



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

# Hoffman Evergreen Preserve

## Property Management Plan

North Stonington Road (Route 201)  
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 \_\_\_\_\_



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

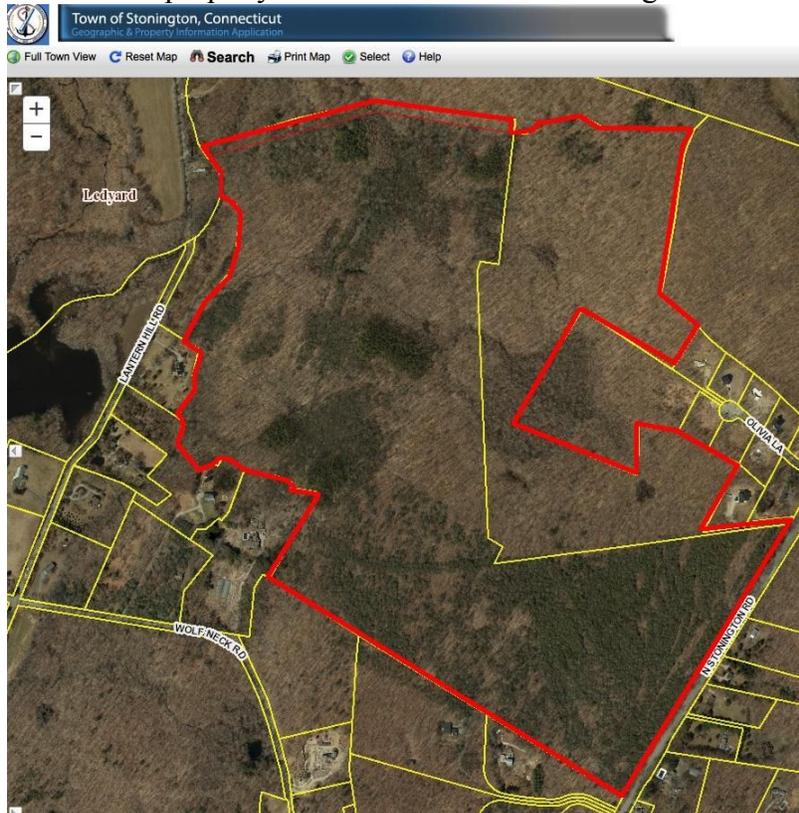
## SUMMARY

This plan is for two abutting properties (herein after referred to as “property”) on North Stonington Road (Route 201) in Stonington, CT. This is a trailed property of woodlands and wetlands. See the photos and maps that follow. 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](mailto:avalonialc@yahoo.com), by phone at 860-884-3500, and has a website at <http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org>.

## HISTORY

The Hoffman Evergreen Preserve is located in the Town of Stonington northwest area of town, just south of the town border. Residential housing, farmland and undeveloped properties surround the property. Whitford 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 198.62 acres.

### Acquisition history

Properties were acquired via mandatory set aside, negotiated settlement or donation. Details of the acquisitions are:

141-1-1A	213	156	12/28/1976	145.12	HOFFMAN PRESERVE
141-1-1A	401	638	03/19/1997		HOFFMAN PRESERVE (STIMPSON SETTLEMENT)
115-1-1K	716	461	05/21/2013	53.5	HOFFMAN PRESERVE ADD-ON (ALLIED DEV. OPEN SPACE)

1976 – Quitclaim to the Mashantucket Land Trust from Chippe A. Hoffman

1997 – Three-acre settlement from Clifford A. Stimpson, Jr. to Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.

2013 – Allied Development Partners Open Space set aside to Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.

The Stimpson Settlement was the negotiated settlement of illegal tree cutting on land trust property.

