



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

# Peck Preserve

# Callahan Preserve

Property Management Plan

Off Prentice-Williams Road  
Old 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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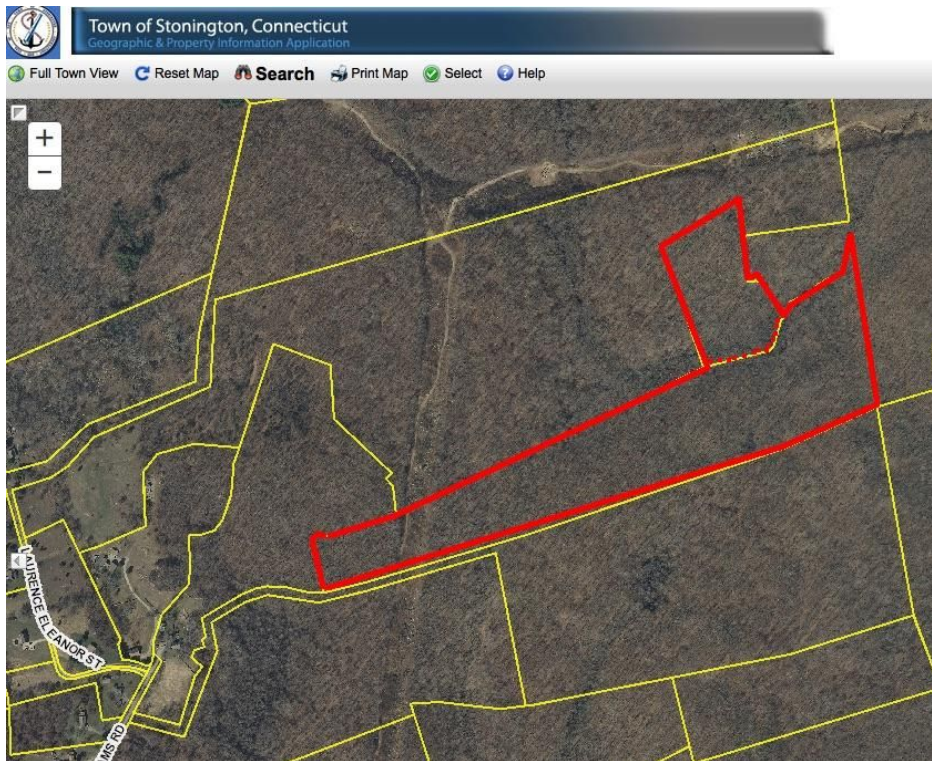
## SUMMARY

This plan is for two properties off Prentice Williams Road in Old Mystic, CT. This is a non-trailed property that was the subject of an extensive New England Cottontail habitat restoration project. See the photos and map that follows. Visitors are welcome when visiting with a Avalonia Stonington committee member and permission from neighbor landowners.

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](mailto:avalonialc@yahoo.com), by phone at 860-884-3500, and has a website at <http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org>.

## HISTORY

The Peck and Callahan Preserves are located in the Town of Stonington northwest area of town.



Residential housing, a gun club and undeveloped lots bound it.

## SITE INFORMATION

### The property

A parcel map of the property from the Town of Stonington GIS database is shown on to the left. The properties are identified as Map/Book/Lot/Unit 137/1/3 & 137/1/5.

Combined GIS acreage is 31.52 acres.

## Acquisition history

Callahan Preserve (the smaller, northern parcel) was donated to the Mashantucket Land Trust by Francis G. & Carolyn J. Callahan in December 1981.

Peck Preserve (the larger, southern parcel) was donated to the Mashantucket Land Trust by Josephine M. Peck in October 1970.


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

## Land use history

There are some stonewalls on the properties, particularly the boundaries of Callahan Preserve, indicating historical agricultural use. There is evidence of logging activities over the last several decades. The Peck Preserve is also intersected by an Eversource (formerly CL&P) power line ROW (dating from 1963) with a gravel roadway for access.

