



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

White Cedar Swamp & Deans Mills Farm Preserves

Property Management Plan

Jerry Browne Road
Mystic, 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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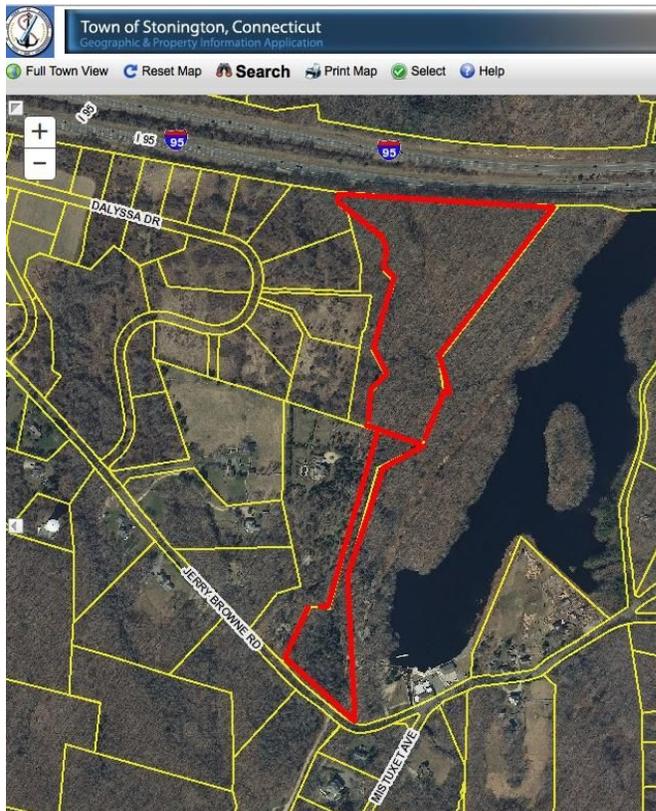
SUMMARY

This plan is for two abutting properties on Jerry Browne Road in Mystic, CT. This is a trailed property of woodlands and wetlands. Parking for about two cars is around the sharp corner from the water company property on the north side of the street. 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 White Cedar Swamp and Deans Mills Farm Preserves are located in the Town of Stonington western area of town. Residential properties, water company property, Interstate I-95 and



undeveloped parcels surround the property. It is across the street from other Avalonia preserves, the Denison Homestead properties and property owned by the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center forming an extensive open space complex of over 600 acres.

SITE INFORMATION

The property

A parcel map of the properties from the Town of Stonington GIS database is shown to the left. The properties are identified as Map/Book/Lot/Unit 133/1/1B & 134/3/1. Combined GIS acreage is 18.71 acres.

Acquisition history

White Cedar Swamp was donated from the estate of May Gardiner Hoxsie in April 1992. Jean Jewett Jones donated Deans Mills Farm Preserve in December 1993.

Land use history

Historical photos show the property is fairly unchanged. Farmland to the north and west is now more woodlands than fields. Perkins Farm to the west has been approved for 35-lot subdivision, though construction has not begun. I-95 cut off the main portion of the Jones family farm from the preserved property.

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.

mistuxet ave., mystic, ct

Toggle map layers

CT Towns

1934

Satellite

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These properties have a long history of local use for livestock and timber. The White Cedar Swamp pool was enhanced generations ago for a livestock watering hole. Rock may have been quarried from the ledges. In the more northern portions there are tall, multi-trunked Oaks that

indicate a cutting decades ago. Stonewalls, rock piles, glacial erratics have local lore attached. In the northwest portion of Deans Mill Preserve there is a large vernal pool area that was reported to be related to a very reliable spring that was located on or near the property line.

The utility company has a power-line ROW through the southeastern portion of the White Cedar Swamp and continues through Aquarion property.

Public use resources

The property was donated to Avalonia to preserve a small White Cedar grove, protect wetlands and an un-named brook. These properties are open to the public as are all Avalonia properties. The trails provide an extension of the trails from across Jerry Browne Road and the other Avalonia preserves, the Denison lands and the lands held by the Nature Center. The trail is hardened, easy to follow with blue diamond blazes and pink flagging tape.

Public benefit of the protected property:

The property is not currently within a Natural Diversity Database area, but the property has not been formally reviewed. This long, small preserve serves as a buffer along the Deans Mill reservoir property and protects portions of the watershed.

