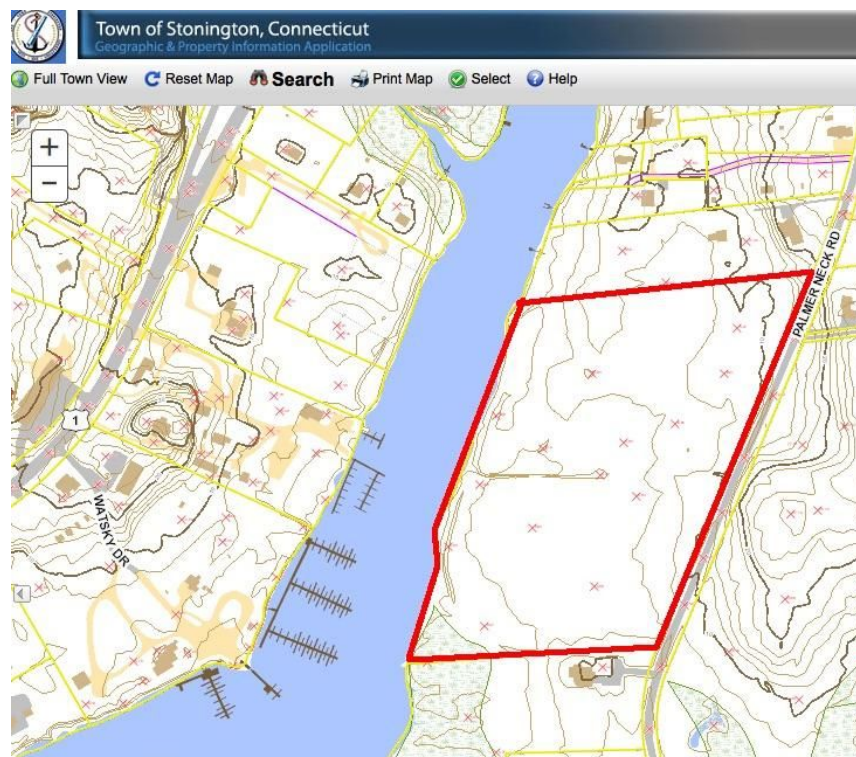
The parcel is open to the public, as are all Avalonia properties. However to protect nesting birds, access is limited to a mowed trail around the perimeter during the nesting season. Mowing is done by DEEP in the fall season to provide low, open habitat for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl that are attracted to the shallow wet areas that are present. Hedgerows along the roadside walls and midline stone wall offer great habitat for shrub nesting birds and the abundance of berries is a great food source.

Most of the open field is upland grasses but there is an abundance of Milkweed which supports the declining Monarch butterfly species. The western and southern coastal edges, have saltmarsh plant species and the marsh has already begun to migrate inland. However there is a significant elevation rise along the cove edge which will slow marsh expansion. A small freshwater wetland along the midline also provides diversity of habitat.

In addition to Bobolinks, other species may be attracted to the area such as Eastern Meadowlark and Grasshopper sparrow. The marsh edges are attractive to the Salt Marsh and Seaside sparrow species.

Potential threats to conservation values: Over growth of invasive plants could degrade the habitat. Yearly mowing is essential to maintain conservation value.

ELEVATIONS / WETLANDS



SPECIAL FEATURES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Bobolink nesting site. Uncommon coastal open grassland habitat.

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.

Protection

Condition of Boundaries:

☒ Corner monuments/pins found

☒ Boundary signs posted

Boundary along roadside and northern residential property has been posted. Stonewalls and Wequetquock Cove define the side and west boundary.

An annual walk around the boundaries of the properties is required. Yearly surveillance should be conducted to check for infringement or encroachment by neighbors depositing yard waste. All motorized vehicles are prohibited on the properties except for maintenance.

Maintaining properties appearance

Litter control. The neighbor to the north mows the path along the front of the property and along the road frontage outside the stone wall. Neighbor to south clears along his property line and has been allowed, by DEEP, to make a small brush pile which they will remove periodically.

Public use

The preserve is open to the public for passive recreational use. 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. The conservation easement held by the CT DEEP has other restrictions.

Enhancing wildlife habitat(s)

CT DEEP is responsible for maintenance of this property. A comprehensive Barn Island Wildlife Management Plan is being developed by CT DEEP and management this property will fall under this plan. Plan will be filed with Avalonia. Yearly mowing is essential and possibly twice yearly mowing may be undertaken by DEEP if time and resources allow, to maintain quality grassland and prevent woody growth in fields.

Controlling invasive species

CT DEEP is responsible for the control of invasive species on this property. Efforts to remove Black Locust trees are ongoing. Some invasive vines remain as habitat along the stonewalls.

Erosion control and flooding

Parts of the property do flood, but there is no need to control.

Productive uses

Provides habitat for local, coastal wildlife. Property is a Bobolink nesting site and stop over site for migrating and wintering waterfowl. Eventual change to marshland habitat will occur due to sea level rise. Provides a natural buffer for uplands.

