

SLT RESTORES NEC HABITAT

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) conducted studies on two properties adjacent to the Thomas Miner Nature Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary. Both studies revealed the presence of New England Cottontails, a species that had been in significant decline due to habitat loss. Although, through conservationist’s efforts, the population is slowly increasing, there is still an exceptional need to continue efforts to protect this species. Currently, the NEC is listed as a ‘Species of Greatest Conservation Need’, and continues to need timely management intervention.

Therefore, in an effort to help increase and protect the population of NEC’s in our immediate area, the Stonington Land Trust applied for and received a grant through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for \$40,057. The grant will be used to restore 13.2 acres on the Preserve to New England Cottontail-friendly habitat; an early-successional habitat of dense, entangled, woody cover that occurs in shrub thickets and young regenerating forests.

The restoration process on Thomas Miner involves clearing the mature trees and invasive plant species from 10-acres at the back of the property and 3.2-acres adjacent to the fields, at the front of the Preserve. Doing this regeneration-cut on these small sections of mature forest will allow young dense rabbit-friendly habitat to regenerate. Importantly, some of the large trees will be left to provide roosting sights for birds and the northern long-eared bat (Myotis septentrionalis), which is now a federally listed threatened species, under the Endangered Species Act. For the protection of these, work did not proceed until the nesting birds had fledged and the northern long-eared bats had reared their pups.

Once the trees are harvested, left over wood and slash will be used to build brush piles, which will provide interim protection and browse for the rabbits. Later, native shrubs will be planted. With a combination of the native shrub plantings and the natural re-growth, in both areas, the acreage will slowly be restored to an early-successional habitat, which will sustain and protect the NEC’s.

This additional habitat, adjacent to the two DEEP documented New England Cottontail locations, will provide a new place for the NECs and other shrubland-dependent species to call ‘home’. The NRCS grant will provide the funding needed to complete the entire project. The Stonington Land Trust considers it a privilege to be a part of the New England Cottontail initiative to continue to protect this vulnerable population.

New England Cottontail
NH Fish and Game Department



Shrubland Habitat *USFWS ~ Northeast*



STONINGTON LAND TRUST
preservation for generations

AUTUMN 2015



Woodland Trail to Cove



Davis Farm Cove

SLT CLOSES ON 48-ACRE WATERFRONT PARCEL

The Stonington Land Trust closes on 48-acres of the Stanton-Davis Farm, located along the Lower Pawcatuck River. It is the largest undeveloped parcel on the Lower Pawcatuck and boasts six-tenths of a mile of saltwater river frontage. This land is a portion of the 300-acres obtained by Thomas Stanton, in 1653. Historically, the Stanton-Davis Farm has played an important role in both Colonial and Native American history.

In 2013, Connecticut State Archaeologist, Dr. Nicholas F. Belantoni, PhD, stated, “This site contains the earliest and most intact 17th-century Pequot Village in the state. It is listed in the State of Connecticut Archaeological Site Files and Maps as the ‘Whit’-Davis Farm Site (137-19). The Native American and Colonial Era historic resources there represent one of the most significant properties in our records. Our office can not stress enough the historical significance of the Davis Farm.”



Preserving Davis
Davis Farm in Background

WHEN SNOW BLANKETS the PRESERVE...

We’ll be inviting our membership to join us for an afternoon of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing through the fields and down the woodland trail on Thomas Miner Nature Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary. On-site parking will be available.
No Fee.

WHEN: After a heavy snowfall, when snow conditions are favorable, we will notify you via email of the exact date. Please watch your inbox!

TIME: 12:30 PM ~ 3 PM

All Ages Welcome!

“Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



Stasia on Snowshoes
© Bruce Fellman



Davis Farm Boat Trip
Hall’s Island & Davis Farm
Photo, CT Trust for Historic Preservation

The Stonington Land Trust is grateful to our donors for their most generous support, which has made the preservation of this historic property a reality. Your support prevents the development of this scenic parcel. It protects six-tenths of a mile of river frontage, thereby protecting the ecology of the river. Your generosity has preserved 362-years of European-American history, as well as thousands of years of Native American history.

