



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

Fennerswood Preserve

Property Management Plan

North Main Street, Farmholme Road, Pequot Trail
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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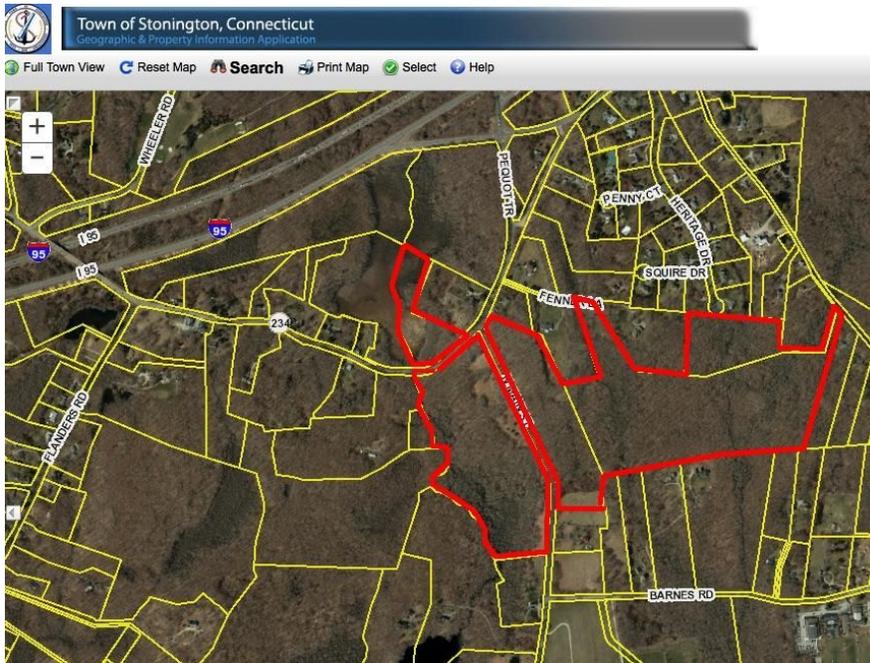
SUMMARY

This plan is for five abutting properties (herein after referred to as “property”) on North Main Street, Farmholme Road and Pequot Trail in Stonington, CT. This is a partly trailed property of woodlands and wetlands. See the photos and map that follows. Visitors are welcome.

The 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 Fennerswood Preserve is located in the Town of Stonington central area of town, on both sides of northern North Main Street, a main traffic route to Stonington borough and Pequot Trail. Residential housing and undeveloped properties surround the property. Stony Brook flows along the western boundary



SITE INFORMATION

The property

A parcel map of the property from the Town of Stonington GIS database is shown to the left. Total acreage is 94.14 acres.

Acquisition history

Properties were acquired via mandatory set asides or donation. Details of the five parcels are:

GIS ID	BOOK	PAGE	DATE	Acres	Address	Preserve
83-1-1	253	874	11/30/1984	28.5	PEQUOT TRAIL	FENNERSWOOD W SIDE N MAIN TRACT
83-3-3B	310	488	04/06/1989	15.5	N MAIN STREET	FENNERSWOOD E SIDE N MAIN TRACT
83-3-3D	396	390	10/01/1996	36.51	FARMHOLME ROAD	FENNERSWOOD SE TRACT (Open Space)
83-3-3J	387	315	12/29/1995	8.33	289 FARMHOLME ROAD	FENNERSWOOD NE TRACT (Daukas Tract)
96-2-8A	439	1057	08/03/1999	5.3	PEQUOT TRAIL	FENNERSWOOD MARSH (O'Neil Tract)

1984 – Quitclaim to the Mashantucket Land Trust from Marcella Beebe Fenner

1989 – Certificate of Devise to the Mashantucket Land Trust – Estate of Marcella Beebe Fenner

1996 – Washington Trust to Avalonia Land Conservancy – Fenner Estate subdivision open space

1995 – Denise M. & Galan G. Dukas to Avalonia Land Conservancy – Dukas re-subdivision

1999 – Michael A. & Margaret S. O'Neill to Avalonia Land Conservancy

Mashantucket Land Trust was renamed Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. in September 1995.

Land use history

Historical photos show the property was open farmland or wetlands. The fields that currently exist are quite a bit smaller now than the 1934 aerial photo shows and the northern marsh / wetland was quite a bit more open.

