



# Avalonia Trails

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DEDICATED TO PRESERVING  
LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

## State Implements New Dog Policy

by Janice Parker

The CT DEP has implemented new dog leash regulations for wildlife management areas (WMAs). As detailed in an article in the May/June issue of "Connecticut Wildlife" the regulation reads (in part) "Dogs must be on a leash no longer than seven (7) feet and under the control of their owner or keeper. The person responsible for the dog must hold the leash at all times... all dogs may be prohibited on any area or during any time when so posted by the Department."

Avalonia's policy with respect to dogs has always been consistent with this new DEP regulation. We prefer that dog owners who use Avalonia properties keep their dogs leashed, and there are certain properties that are sensitive wildlife habitats and where, for that reason, dogs are prohibited. One such property is Sandy Point, a nesting area for the endangered piping plover. Signs indicate those Avalonia properties on which dogs are prohibited.

As the Connecticut Wildlife article goes on to say: "Wildlife management areas are set aside primarily for the conservation of wildlife populations and their habitat. Public use of these areas is a benefit, but not the main reason for their existence.

Dogs are perceived by wildlife as predators. Ground nesting birds are heavily distressed by dogs and may abandon or lose their nests if constantly disturbed. They are also susceptible to undue stress and may suffer injuries from unleashed dogs. Many populations of ground nesting birds, which nest at WMAs, are in long-term decline on a regional basis. Dogs also will chase wildlife including their helpless offspring.

Owners often allow their dogs to swim in wetland areas at WMAs, such as streams, ponds, marshes and vernal pools. Waterfowl and waterbirds that use these areas are usually frightened away from their nests. Dogs wading through vernal pools and marshes have a negative impact on these important amphibian breeding sites. Egg masses left behind by wood frogs, spring peepers, and various species of salamanders can be destroyed. In addition, the pathways that dogs and their owners have created to gain access to these wetlands have destroyed important riparian habitat and caused significant erosion."

We hope that Avalonia members and the public will continue to enjoy responsibly the properties that we have preserved, bearing these considerations in mind when they choose to hike with their Best Friend.

Italicized text has been excerpted from the May/June issue of "Connecticut Wildlife" with permission of the author and editor, Kathy Herz. The full article is available on Avalonia's website at [www.avalonialandconservancy.org](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org)