

The official newsletter of Avalonia Land Conservancy

AVALONIA *trails*

SPRING
2023

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
OF THE CLEAN AIR ACT

WHY FOREST AND
TREE CONSERVATION
IS SO IMPORTANT

The official newsletter of Avalonia Land Conservancy

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AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

A WORD FROM DENNIS S. MAIN

You have no doubt heard the axiom “Fail to plan and you can plan to fail.” Avalonia has taken that advice very seriously over the years and continually looks to do strategic planning. For example, Avalonia spent countless hours planning and preparing for national accreditation and was awarded accreditation in 2017. Integral to that process was the formalization of a vision statement and a definition of a mission area (Southeastern CT); both those goals were met.

In parallel with and in response to the State of Connecticut Green Plan, which called for 21% of State lands to be conserved by 2023 (a roughly 50% increase in holdings by the State and other partners such as land trusts), Avalonia undertook an acquisition plan to increase conserved lands. As of this writing, Avalonia has increased its conserved properties from 3,382 acres in 2017 to 4,732 acres today — a 40% increase (1,350 acres) with another 1,407 acres or so in the pipeline, some of which are expected to close next year.

For the perpetual stewardship and legal defense funding of all Avalonia’s conserved properties, Avalonia will need at least \$1,000,000 in reserves to protect these holdings. A multi-year plan was established to raise these funds. Thanks to the generosity of a recent large donation (see page 6) we are now at 80% of that goal.

Avalonia’s Board of Directors is currently working on updating its strategic conservation plan (last updated in 2013) and on a new organization strategic plan. The strategic conservation plan is being done in parallel and collaboration with the Southeastern CT Council of Government’s recently undertaken regional open space plan as we share the same mission area. This should continue to sharpen our conservation focus.

LET’S CELEBRATE CLEAN AIR AND HEALTHY FORESTS



STORY BY BRUCE FELLMAN — PHOTO BY JEFF ALEXANDER

A deep, cleansing breath of pristine air is always balm for body and soul, but until the passage of the Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1963, the very act of breathing in many parts of this country was hazardous to one’s health.

A toxic cloud of mining and industrial gases killed more than a dozen people in 1948 in Denora, Pennsylvania, and the air in Pittsburgh was so dirty in the 1950s from steel mill emissions that white-collar workers out for a lunch-time walk needed to change into a fresh dress shirt when they returned to the office.

These events and others, such as the infamous London smog of 1952 that claimed the lives of more than 12,000 residents, pricked the conscience of the industrialized world. The U.S. Congress, in a show of bipartisan unity absolutely unfathomable today — the Senate passed the bill unanimously — sent the CAA to President Lyndon Johnson who signed it on December 17, 1963, thereby giving the federal government the authority to research and combat air pollution. “We are about to come of age in our relationship with our environment,” declared Oregon senator Maurine Neuberger.

For the past 60 years, during which the CAA has been amended and expanded several times, the law has done a remarkable job of removing toxic pollutants from the

air, from lead and carbon monoxide to the chemical constituents of acid rain and the chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants that put a hole in the ozone layer. While we certainly have a long way to go — controlling particulates and greenhouse gases remain a challenge — we certainly have a lot to celebrate. The CAA helped us breathe easier, saved countless lives, prevented a myriad of respiratory diseases, and, by one estimate, added almost half a year to our lifespans.

In Avalonia’s programs throughout the CAA’s anniversary year, we’ll be saluting these successes. But ensuring an abundance of clean air takes more than legislation — it requires an equal abundance of oxygen-providing healthy plants, trees in particular. The preservation of woodlands, which are celebrated throughout the world every March 21 during the UN-sponsored International Day of Forests, is a core Avalonia mission. So, when you’re out on a wooded trail and watching the leaf and flower buds fatten with promise, take time to rejoice. Take time to breathe deeply.

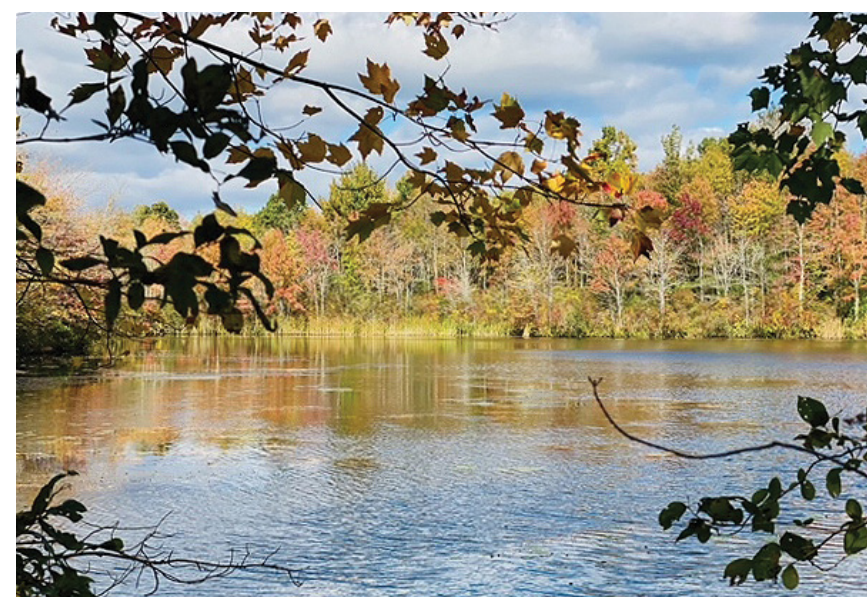
Avalonia Trails is a biannual publication that communicates Avalonia’s work to acquire, protect, and maintain land of high conservation and habitat value; combat climate change for the benefit of people and wildlife; and ensure healthy, livable communities for now and generations to come.