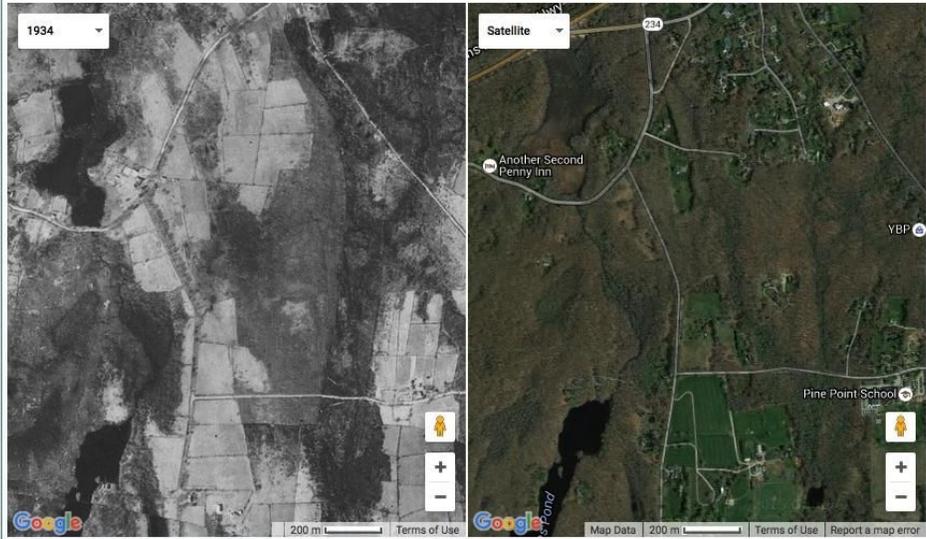
Neighborhood Change in Connecticut, 1934 to Present

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.
north main street, stonington, ct

Toggle map layers
 CT Towns



1934

Satellite

Another Second Penny Inn

Pine Point School

YBP

200 m

Map Data 200 m

Public use resources

The property provides partial protection to Stony Brook and provides scenic vistas along the declared 'Gateway to Stonington Borough': North Main Street.

Public benefit of the protected property:

The very southeast corner of the property is within a CT DEEP Natural Diversity Database area, but the remainder of the property has not been formally reviewed in recent years.

Avalonia installed a trail on the western parcel that leads out to the brook and behind the fields. There currently is no map posted at the entrance, as the trail is quite simple. There is an online map available.

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. The trailed area is easy walking but much of entire property is wetlands which are nearly inaccessible or at the very least difficult.

The Northern O’Neil tract is nearly all wetland. It is obvious from historic photos, that the area was once far more open water. However in recent decades a large portion of the wetland has been overrun with Phragmites as a mono–culture that has seriously degraded that habitat. The northern portion appears to have successively grown in with more native wetland vegetation and shrubs. The area is difficult to access however there have been signs of beaver activity on occasion at the brook outflow near Pequot Trail.

The eastern portions of the property are wooded wetlands and successional forest. However most of the newer tree growth is non-native Norway Maple with some larger native trees, Red Maples, Oaks and Hickories included. A large deer population has grazed out much of the understory thus reducing its value as successional young forest.

The Western portion of the property has significant wetlands that protect the Stony Brook that forms the west boundary of the property. It also has interesting glacial features such as rocky outcrops, ledges and glacial erratics. There are small caves and crevices that provide denning spots for mammals. Fox, Coyotes, Fishers and Bobcats have been reported on the property as well as more common mammals. The forest on this side is somewhat uneven aged with older trees and snags for Woodpeckers, Owls and other cavity nesting species.