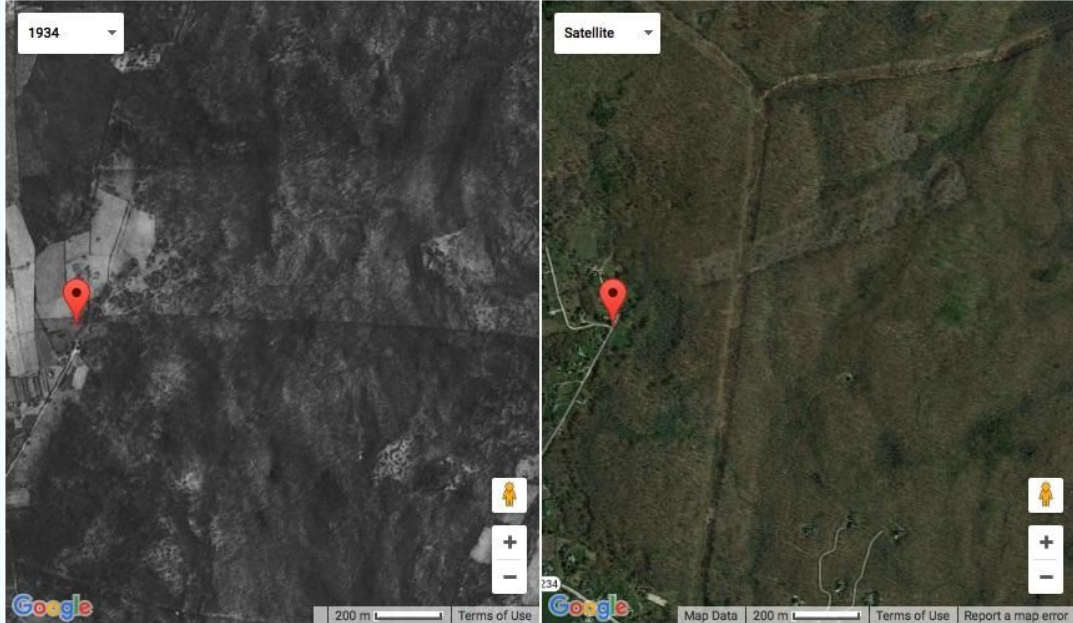
## Neighborhood Change in Connecticut, 1934 to Present

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.**  
prentice williams road, old mystic

**Toggle map layers**  
 CT Towns



200 m   200 m

## Public use resources

Vj gt g'ku'pq'wp/uwr gt xkgf 'ceegu'vq'gkj gt 'rt qrgt v{ 'hqt 'vj g'i gpgt cdlr wdile0 There is historic access right of way to the properties from Route 184 in the north, via a private road, listed as Lawrence and Eleanor Road in historic documents, that extends to a gated entrance, onto the utility right-of-way that crosses the properties of the Williams and Floyd families thus accessing both Callahan and Peck properties. Walk-on access has been allowed by permission of Julie and Warren Heerlien at the end of Prentice Williams Road and all property owners request notification when access is needed.

Within the property there are some minor trails that are used by neighbors for hiking between properties. There are no maintained trails and there are no plans for creating trails on the property. Standard Avalonia boundary marking signs have been posted in accordance with management principals. Neighboring property owners have active deer stands and several were documented on Peck during a property walk in 2012. The owners were notified and those on the property have been removed.

Public benefit of the protected 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 combined properties total slightly over 30 acres of varied habitat. The majority is uplands that had evolved into mature forest (Oak, Hickory, Birch, Beech Maple and Tulip Poplar) with an understory that was generally open with sparse areas of Low-bush Blueberry, Huckleberry, brier patches and areas of Mountain Laurel. Rocky outcrops, some glacial erratics and slopes of glacial rocky rubble accent the high areas. There are several areas of low wetlands along the northern boundary of Peck and a stream emerges and flows through a rocky low land into a significant spreading red maple swamp and wetland at the common boundary of Peck and Callahan and into the northeast corner of Peck. There is one vernal pool that would be a breeding area for amphibians. Toward the western portion of Peck and just above the northern border of

Callahan, the utility ROW cuts through the forested area. The habitat on the ROW is maintained as low shrub land that is dense with a mix of shrubs, vines and some grassy areas. This shrub area is unique within the larger forested area and provides habitat for a significant and increasingly endangered group of animals and birds that depend on it.

In 2012 Avalonia was contacted by representatives from CT DEEP and USFWS proposing that the preserves had high potential for a successful restoration project to create shrub land habitat for the New England Cottontail. A year of intensive study and planning followed.

Project Abstract. (Prepared by USFWS Suzanne Paton in 2011 for Long Island Sound Futures Fund / National Fish and Wildlife Foundation [LISFF/NFWF] Grant funding):

Avalonia Land Conservancy owns and manages two forested properties in Stonington that are surrounded by forest, referred to as the Peck & Callahan Preserves. The site is approximately 31 acres of mixed hardwood forest located within a larger block of contiguous forested habitat.

These properties lie within the Ledyard Coastal Focus Area, which has an established goal of maintaining or creating 2,000 acres of shrub / early successional habitat by 2030. This site is not only in a high priority geographic area but is within 2-5 miles of three sites confirmed to support NEC as recently as 2010. There are also several shrub wetlands, young forest patches and stone walls on or adjacent to the property that could currently be providing habitat for NEC. These individuals in the surrounding landscape could serve as source populations for any newly created habitat and help ensure that habitat we create will not only produce suitable habitat but will have a very high likelihood that it will become occupied by the target species.