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. These combined properties are part of a larger greenway connecting Denison Lands, Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center Lands, other Avalonia properties and Aquarion Water Company reservoir protected land. Only a few side roads intersect the entire complex. As such it is part of a greater woodland area for breeding and migrating birds and larger land areas for mammals to move within.

The small White Cedar Swamp is one of only a few local examples of an increasingly rare habitat. Many of the trees are large and old. At their base is a boggy wetland of Sphagnum,

Bur-reed (*Sparganium* spp) and water lily plants. For most of the year there is standing water in a large portion of the area and is home to a very large snapping turtle, seen over many years. It also supports many amphibian species including Green Frog, Wood Frog and Spring Peepers and several salamander species. Spotted turtles have been found in the past.

Attempts have been ongoing to maintain and support the population of Atlantic White Cedars.

The power-line cut-through provides low shrub habitat and in general the area is characterized by a dense understory of Blueberry, Huckleberry, Sweet Pepper Bush and masses of Green Brier. A small number of American Holly trees are present. Blue Winged Warblers, Prairie Warblers and Towhees are species of concern that make use of this area as well as more common woodland birds. The larger trees are old Oaks (mostly White and some Red), Shagbark Hickory, Sassafras and Black Birch.

The rocky ledges that run along the eastern border with the water company property create open bald areas with an array of lichens, mosses and stunted shrubs. There are also caves and crevices suitable for denning areas.

The more northern portions, in Deans Mill Preserve, are mainly upland woods characterized by large, second growth Oaks, some Beech groves and Witch Hazel. An understory of Sweet Pepper Bush, Wild Sarsaparilla and NewYork ferns is dense. Along the north and western border there is a culvert that directs water under I-95 and creates a stream that flows into a larger vernal wetland. This area is also breeding grounds for amphibians and provides water at almost all times of year. It flows out and east in a watercourse that is bordered by wetland plants, Cardinal Flower, Blue Flag Iris, Skunk Cabbage and into the reservoir property.

Potential threats to conservation values: Over growth of shade trees to inhibit White Cedar, increase and over growth of invasive plants, litter and misuse of property are all threats. The area seems to be an attractive secluded area for gatherings. If the housing development to the west ever comes to fruition, increased encroachments and run-off of fertilizer could be expected.

ELEVATIONS / WETLANDS



SPECIAL FEATURES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The White Cedar Swamp itself is a rare example of this habitat. The rock ledges are also unique and there are beautiful views over the reservoir from the top of the ridges. There is an old stone bench overlooking the bog. There is interesting local history associated with this preserve.

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

Boundaries are posted.

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

Maintaining properties' appearance

Litter control. Maintain trails.

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.

Enhancing wildlife habitat(s)

Complete natural resources assessment. Over the last years, stewardship efforts have included removing many of the Black Birch trees that have threatened to over top and shade out the White

Cedar in the swamp. Some have been cut; many have been girdled to provide snags. Young White Cedars have been transplanted into prime spots.

The dense berry bush and Green Brier stands provide excellent habitat for many small mammals and thicket birds. Periodic management to remove taller shade trees also helps promote this habitat.

While there is known to be a significant deer population, the understory is not grazed out. There is good coarse and fine woody debris in many areas. Snags and dead trees and blow downs are left in place.

Controlling invasive species

Removal of invasive species by manual means will be accomplished as resources permit. There is not a severe overgrowth of invasive plants in most of the areas. The highway boundary and the western boundary with the neighboring proposed housing development have bittersweet along the edges. The wetlands in the north, along the stream from the highway and into the vernal pool, have areas of Multiflora Rose and Japanese Barberry that follow the streambed.

Erosion control and flooding

No current issues.

Productive uses

Provides habitat for neighborhood wildlife and protects an un-named brook leading to reservoir.

Scientific and educational activities

The Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center and Mystic Aquarium use the property for educational purposes.

Response to large natural disasters

Removal of any hazards will be undertaken as necessary.

Special management considerations

None.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Recurring and occasional requirements

Stonington Town Committee members visit the site on a limited basis. Volunteer stewards have been willing to oversee trail maintenance. Continued stewardship efforts to manage the over-story and Black Birch to preserve the habitat needs of the Atlantic White Cedars will be ongoing.

Annual obligations

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

Short term plan (1 – 5 years)

Annual boundary walk. Trail maintenance and assessment of wetlands crossings.

Long term plan (5+ years)

Monitor site. Control invasive plants.

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>