Scientific and educational activities

None at present but would be encouraged within the limits of the conservation easement and with the approval of CT DEEP. The area is within the Audubon designated Important Bird Area associated with Barn Island. As such it will be considered part of a potential SE CT Birding Trail being proposed by Audubon CT. It is already known to local birders as a “Hot Spot”. It would be a good location for future informational signage.

Response to large natural disasters

Removal of any hazards will be undertaken as necessary.

Special management considerations

None. CT DEEP is responsible for monitoring the conservation easement.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Recurring and occasional requirements

Stonington Town Committee members visit the site on a limited basis. Assist the DEEP with their easement monitoring as necessary.

Annual obligations

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

Short term plan (1 – 5 years)

Annual boundary walk.

Long term plan (5+ years)

Monitor site. Coordinate management with CT DEEP.

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>

- II. CT DEEP announcement of property acquisition:

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

July 25, 2011

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection and Avalonia Land Conservancy Acquires Coastal Property in Stonington, CT

The Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Avalonia Land Conservancy today announced that they have jointly acquired a 16-acre parcel of coastal grassland on Wequetequock Cove in the Town of Stonington, CT.

The acquisition expands what is now a 2.4-mile corridor of contiguous protected open space extending from the Pawcatuck River on the Rhode Island border to Wequetequock Cove adjacent to the State of Connecticut's Barn Island Wildlife Management Area, Connecticut's largest and most ecologically significant coastal wildlife management area.

"The land we are protecting today provides a stunningly beautiful visual gateway to visitors to Barn Island Wildlife Management Area protecting unique and sensitive areas. As a result of this acquisition, over 1,000 acres of contiguous protected open space spans 2.4 miles from the Pawcatuck River to Wequetequock Cove," said Daniel C. Esty, Commissioner of the DEEP. "We have utmost regard and admiration for the Crowley family whose commitment to conservation is unsurpassed."

The property was acquired from the Crowley family whose land has 1,000 feet of frontage on one of Connecticut's least developed coves still largely in private ownership. The land abuts 48-acres of salt marsh, wetlands, and coastal forest that was acquired from the Crowley family and added to Barn Island WMA in 2009.

"Avalonia is proud to be a part of the partnership of agencies that worked together to save this beautiful and fragile habitat," said Avalonia President Duncan Schweitzer. "Our goal as a land conservancy is to preserve significant habitats and wildlife corridors and this expansion of the existing Barn Island Wildlife Management Area is a critically important addition to our preserves." Avalonia currently protects more than 2,800 acres within eight towns in southeastern Connecticut.

The \$1,512,500 purchase price of the property was largely funded by a grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Grassland Reserve Program. Contributions from an additional 8 partnering organizations including: CT DEEP, Avalonia Land Conservancy, Sarah Ann Martin Trust, Town of Stonington Conservation Commission, Stonington Land Trust, New Haven Bird Club, CT Ornithological Society, and CT National Audubon Society.

This acquisition permanently protects 16-acres of waterfront coastal grassland known to provide breeding habitat for grassland dependent birds including Bobolink, a State-designated *species of special concern*. The site's grassland field also includes the fringes of a 21-acre salt marsh that is slowly migrating upland into the fields in response to sea-level rise in Fishers Island Sound. This marsh is part of a larger 350-acre tidal marsh complex extending from the Pawcatuck River to Wequetequock Cove. The marsh provides critical nesting habitat for the Saltmarsh sparrow, a *species of special concern* that has been targeted as a conservation priority due to the loss of its breeding habitat within the salt marshes of the Northeastern United States.

The Barn Island protected open space corridor contains over 1,000 acres of contiguous conservation land including open fields, coastal forest, estuarine marsh, small pocket-beaches and the adjacent shallow waters of Little Narragansett Bay. Collectively, the conservation area provides habitat for 36 state and federally-listed animals and plants considered endangered, threatened or species of special concern. Barn Island Wildlife Management Area, which comprises the core of the area, is one of the most important tidal wetland scientific research sites on the eastern seaboard, with over 60 years of continuous research on how degraded tidal wetland systems respond to wetland restoration activities.

"Connecticut's coastal municipalities are about 50% more developed than the state's average," said Jay T. Mar, State Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. "The opportunities for coastal grassland conservation along a rapidly developing segment of our state's coastline are rare. Protection of lands along this estuary requires complex working partnerships involving stakeholders at all levels of government, as well as the conservation interests of private landowners."

"We are very excited to be a part of the partnership that made this easement acquisition possible," said Mar. "Through the USDA Grassland Reserve Program, we were able to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on this very important piece of property, and ensure the area is protected for future generations."

The State's overall goal is to preserve 21 percent of Connecticut's land – or 673,210 acres --as open space by the year 2023. To date, 73% of the goal has been achieved with 491,271 acres having been designated as state or local open space.

