

Pequot Trail tract donated to Land Trust

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Green acres

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Sun Staff Writer

STONINGTON - Not long after celebrating the acquisition of its first parcel, the Stonington Land Trust has cause to celebrate anew. The conservation group has just been given a conservation easement to a second, larger property - a secluded 148 acres off Pequot Trail.

"[We've been given] a permanent easement," said land trust president Jim Smith. "It was an incredibly generous gift."

The easement was donated by Alessandro **Fusina** and his wife Nora, who purchased the property nearly two years ago. They are keeping 11 of the 159 acres for their own unrestricted use, and are dedicating the remaining acreage as perpetual open space. Included in the 11-acre tract is the Fusinas' home, built in 1695.

The land begins high up on Pequot Trail and gently slopes down to wetlands just behind the town's police station and the Stonington Shopping Plaza. Even this week, with the green veneer of spring not yet fully realized, the vista that spreads toward Route 1 was an idyllic one. The land has vineyards, a cornfield, and two ponds, in addition to pastures and stands of evergreen and hardwood trees.

"I think I was lucky enough to see that in 300 years, [the land's former owners] did almost nothing," **Fusina** said.

The Fusinas still own the donated land, but they must now limit their activities on the land. They cannot build on it, or use dirt bikes on the trails or motor boats in the pond. They can continue to grow corn and the Chardonnay grapes they sell to Stonington Vineyards, but they must do it with as small a negative impact on the land as possible. **Fusina** said he has had experience with organic farming back in his native Italy, but it's more difficult to accomplish here.

"The fashion is organic, but it gets so humid here you can't do it," he said,

adding that he was pleased to add to the town's stock of committed undeveloped space because he believes Stonington has had enough growth.

"There is too much development here," **Fusina** said. "It's not an unpleasant part of the world, but it's still very built up."

The land will not be open to the public, as it is still private property. However, Smith said the land trust is working to get walking trails on their first property, the 32-acre Anguilla Brook Preserve, ready for the public. The land trust is planning to host a May 22 bird walk on the preserve, located off North Anguilla Road, led by Maggie Jones of the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center.

Standing on top of the hill overlooking the easement property this week, **Fusina** listened to a visitor remark how beautiful the property is.

"And it should stay that way," he said.

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DANIEL HYLAND / The Sun

The 148-acre parcel donated to the Stonington Land Trust by Alessandro **Fusina** includes scenic grassy areas, trees, a vineyard and more. Jim Smith of the land trust points to the location on a map, below.