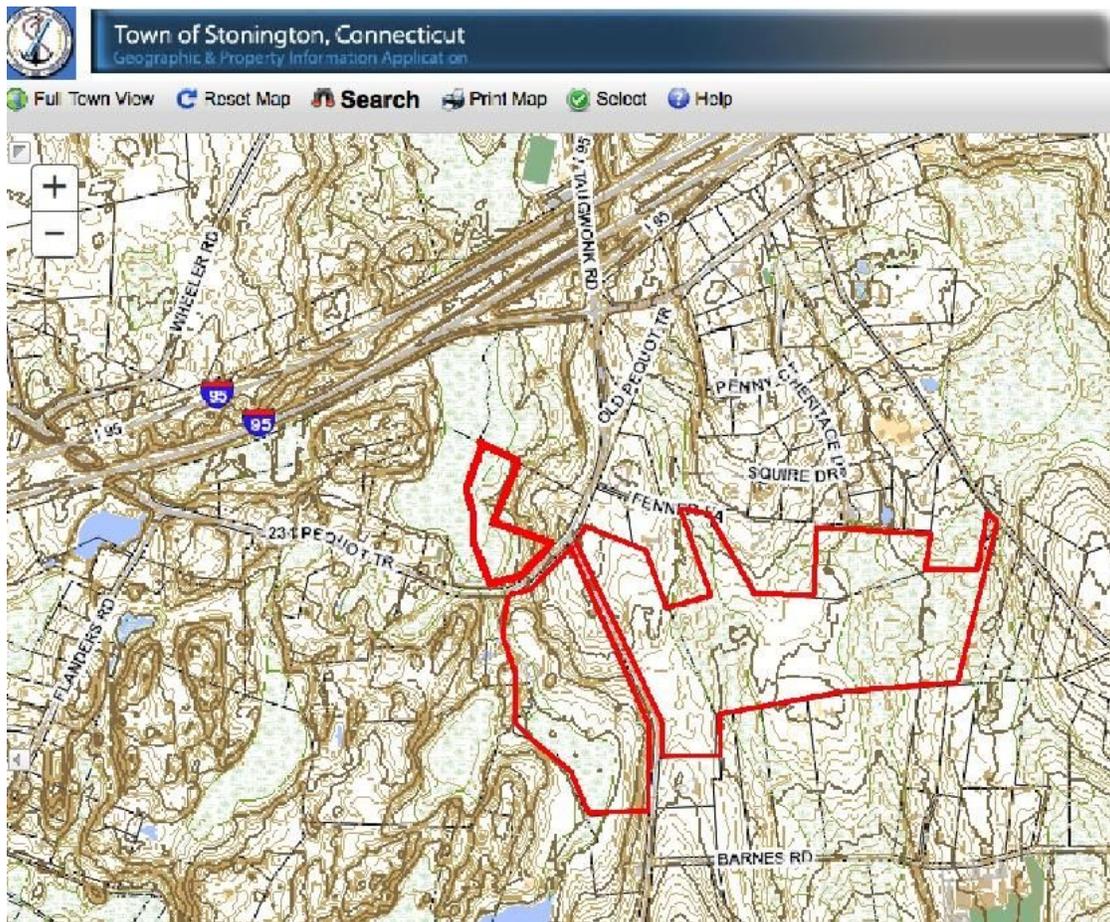
The roadside parcels were once all fields. Now they have grown in around the edges. The southern-most field is largest with more continuous mowing over the decades. The northern three fields are smaller but are now mowed each fall to maintain an open meadow habitat with shrub edges and hedgerows to provide the greatest diversity. It is a good area for a variety of birds and hosts a population of Turkeys that use open areas and woodlands.

Potential threats to conservation values:

The invasive monoculture of Phragmites has seriously degraded the northern tract of wetlands. Treatment or removal would be nearly impossible in that area. Other portions of the property have other invasive issues: Swallowwort has invaded the western fields, Japanese Barberry is established along the waterway and thickets of Multiflora Rose, Honeysuckle and Bittersweet vines are found throughout. Some of these areas are beneficial habitat for wildlife, but annual monitoring and assessment of impact will be necessary.

The area has been seriously impacted by Gypsy Moth outbreaks (1980's, 2015) as well as defoliation by the Winter Moth (2015). This has stressed the health of the Oaks and historic Maples that line the roadway. Death of some of the older trees would alter the ecology but also allow regeneration and create dead wood and snags if they do not pose a danger to the public along trails or roadways.

ELEVATIONS / WETLANDS



SPECIAL FEATURES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Stony Brook forms much of the western edge. Extensive stonewalls run throughout the property and create boundaries. There are interesting glacial rock features and an old foundation or quarried area of uncertain history. As the declared gateway to Stonington borough, the properties provide a scenic vista for people driving on North Main Street. The roadside walls are

scenic and historic and were restored in 2014-2015 with a special fund raising effort by Avalonia, Stonington Town Committee.

