

## AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY

### FEE LAND STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES

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This document has been prepared for guidance in developing Property Management Plans for individual properties Avalonia owns in fee. It sets forth general principles and practices that apply to all or most of our properties.

Avalonia Land Conservancy owns a mix of forested lands, both inland and coastal wetlands, urban properties surrounding housing developments, river floodplains, power line cuts and some grassland. It is difficult to prescribe a set of principles that apply to all these diverse tracts. The principles set forth here must be adapted to individual properties through Property Management Plans. Property Management Plans that differ from these principles need to be approved by the Stewardship Committee and the Board of Directors. Property Management Plans in full compliance with these principles can be approved by the Stewardship Committee.

#### Avalonia Land Conservancy Land Management Principles

1. Management plans must comply fully with federal, state, and local government regulations.
2. Plans must comply fully with any deed restrictions and letters of agreement with the donor. When properties have been given to Avalonia through a third party such as The Nature Conservancy, approval of the plan by the third party is required if there are conflicts with the transfer document.
3. Properties should be managed to enhance wildlife habitat while maintaining sustainable growth of native plants, conserving soils, and protecting cultural resources and special habitats.
4. Avalonia strives to maintain a mix of forests and woodlands, shrub lands, grasslands/meadows, inland and coastal wetlands, and special habitats which, together with surrounding properties, maximize use of the land by a wide variety of wildlife and provides passive outdoor recreation opportunities for our members and visitors.
5. Properties should be protected against encroachment by posting boundaries at regular intervals (~ 50 feet) and by checking the boundaries at least annually. Large boundary signs should be posted along roads and at entrances to advertise Avalonia's stewardship of the land.
6. Cultural resources such as stonewalls, buildings and building foundations, old mill raceways, and glacial erratics should be retained and protected. Renewable resources such as old farm fields and pastures, planted areas or specimen trees should be considered

for protection based on their value to wildlife and their value for enhancing the experience of visitors to the property.

7. No permanent roads or structures should be constructed except where required for property maintenance, i.e., access or equipment storage. Temporary roads or structures required for research purposes or maintenance should be restored to a natural condition after the use ends. Existing old or abandoned roads should be kept free of new tree growth to provide access for fire fighting and property maintenance.
8. Every effort should be made to identify and protect threatened or endangered species of plants or wildlife on our properties.
9. Natural habitats should be protected from invasive species as manpower permits. If herbicides are used, they should be applied in a manner that limits damage to surrounding natural vegetation. If a control program involves a regulated activity, all permits must be obtained.
10. Introduction of any non-native plant to our properties is prohibited.
11. No fires shall be started unless they are prescribed fires undertaken for a specific purpose identified in the management plan. Naturally caused fires should be controlled to the extent that surrounding properties are protected. Since most of our properties are near neighbors, bringing fires under control as quickly as possible is necessary.
12. Normally, in the event of a natural disaster, such as fire, flood, wind, or disease, any restoration activity should be limited to work necessary to prevent further damage to resources and to trail clearing. Management plans should describe what to do in case of large natural disasters, e.g., after a major windstorm is timber harvesting permitted or will the area be left alone.
13. Timber harvesting may be conducted where it enhances wildlife habitat or addresses silviculture needs. (See note on timber harvesting below) Timber harvesting is not permitted in areas with frail or thin soils, or steep slopes, areas within 100 feet along either side of watercourses, and within public water supply watersheds. In sensitive areas that contain rare and endangered species or exemplary natural communities timber harvesting is only permitted when such harvesting is needed to protect or expand these communities.
14. After a timber harvest all areas where vegetative cover is disturbed, including landings and skid trails, should be seeded with grasses that benefit wildlife and provide protection to exposed soil.
15. Bedrock geology and soils should be considered whenever forestry or other changes to the landscape are proposed. Activities should be designed to prevent soil erosion.
16. Natural erosion should not be controlled. Erosion and soil deposition due to past or present activities by people may be controlled.
17. Removal of living plants or firewood from our properties is prohibited unless such removal occurs as part of a planned management activity.
18. Dumping, burying, or spreading garbage, trash or other materials on our properties is prohibited.