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

## Land use history

Historical photos show the property was a mix of open farmland, forest or wetlands. Mr. Hoffman acquired the original property in 1958 and planted thousands of evergreen trees to mimic the forests of Canada that he loved. The area shows many signs of former usage including many stone walls, stone cairns, several stone bridges over wetland crossings and at least two significant pent-ways/fire roads providing open lanes and possible access for emergency vehicles. There are several large Oak trees known as Wolf trees, or “Nooners”, which are older than all the rest, having been left standing during the early agricultural years.

The Bennet Yard is a colonial cemetery which is included within the boundaries of the Hoffman Preserve.

There is a cellar structure of unknown usage/history as well as an old foundation on an untrailed part of the property.

There are a couple of areas of old dump debris and metal pieces of farming and household usage.

On the Allied, recently acquired property, there are stumps, indicating more recent logging activity and forest that is slightly younger.

## 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.

Toggle map layers

 CT Towns

1934

Google

200 m

Terms of Use

Satellite

Google

Map Data

200 m

Terms of Use

Report a map error

### Public use resources

The property provides partial protection to Whitford Brook and its watershed and has miles of hiking trails on the original property. In early years horseback riding was allowed. Now it is a favored place for hikers with their dogs. Off leash dogs are a persistent problem. Trail maps are posted throughout the preserve at trail junctions.

Public benefit of the protected property: This preserve offers great opportunities for nature study, photography and bird watching because of the diversity.

The western edge the property is within a CT DEEP Natural Diversity Database area as is the property to the north, but the remainder of the property has not been formally reviewed specifically for listed species, in recent years.

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 property is quite extensive and there are several different ecological zones. For a detailed outline, please see the Audubon Connecticut report attached as appendix.

The entire property is forested with minimal fragmentation or openings. It is a varied mix of native hardwoods (Oaks, Beech, Hickory, Ash, Sugar Maple and Birch, with Red Maple in wetter areas) and softwood evergreens( Hemlock, Pine, spruce and Larch) that were planted in large blocks by Mr. Hoffman. The resulting mosaic of forests makes for great diversity for wildlife benefit, including for nesting sites and hard and soft mast production.

There are several wetland areas throughout. Several seeps are headwaters and sources flowing to the Whitford Brook on the west boundary. There are several ponds, one of which is more persistent in all but the driest years. This provides a year round water source for mammals, reptiles and amphibians as well as birds. Vernal pool areas are also in the central portion. These provide amphibian breeding areas and greater vegetation variety for different bird species as well.

Almost all of the forested area is quite mature. There are large diameter trees which support certain forest species, including Pileated Woodpeckers which breed on the preserve. As part of a large block of core forest, forest dependent bird and mammal species are present. Wood Thrush, Veery, Scarlet Tanager and Ovenbirds are residents. Coyote, fox, raccoons, skunks, bobcats and Fishers have been reported.

While there are some areas, particularly in the wetlands, with good mid and understory coverage, much of the forest floor is open. Some areas have cover due to damage from storms which provide nesting sites and cover. There are areas with some sunlight allowing understory of Lowbush Blueberry and Huckleberry. Along the northern edge near the entrance trail, there is a

large Mountain Laurel grove which was more lush and flowered when there was more light in the area. It is now overtopped by Oaks and Beech.

The dense shade in a healthy young evergreen forest inhibited the growth of seedlings throughout much of the area. The evergreen areas are now old aged and are not thriving and are losing their value.

Potential threats to conservation values:

The high value of this property was based on the health and vigor and diversity of the various forest blocks. The changes of the last decade have negatively impacted these values.

The densely planted and now crowded Hemlocks in large areas, are weakened by Woolly Adelgid and Hemlock scale and are adversely affected. They are no longer as productive and supporting of wildlife as before. Warming climate has stressed the Spruce and other evergreens more associated with northern cooler climates. Beech trees are infected with the Beech Bark disease, a fungus spread by a scale insect and many are dying. To some degree the resulting snags and dead trees are supportive of Woodpecker species and wood loving insects/beetles but overall the ecosystems are losing value.