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 though there are some wetlands not fully signed due to inaccessibility. There some areas that may need more formal surveying to determine complicated, narrow access areas from Farmholme Road before signs 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. Trash on North Main Street is a constant problem. Years ago Avalonia agreed to be stewards for the town for the northern portion of North Main Street, a designated scenic road. North Main Street neighbors and Pine Point School students also help with litter control. A greater effort is made to keep the more visible portions clear of downed trees and brush.

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 trail loop, from trailhead through western side, is blazed in red.

Pine Point School Explorers group has used the trail for hikes and study. There are geocache sites on the property.

Enhancing wildlife habitat(s)

A complete natural resources assessment would be desirable. Any management must be carefully planned, as the general public likes the scenic views afforded by North Main Street. Invasive Norway Maples have filled in the eastern portion where a field once was. USFWS and CT DEEP reviewed the property several years ago and advised that the property (excluding the wetlands) was probably not large enough for NRCS funding. However there has been discussion of doing some removal of small, crowded trees to open up understory in that area and encourage new growth and enhanced young forest habitat.

The one larger and three smaller fields along the west side of North Main Street are being maintained as meadow habitat. While not large enough to support grassland-nesting birds, they are good pollinator fields and habitat for other birds and mammals. They could be allowed to go to shrub growth, but would likely go to non-natives and invasives. To keep in mind the public vista concerns, meadows are a more acceptable alternative and mowing helps control invasive overgrowth to some degree.

The Stony Brook flows to Sylvia's Pond that is a man made, dammed body of water. There could be a future decision to remove the dam there and maybe a mill dam on the Admiral Fife Preserve to improve habitat for fish all along the up stream course.

Controlling invasive species

Eradicating the Phragmites in the Northern section would be difficult without grant funding for a professionally managed marsh restoration project. It may be feasible to confer with a vegetation control service or CT DEEP to discuss alternatives or strategies that could be costly and complicated but would greatly enhance the habitat quality. Removal of other invasive species throughout the property may be done as time and resources allow. Targeting Barberry along the waterway, cutting Bittersweet vines and cutting Swallowwort in the fields before seeding might be options over time.

Erosion control and flooding

No current issues. Property flooded extensively during past rainstorms of many inches of rain. Natural wetlands act as effective buffers and there are no residential properties threatened.

Productive uses

Provides habitat for local wildlife and protects Stony Brook. The Fennerswood parcels form part of a larger greenway area along the waterway from north in Stonington in Avalonia's Stony Brook Preserve to Sylvia's pond and Paffard Woods and south Admiral Fife Naval Recreation Area to Quana Duck Cove.

Scientific and educational activities

No formal activities at this time. Pine Point School is close by and has been encouraged to use the property for educational activities and their Explorer's Club.

Response to large natural disasters

Removal of any hazards will be undertaken as necessary.

Special management considerations

There is an understood consideration that the scenic value along North Main Street is of importance. Extra attention is paid to roadside care, wall clearing and upkeep and maintaining the views and conditions of the parcels along the roads. Undeveloped properties abut to the west and north and should be reviewed for possible acquisition. The marsh area in particular might make a worthy wetlands restoration project.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Recurring and occasional requirements

Stonington Town Committee members visit the site regularly. Manual and mechanical removal of invasives to maintain open trails is necessary several times during growing season. Annual mowing of the western fields is contracted out. (currently (2015) Joseph Burdick, Barnes Road, 860-535-3281 has been doing the mowing) Rebuilding of stonewalls along North Main Street was contracted out in 2014-2015. Monitoring of the walls to observe for rock removal/theft that has happened in past. Neighbor mows South portion of Eastern field when their part of field is done.

Annual obligations

A boundary walk around the outside perimeter the property is required. Area at end of Heritage needs to be viewed more regularly for littering. Special attention given to property abutters along Heritage Drive, Farmholme Road and Barnes Road for violations involving dumping of brush

and leaves.

Short-term plan (1 – 5 years)

Annual boundary walk. Check boundaries for signage and replace old signs where needed. Mow fields and roadside. Litter control. Written contact with neighbors may be a good idea. Possible consultation with CT DEEP regarding Marsh Restoration on North Property. Review idea of removing some trees on eastern parcel along North Main to open canopy but maintain scenic views. Volunteers could do this with brush piles made toward back of property. Monitor properties to the north for possible acquisition.

Long term plan (5+ years)

Monitor site. Control invasive plants. Follow up with ideas in short term plan.

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>