

Voters decide fate of 32-acre parcel tonight

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STONINGTON - The one-year-old Stonington Land Trust has the opportunity to acquire its first piece of property. At tonight's town meeting, voters will be asked to approve the transfer of the 32-acre **Anguilla Brook** Preserve from the town to the land trust.

The town purchased the property about 20 years ago for \$110,000.

"Environmentally speaking, it's a very interesting piece of property," said land trust board member Stanton Simm, who is head of land acquisitions for the non-profit group.

First Selectman Edward Haberek, Jr. said the town purchased the land "a number of selectmen ago" for recreation and walking trails. However, he said development of the property was hindered by the marshlike character of parts of the property.

"It's so wet. It's just a total wetlands," he said.

Simm, who also chairs the town's Conservation Commission, said land trust volunteers are well suited to preserve the open space and create walking trails and other opportunities for passive recreation.

"The land trust is better situated to maintain property and be responsible for the upkeep," he said.

Both Simm and Haberek said transferring the parcel to the town would eliminate the town's liability for the property. Haberek said the transfer would not cost taxpayers any money, and will possibly save money by not incurring that liability.

The land trust has not yet decided how the property will be used, Simm said.

The property, located south of Interstate 95 and accessible from North **Anguilla** Road, is a former farm that was sliced in two when the state ran the interstate through it, according to Simm. The southeast side of the property borders the **Anguilla Brook**, which contains

native **brook** trout. It is a good habitat for forest birds, "warblers and what have you," he said.

It is "one of the primary water and wildlife corridors in town," added Simm. "It's a piece that just should be preserved, period."

Voters will have their say on the transfer at tonight's town meeting at 7 p.m. at Stonington High School, 176 South Broad St., Pawcatuck.

"Hopefully people will come out and vote in favor," Simm said.