

November 18, 2024

Commissioner Katie Dykes
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Letter in Support of Avalonia's Application to the
Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

Dear Commissioner Dykes,

I am writing to express the Town of Waterford's support of the Avalonia Land Conservancy's initiative to obtain Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) grant funding to purchase and conserve 170 acres of land at 36 Butlertown Road in Waterford, CT.

The property contains a large expanse of intact upland and riparian forested communities that are part of a core forest area in the northwest portion of Waterford. The land is part of the Oil Mill Brook watershed area, a Class A stream tributary to the Niantic River. A perennial tributary known as Willys Meadow Brook flows through this land. Town-wide biannual surface water monitoring conducted by the Waterford Conservation Commission shows this brook to consistently have the lowest coliform and nutrient loading concentrations within the Town's surface water resources. Preservation of this land will help preserve the headwater tributary of Willys Meadow Brook and serve to protect the water quality of Oil Mill Brook and the Niantic River.

Two large forested swamps are also contained within this property, one of which supports a great blue heron rookery. The wetlands and riparian corridors in this watershed are ranked high on the Conservation Priority Index developed as part of the Niantic River Watershed Protection Plan (2006). The Town of Waterford is a contributing member of the 4-Town Niantic River Watershed Committee, which implements the goals of the watershed protection plan.

The riparian corridors on this property are identified in the Town's Plan of Conservation & Development as potential greenbelt buffer areas. Protection of these lands is consistent with the Town's goals of preserving open space that "contribute the most to the Town's open space and greenbelt system" and that "protect important natural, scenic or other resources and improve wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors, especially stream corridors". The preservation of these riparian and forested upland communities is consistent with these goals and will serve to protect existing intact ecosystems and maintain the ecological integrity of Oil Mill Brook.

We appreciate your consideration of this request to help preserve this important resource area.

Respectfully,

Richard F. Muckle, Chairman
Waterford Conservation Commission