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ACQUISITIONS CONSERVATION ACTIVITY UPDATE

BY DENNIS S. MAIN

The Acquisitions Committee, chaired by David Stygar, along with the assistance of the various Avalonia Town Committees and direction of the Board of Directors, has been moving forward on several conservation projects. These have all been found to have “significant conservation value and that protection of the property serves the public interest, meets the selection criteria and fulfills the mission of Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.” As of this writing (March 4, 2023) Avalonia has conserved 4,732 acres. All the parcels listed are under contract or transfer agreement and are slated to close by the end of 2023. These total about 1,336 acres, subject to slight adjustment after surveys, final title, etc. and, assuming all will close, would bring Avalonia’s conserved acres total to 6,068.



The Bond Property fundraising brochure and pond.

In addition to those below, there are several other projects in various stages, generally at confidential and sensitive negotiation-discussion levels.

Pike, Marshall, Mummert parcels

Ledyard - 262.58 acres
Accumulation of 6 tracts being transferred from The Nature Conservancy

Founders Preserve

Ledyard - 101.94 acres
Transfer of designated open space

Glemboski/Ous parcels

Bozrah/Montville - 161 acres
OSWA project – funding in place

Doolittle

Preston - 43 acres
Include Atlantic White Cedar area

Saporita/Pendleton

Preston/Griswold - 17.9 acres
Abutter/infill to Tri-Town Forest Preserve

Bond

Montville/Salem - 669 acres
Significant large tract forest and watershed protection

St. Michael

Stonington - 1.4 acres
Watershed protection parcel abutter to existing preserve

Mary Cooper Preserve

N. Stonington - 3.03 acres
Donation

Pequot Audubon Preserve

N. Stonington - 6.74 acres
Donation

Hunter’s Road

Norwich - 26.99 acres
City open space donation

Cowhill

Groton Hollow - 42 acres
Donation

RECOMMENDED READING

Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World, September 2021 by Katharine Hayhoe, a Canadian atmospheric scientist

The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate: Discoveries from a Secret World, May 2015 by Peter Wohlleben, a German forester and author



NEW TOOL TO AID STEWARDSHIP EFFORTS

BY TOBIAS GLAZA

With annual preserve and conservation easement monitoring behind us for the season, stewardship is shifting its gaze towards spring. While each year brings with it familiar tasks such as invasive plant removal and trail maintenance, this year we are embarking on several new and exciting initiatives. Some will be obvious to visitors, such as improved parking areas and attractive informational kiosks on selected preserves.

Others, by design, may go entirely unnoticed. One effort in particular allows us to engage in a new form of preserve monitoring. Through a generous grant from Chelsea Groton Bank, Avalonia now joins the ranks of many other land trusts in the area in the use of trail cameras. Consistent with our goal of making stewardship decisions based on quantitative data, these cameras will be used to help in our calculations of preserve and trail usage, to monitor parking and other areas for unauthorized activity, and to assist in inventorying wildlife. Among other things, collecting these types of data will allow us to prioritize projects, better allocate funding, and submit more competitive grant applications. The cameras will provide us with the ability to generate more comprehensive species lists, better understand behavior, and position us to make more informed management decisions for each preserve.

Footage of wildlife is an extremely effective way of communicating the conservation values of the habitats that we are working to preserve. As spring unfolds, certain species become more active, and we are exploring ways in which we might share some of the more interesting images and videos of wildlife. Recent field testing of the cameras, for



example, yielded striking footage of a bobcat, a coyote, and a barred owl, captured within only a four-day period.

If you do happen to see a trail camera on an Avalonia preserve, we ask that you not interfere with it. However, please do reach out to us at the office so that we can be assured that it is one of ours and not an unauthorized use.



Peter Perry

**AN EXTRAORDINARY
ENDOWMENT FUND GIFT
FROM THE PERRY FAMILY**

STORY BY TERRI EICKEL — PHOTO OF PAFFARD WOODS BY GAIL KAHOVER

As the old song says, “forever is a long, long time.” That is certainly true of open space conservation where the acquisition of a property is just the beginning. Once acquisition funds are raised and contracts signed, the real work starts! Avalonia staff and volunteers then begin the long process of walking the property, writing the management plan, removing invasive plants and blazing trails; the list is seemingly endless and the work never stops. With each acquisition, Avalonia’s workload grows to honor the pledge that we made: to steward the land forever.