The White Pine grove has been damaged with wind thrown tops during the storms of 2012-2013. While this has created woody cover on the ground and snags, it has allowed sunlight to reach the forest floor and invasives are taking over.

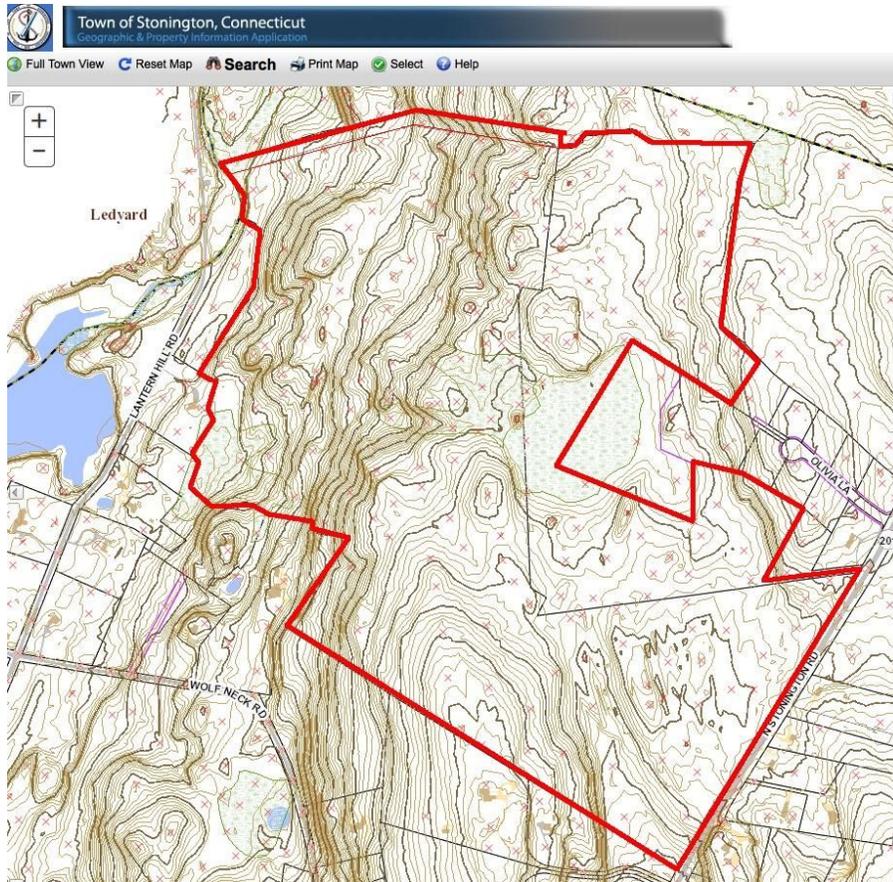
There are a number of Ash trees present, and the Emerald Ash Borer is a very real threat to all Ash trees in CT.

Invasive species such as Japanese Barberry, Multiflora Rose, Autumn Olive tend to follow the waterways as seeds are spread by animals attracted to water. Areas such as the damaged Pine grove are being overtaken by the same invasives as well as Oriental Bittersweet.

The trails are generally well hardened but unauthorized ATV and mountain biking have damaged the trails in the past.

A fire in the area could both harm and help the forest.

## ELEVATIONS / WETLANDS



## SPECIAL FEATURES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Whitford Brook forms some of the western boundary and unnamed streams feed down to the brook from wetlands. Extensive stonewalls line the boundary lines and are found throughout the interior. An old homestead foundation and cellar structure, are located near the border of the add-on parcel.

Bennett Yard Cemetery is located in southeast corner.

## 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 mostly posted though there are some wetlands not fully posted. Old Mashantucket Land Trust signs are being replaced.

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 Stonington Road is an ongoing problem.

### 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. Off leash dogs are a common complaint despite leash law signs posted conspicuously. Visitors are not allowed to pick vegetation or disturb wildlife excessively. Trails are blazed and maps posted throughout.

