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## **Stonington Land Trust Buys 82 Additional Acres**

By Joe Wojtas Day Staff Writer

Stonington - The momentum continues for the Stonington Land Trust. Earlier this month it announced that thanks to an anonymous donor it has been able to buy 82 acres off Taugwonk Road from Pfizer for \$325,000. Since its inception five years ago, the land trust has acquired five parcels and helped preserve two others. Earlier this year it purchased 18 acres in the Anguilla Brook corridor for \$36,000. Stanton Simm, the land trust's vice president, said it is now looking at acquiring additional land for preservation. The land trust had worked on acquiring the property, which Pfizer used to grow vegetables using various fertilizers in the 1970s, for the past two years. The land had originally been placed on the market for \$1.6 million. Stuart Cole, a member of the land trust's board of directors, called the purchase a "bargain sale." Preserving the Anguilla Brook corridor where the land is located has been a priority for the land trust since its inception. "In many ways this is a critical property for the land trust. It is one of the largest undeveloped pieces of property left in the Anguilla Brook watershed corridor," Simm said. Simm said the land will be named the Thomas Miner preserve in honor of one of the town's first residents, whose descendants owned the property in the 1700s. Simm said the property, which is located along the east side of Taugwonk Road about a mile north of Interstate 95, contains 25 acres of hay fields along with a wooded area to the rear important for wildlife, he said. There is also small barn on the property, which also is part of the Stony Brook watershed. Cole said the land trust will continue to use the field for hay farming. About 30 acres of the property is zoned for light industrial use which means it could have be developed for uses such as warehouses, offices and research and development. The rest of the land is zoned residential and requires a minimum of three acres to build a house. Because the trust is tax exempt the town will not receive tax payments which currently total \$17,874 a year. The loss of tax revenue as well as the loss of what amounts to 13 percent of the town's light industrial land has concerned some residents, including Economic Development Commission Chairman Blunt White who said the land could be used to not only generate even greater tax revenue but to create well-paying jobs. White said that getting new land zoned for industrial use is very difficult, "So losing this hurts," he said. "While land preservation is a noble goal, at some point we have to look at where it's taking us. The town has financial challenges that it has to meet," he said. White said that according to

figures he obtained from Tax Assessor Marsha Standish, 7,274 of the 26,680 acres of land in town, or about 27 percent, is now exempt from taxation. "The town needs to be concerned that it is eroding its tax base," he said.

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