19. Scientific and educational activities may be conducted on Avalonia properties.
20. Wildlife population control should only be considered under extreme circumstances when wild or feral fauna reach population levels that adversely impact natural resources.
21. All Avalonia properties are open to the public. Activities permitted on an individual preserve are defined in the management plan for each preserve.
22. Trails may be constructed and maintained where conditions permit. Trails through wetlands or over streams must have raised walkways installed. Trail construction should follow principles set forth by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, the Appalachian Mountain Club, or the U.S. Forest Service.
23. Parking areas at trail heads may be developed on properties with hiking trails. These areas should not be paved and should be kept to a minimum size consistent with property use. Property entrance signs should be constructed at parking areas and property access rules should be posted there.
24. On properties with marked trails, off trail hiking is generally allowed provided that unauthorized trails are not created.
25. Motorized vehicles are not allowed except in support of a planned management activity or where maintenance easements are held by others such as under power lines. Provision should be made for disabled persons to use motorized vehicles on trails to the extent practical.
26. Use of firearms (including bows and crossbows) and hunting are not permitted except for hunts necessary for wildlife population control.

#### Note on Timber Harvesting

Logging is a disruptive affair even under the best circumstances, and some may question the validity of subjecting "protected lands" to timber harvesting. Many Avalonia properties contain commercially productive soils, which represent a financial asset that should be enhanced, not ignored. These lands also provide Avalonia with the unique opportunity to demonstrate that timber harvesting can co-exist with and even enhance many non-timber values such as wildlife habitat, recreational and educational opportunities.

Maintaining healthy and diverse habitat for populations of wildlife species is a very important land ownership objective. Avalonia lands are managed to provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Site-specific practices should be incorporated into every timber sale and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Releasing fruit and mast producing shrubs and trees.
- Maintaining or creating snags and cavity trees of varying height and diameter for cavity nesting and feeding birds and mammals.
- Maintaining and enhancing wildlife corridors, water resources, nesting sites, and softwood cover.

- Creating temporary openings in wooded areas and adjacent beaver flowages to stimulate the production of hardwood sprouts for browse. Strip and patch shelter cuts and clearcuts up to 10 acres in size can be used to obtain this objective.
- Seeding harvested areas where vegetative cover is disturbed, including landings and skid trails, with grasses that benefit wildlife and provide protection to exposed soil.

We understand that the last thing visitors to any recreational forest expect is to be confronted with the sights and sounds of a logging operation, or the aftermath of a careless harvest. Extraordinary measures should be taken to ensure that logging operations have a minimal impact on the visiting public.

Since Avalonia Land Conservancy depends on the good will of our neighbors for land donations and funding it is important that the benefits of harvesting timber on one of our properties be made clear to the public prior to beginning the harvest. Information should be distributed through as many media outlets as possible as well as described on prominent signs at the property entrance. Educational signs should be erected near the cut explaining the expected benefits and how the harvested area is expected to change over time.

Temporary visual chaos resulting from timber harvesting should be mitigated by:

- Limiting the number of skid trail crossings of hiking trails and restricting operation to the winter, when the frozen ground offers additional protection and visitation is at a minimum.
- Establishing buffer zones where appropriate, i.e. around landings, along streams and sections of hiking trails.
- Protecting stonewalls by using existing barways and limiting the number of openings. Disturbed sections should be restored.
- Modifying silvicultural treatments to soften impact in critical areas.
- Minimizing damage to the remaining stand.
- Obtaining maximum utilization of all portions of the cut tree to minimize the amount of slash left in the woods.
- Cutting stumps to a height of 6" or less.
- Cutting branches so they lay two to four feet above the ground.
- Removing slash out of and back from main skid trails.
- Leaving individual and groups of large attractive trees where appropriate.
- Burying or removing all wood waste generated at the yarding areas.
- Grading, liming, fertilizing and seeding yarding areas and skid trails according to Natural Resource Conservation Service recommendations.