Additionally, a utility power line transects the property and is maintained in early successional habitat that could provide an important dispersal corridor between the project area and other suitable habitat on the landscape. We propose to enhance the value of this forest for NEC and other early successional species by removing the trees greater than 3 inches in diameter to set back forest succession and enhance shrub and young tree growth.

The Peck & Callahan Preserves are a mixed hardwood forest dominated by Oak, Beech, Birch and Hickory species. Trees are mostly in the pole and saw timber category, between 6-12 inches in diameter, although there are areas with intermixed sapling and shrub stands where trees have fallen naturally.

To enhance the site for NEC and other early successional species we are proposing to implement practices identified in the “Best Management Practices for New England Cottontail Habitat” developed by the NEC Technical Committee under the direction of Paul Rothbart (CT DEEP Habitat Branch). Additionally, we would like to consider management practices that will benefit a wide range of early successional species, including birds and bats. To accomplish that we will follow Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) established practices for “Forest Stand Improvement (code 666), Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (code 645), and Early Successional Habitat Development / Management (code 647)”.

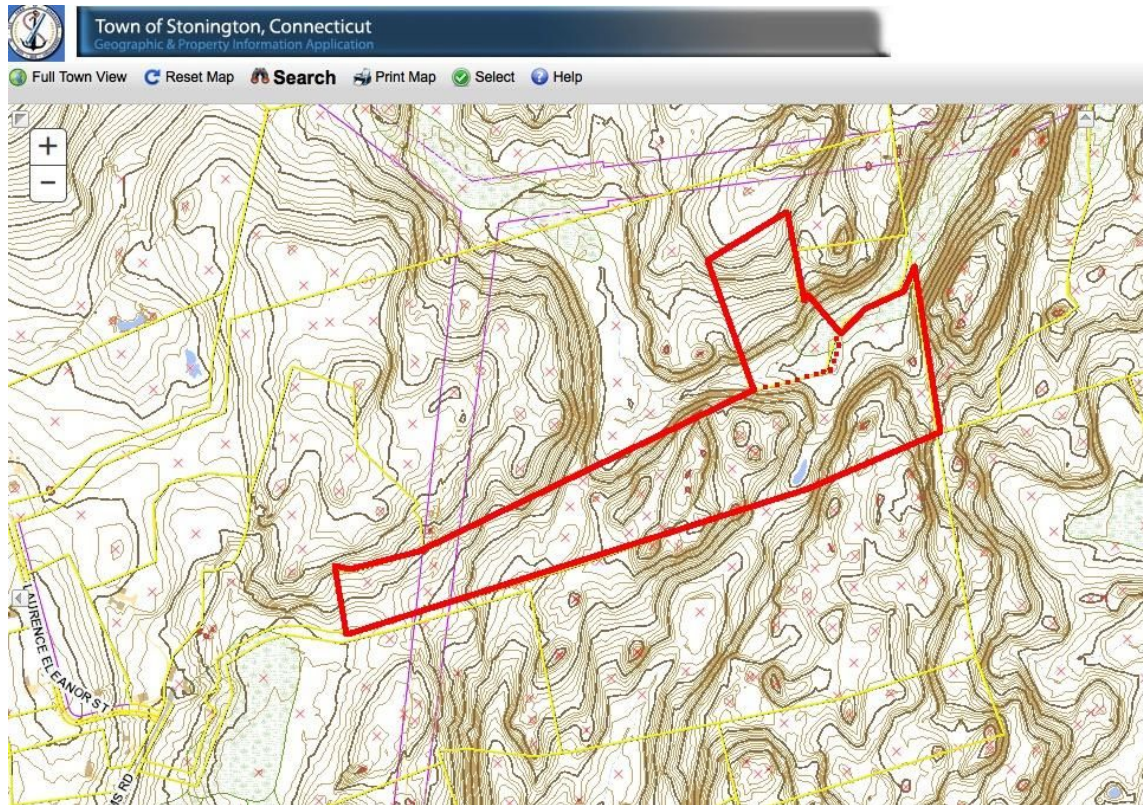
By creating 15-20 acres of habitat in the Ledyard Coastal Focus Area we are helping to achieve the focus area goal of creating and managing 2,000 acres of habitat for New England cottontail by 2030.

This in turn will help to move the conservation effort forward for New England cottontail with the ultimate corridors and a power line ROW that could serve as dispersal corridors in surrounding landscape. As a candidate for federal endangered species status listing, the NEC is a high priority for conservation action in the region. [Note: Sept. 2015 USFWS declared protection was not yet necessary, primarily due to projects such as this.]

The project will remove over story trees on either side of the existing power line ROW to create approximately 20 acres of suitable habitat. The crowns and branches of trees will be left on site to create immediate cover in brush piles. This will deter excessive deer browsing that could inhibit re-generation of tree and shrubs.

Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC) is working with CT DEEP, NRCS, and USFWS to identify best practices for management of the site to achieve high quality habitat for NEC. A licensed professional forester will develop a forest management plan and a contractor will implement the plan. Avalonia volunteers will provide a base line inventory, oversight, and conduct invasive species monitoring and treatment as needed.

## ELEVATIONS / WETLANDS



## SPECIAL FEATURES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

New England Cottontail Restoration Project

## 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

No entrance / roadside sign at present.

Boundaries are posted and project outline is obvious. There are no plans for entrance signs. Avalonia will monitor over time, as described below, and access will continue to be limited to those doing survey work and site study and will be by permission of land owners. **Vj gt g'y kndg'' pq'i gpgt cdlr wdle'ceegu'y kj qw'b'Uvqplpi vqp'Vqy p'Ego o kvvgg'xqwpvggt 'vj cv'j cu'lgewt gf '' rtqrgt''rgto kukpu**, nor are there plans for trails signage, parking or maintaining walls or views.

The NEC habitat restoration project, active creation of a Shelter wood cut, with reserve trees and creation of brush piles, was carried out over 4 months, May to August in 2012.

Avalonia will continue to work with USFWS and DEEP partners in the future for continued advice and monitoring assistance. Stewardship guidelines will follow those BMPs as described by USFWS and DEEP for NEC habitat.

2014: Avalonia was obligated to monitor for invasive plant seedlings and treat according to BMP. NRCS had funding for intensive control efforts in this year. CT DEEP assisted individual volunteer efforts using backpack sprayers with appropriate chemicals. Avalonia monitored individual sites throughout the preserve, designated by PVC marker pipes so photo documentation can be consistent over the years. Monitoring of newly planted native shrubs will continue and protection against deer browse will be assessed. Monitor the regrowth of grasses / forbs in skid trail areas and reseed if necessary. Monitor erosion after extreme weather / rain storms.

2015-2017: Avalonia expects to see rapid low cover growth throughout area now opened to sunlight. Volunteers will continue to monitor and treat invasive plants as needed. Monitor and record plant species present in the new growth as well as monitoring the success of those that were planted in 2013. Monitor and record fauna and species observed using newly created habitat. When possible in winter, with snow cover, look for and collect any rabbit pellets according to protocol and submit for analysis. Maintain positive communication with landowners and always inform them of any need to be on their property / power line trails.

2018-2022: This period should be prime period for desired shrub habitat stage. Continue

monitoring for invasive plants and treat as needed. Growth should be dense and thick. Monitor and record observations of species using habitat, mindful of those that are targeted. Continue to monitor and collect rabbit pellets during winter season.

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

No real appearance issues.

#### Public use

All Avalonia properties are open to the public for passive recreational use though there are no trails and access rights to these two properties is limited ~~\*ugg'cdqsg+~~. 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)

Presence of NEC will dictate future management. If NEC successfully colonizes the site, future management such as rotational patch cutting following guidelines for occupied sites should be investigated. NRCS may have future funding for continued management that will not be nearly as extensive or costly as first cutting plan.

Ideally the property will continue to be managed to provide rotations of early successional growth to continue to provide such habitat even if NEC are not found on site. It will benefit all other associated early successional habitat species.

#### Controlling invasive species

Controlling invasive species will be an ongoing challenge with the dense new growth. Prior to the project there were few invasive species within the preserves. Some Barberry was noted along the brook line and was targeted before the cutting. Management will be according to BMPs but it is also recognized that some invasive species actually offer significant benefit to the wildlife we are encouraging at the shrub thicket stage.

#### Erosion control and flooding

Once new growth has become established, erosion should be no issues with erosion. Wetlands

were buffered prior to the cutting to minimize erosion at all stages.

### Productive uses

New England Cottontail habitat.

### Scientific and educational activities

The site will continue to be monitored by several organizations to determine the success of the project. CT DEEP and USFWS with Avalonia volunteers will continue to make and record observations of growth and flora and fauna over time.

### Response to large natural disasters

With few tall trees remaining, there is little fear of damage due to wind/winter storms. Existing trees may be subject to wind throw but it is not a major concern. Forest fires are always a concern within a core forest and with a great deal of dead material on the ground. Any such occurrence will be managed as necessary. There is vehicular access on the power line ROW.

### Special management considerations

As described, over decades, the management will be based on the success of the project in encouraging the targeted species. Under ideal circumstances, further funding can be applied for after 7-10 years for rotational cuttings to maintain the uneven aged young forest pattern. Without intervention, there will still be a significant period of variation in the age and type of habitat that should be beneficial to wildlife.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

### Recurring and occasional requirements

Stonington Town Committee members visit the site as described above.

### Annual obligations

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

### Short term plan (1 – 5 years)

Annual boundary walk. Implement plan as described above.

### Long term plan (5+ years)

Monitor site. Control invasive plants. Implement plan as described above.