### Enhancing wildlife habitat(s)

Complete natural resources assessment would be of value. There was an environmental review study done in 1987. The 2014-2015 Audubon Forest Bird Habitat Assessment (see appendix) recommendations will be the primary guidance document.

A consulting Forester offered several opinions. There is little valuable commercial saw log material on the property. The best trees would most likely want to be saved for mast and seed trees if any cutting plan was attempted. Because of the location within the New England Cotton-tail focus area, it was suggested that a number of acres ( 25+) could be cut for a habitat project with grant funding possible. Access deep into the preserve with machines would be difficult due to terrain and it would be costly as there is no value to wood that would be harvested to offset cost.

Because of the high visibility and public usage, it was decided in 2015 that a large cutting project for NEC would not be received favorably. The best options are outlined in the reference document for patch cutting smaller parcels of 1-2 acres. This could be done to a greater extent in the Hemlock areas and areas off the paths and out of view. This would allow better regeneration of understory and creation of edges for greater diversity and attractiveness to more species.

Avalonia can pursue grant funding towards this end, but much of the effort may need to be done over time by Avalonia volunteers.

We need to research evergreen species that would be tolerant of warming temperatures and be less susceptible to diseases, insect pests and deer browsing. If possible replant areas to re-establish an Evergreen Preserve as intended by donor

### Controlling invasive species

It was advised that we address the invasives on the property, along the waterway and in Pine grove, as soon as possible to avoid spread. At this point the problem is manageable with manual removal and treatment of stumps after cutting. This will be accomplished as time and resources permit.

### Erosion control and flooding

No current issues.

### Productive uses

Provides habitat for neighborhood wildlife and protects Whitford Brook. Provides opportunity for hiking, nature study, photography and birdwatching and is a favored hiking area.

### Scientific and educational activities

In 2015 an Entomologist Raul Ferreira from Roger Williams Zoo began a study of forest beetles. His study will be a good baseline if we move forward with any management practices. (results will be attached when available)

We have an opportunity to do good education/outreach by creating signage to discuss forestry management practices prior to any activity. Illustration of cutting, making openings, creating diversity, girdling of larger trees and encouraging public engagement will go a long way to acceptance of the project.

### Response to large natural disasters

Removal of any hazards will be undertaken as necessary.

### Special management considerations

Use the attached Audubon report to guide management over the next decade. Create openings to allow forest regeneration and improve bird habitat. Seek funding and support from whatever sources are available. Undeveloped properties abut to the south and north and should be reviewed for possible acquisition.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

### Recurring and occasional requirements

Stonington Town Committee members visit the site on a limited basis. Manual and mechanical removal of invasive plants will be accomplished as necessary. Create additional trail to old homestead and into the new acquisition area. Engage assistance from local birders to continue to do surveys of the area over time related to management practices.

### Annual obligations

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

#### Short-term plan (1 – 5 years)

Annual boundary walk. Check boundaries for signage and replace old signs where needed. Litter control. Trail maintenance. Continue to plan for implementation of management strategies and seek assistance from DEEP, USFWS, COVERTS resources.

#### Long term plan (5+ years)

Monitor site. Control invasive plants. Improve habitat for birds and other wildlife associate with forest openings. Possibly re-establishing evergreens in areas where they have died, thus returning the preserve to a condition closer to as it was donated.

#### 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>

II. Environmental Review Team Report #299 – September 1984

[http://www.ctert.org/ERTWebsite/pdfs/Stonington\\_HoffmanEvergreenPreserve\\_299.pdf](http://www.ctert.org/ERTWebsite/pdfs/Stonington_HoffmanEvergreenPreserve_299.pdf)

III. Audubon Connecticut Forest Bird Habitat Assessment Report – January 12, 2015. (Aububon Connecticut, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Ferrucci & Walicki, LLC).