In 2016, Avalonia began an endowment fund with the goal of providing funding for perpetual stewardship. One of our early donors to the endowment fund, Peter Perry, was a long-time member of Avalonia who supported several acquisitions, including Babcock Ridge in North Stonington. As a lifelong lover of the outdoors, Peter understood the value of open space and the need to protect it forever,

so he generously supported Avalonia’s endowment fund for many years. It is not an overstatement to say that his support was critical to Avalonia’s growth as an accredited land trust.

After his death in 2021, the Perry family cemented their father’s legacy forever with a generous \$500,000 donation to Avalonia’s endowment fund in 2022. Now named the Peter B. Perry Fund for the Avalonia Land Conservancy, Avalonia’s endowment provides financial stability for our stewardship efforts in perpetuity and brings us to almost 85% of our goal of \$1M. Avalonia is deeply grateful for Peter’s life and commitment to conservation, which will live on in Avalonia’s forests, streams, and shoreline.

With over 1,000 acres in our acquisition queue for 2023, it is extremely important that we reach \$1M in the Peter B. Perry Fund to ensure that Avalonia can continue its proud tradition of responsible stewardship.

To make a gift or designate a bequest to the Peter B. Perry Fund for the Avalonia Land Conservancy, please contact Avalonia President Dennis S. Main at (860) 823-MAIN or dennis.main@snet.net. Thank you!

NEWS



The 2023 Photo Contest
Avalonia is hosting a photo contest again this year!

DETAILS: There are three categories: wildlife, flowers, and landscapes.

Participants may submit 2 photos in each category. Only photos from Avalonia properties are eligible.

The contest runs May 15 through August 31. Winners will be announced on September 5, 2023.

Submit entries online at Avalonia.org/photo-contest starting May 15. Good luck!

Photo of Henne Preserve by Sherry April, Winner of Best Avalonia Water in 2022

In Recognition

Avalonia is deeply grateful for the commitment of Lee Ziegler and her companion, Richard Curriden, who together believed passionately in open space conservation and worked during their lifetimes to make the world a better place.



**LET’S GO: SUPER
SPRING EVENTS**

The weather is warming up, so join us on the trails! See our events below and visit our website for more.

A Vernal Pool Adventure at Babcock Ridge Preserve
Wednesday, March 22 | 6:30 pm – 8 pm

At twilight, join Bruce Fellman for a half-mile, somewhat hilly walk — to a group of vernal pools in Avalonia’s Babcock Ridge Preserve to search for such creatures as wood frogs and spring peepers, spotted and marbled salamanders, and fairy shrimp. Register at Avalonia.org

Walk at Paffard Woods with Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center (DPNC)
Sunday, April 2 | 2 pm – 3 pm

Explore Avalonia’s Paffard Woods and discover the glacial erratics, wetlands and streams that highlight this preserve. This hike is moderately difficult. Program for adults and older, interested children. Register at dpnc.org

Avalonia Stewardship Day
Saturday, April 15 | 9 am – 12 pm

Join Stewardship Director Toby Glaza and the Stewardship Committee for Avalonia’s 2nd Annual Stewardship Day. Our Town Committees will be hosting stewardship activities in many towns to clean up the trails for Earth Day. Check Avalonia.org for exact times and locations.

Hike the Sheets Family Forest Preserve with DPNC
Saturday, May 6 | 9:30 am – 11 am

Explore Avalonia’s Sheets Family Forest and look for signs of beavers as we investigate a variety of habitats. This hike is moderately difficult. Program for adults and older, interested children. Register at dpnc.org

Hike Sheets Family Forest Preserve
Sunday, June 4 | 2 pm

Join Hike Leader Stephen Colgan for a hike celebrating CT Trails Day at the Sheets Family Forest! Register at ctwoodlands.org/events/ct-trails-day/



Check out Avalonia’s Trail Finder for full details on our preserves and trails. Search and sort hikes by length, location, and terrain.

Avalonia.org/trail-finder-searchable



(1) + (2) Vernal pool adventure at Babcock Ridge (3) Guided hike (4) Stewardship (5) Hiking and contemplation in the woods



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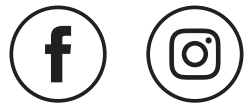
AVALONIA *trails*

View our full calendar of events
at www.AVALONIA.org

PLEASE
JOIN US
FOR AVALONIA STEWARDSHIP DAY
SATURDAY, APRIL 15th | 9 AM - 12 PM
Check Avalonia.org for all the activities

EARTH DAY
APRIL 22
ARBOR DAY
APRIL 28

FOLLOW US



VISIT US ONLINE



THANK YOU FOR BEING A VALUABLE MEMBER OF AVALONIA!

Over 55 years of preserving natural habitats in southeastern Connecticut by acquiring and protecting lands and by communicating the value of these irreplaceable resources.