This 48-acre preservation concludes the first stage of the Stonington Land Trust’s Stanton-Davis Farm Campaign. In 2016, upon receipt of grant funds from the NRCS, we’ll close on the 120-acre farmland parcel, located on Greenhaven Road. At that time, the entire 422-acres of the Stanton-Davis Farm will be preserved in perpetuity. We thank you again for your generous support. ~ S. Simm ~

Photos, S. Simm

MOONLIGHT STROLL

Dear Friends:

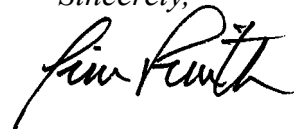
This letter begins with a big **THANK YOU** to all of our members and supporters! We have completed the fundraising permitting us to close on the 48-acre Davis Farm parcel, fronting on the Pawcatuck River. This has been a community-wide effort and we are especially grateful to the many residents of Watch Hill and Westerly who contributed so generously.

At our annual meeting in June, David Prescott, of Save The Bay, gave a presentation on the future of the Pawcatuck River. He clearly identified the Pawcatuck as a river under stress from, among other things, pollution and development. So, our action to preserve the Davis Farm is most timely. Once again, we are indebted to Nick and Happy Smith at Stonington Vineyards for hosting this event and providing us with complimentary wine.

We have welcomed three new Board members this year. They are all long-term residents of our community; each brings important skills to us. They are: Tim Bell, a former member of the Stonington Conservation Commission; Alan Blanchard, whose investment acumen brought such great success to the Episcopal Church Pension Fund; and Alix Ogden, former Parks Commissioner of the city of Providence, whose recent law degree will be most important to our deliberations. She has been elected vice-president of the SLT.

In conclusion, we want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our Executive Director, Stanton Simm, who keeps his hand on the day-to-day tiller and assists with everything from events to fundraising.

Sincerely,



WINTER BIRDING EXCURSION



N. Doherty

ANNUAL MEETING



Photos, S. Simm



Moonrise



Moonlit Sunset



Nightfall

THE PAWCATUCK RIVER ESTUARY ~ WHERE RIVER MEETS SEA



Lower Pawcatuck River



S. Simm Sunset ~ Lower Pawcatuck

S. Simm

The Pawcatuck River and Little Narragansett Bay define our region, forming the border of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Not only is this region ecologically remarkable in its beauty and diversity of marine life, it is also economically and recreationally important for all whom live, work, play and visit the area. At the same time, it is also very fragile and constantly under pressure by man and nature – development pressures, pollution, and climate change impacts. Therefore, it is crucial that the land, sea, and watershed be protected now, so that it continues to be an invaluable resource for us well into the future.

Little Narragansett Bay and the Pawcatuck River are stressed by elevated bacteria levels from human and animal waste, high nutrient loads from fertilizers and polluted runoff, and diminishing oxygen levels needed for marine life to survive. While there has been much progress in cleaning up the river in terms of industries that historically discharged pollutants directly into the river, much work needs to be done to address polluted runoff coming directly off pavement, lawns, and farms.

In addition, these amazing resources continue to be challenged by the changes to our climate. Higher sea levels flood our salt marshes and coastal property on a more frequent basis. More intense rainfall causes our rivers and streams to swell leading to water quality impairments that make it unsafe to swim and shellfish. Coastal storms ravage our vulnerable shorelines causing increased coastal flooding and erosion.

Upgrades to septic systems and sewage treatment facilities, removal of all cesspools, and improvements to outdated stormwater systems need to be a priority. We rely heavily on our local community to address these inadequacies at the town level, however, it is prudent that we as homeowners do our part as well. Install rain barrels, pick up after Fido, reduce/eliminate our use of fertilizers/pesticides, take care of our septic systems, and/or build a rain garden. Each of these small steps helps to reduce the amount of polluted runoff that makes its way to our rivers, Bays, and coasts. We all need to be part of the solution!

Overall, we are fortunate to live in such an amazing, beautiful place that has an unbelievable plethora of natural resources. We must work to protect this region's most important estuary, so that it will remain healthy enough for future generations to enjoy and continue to thrive as an ecological, recreational, and economic engine for the region.



Greenhaven Marina ~ Lower Pawcatuck
CT Trust for Historic Preservation



David Prescott
Water Quality Monitor
Save The Bay

~David Prescott,
South County
Coastkeeper,
Save The Bay



Egret ~ Pawcatuck River
Dana Jensen