



Salem Land Trust



www.salemlandtrust.org

P.O. Box 2133, Salem, CT 06420

April 24, 2026

Dear Salem Land Trust Members,

This year is the 30th Anniversary of the Salem Land Trust, Inc.'s founding.

Over these 30 years the members and volunteers of SLT have made it possible to acquire 18 fee properties, combined into 10 public access Preserves with hiking trails. SLT also acquired agricultural and forest easements on 2 Salem farms. You supported SLT's maintenance of The Nature Conservancy's 400-acre Walden Preserve and its miles of trails. None of this could have happened without the people of Salem, CT who supported and volunteered for SLT.

Much in life has changed in the past 30 years, but people's love of the outdoors, the woodlands, grasslands, watercourses, the habitats for the wildlife that live there, is still very strong within us. But one change has occurred; we have seen a decrease in the time people have available to volunteer. We still find people who want to help with preserve and trail maintenance, and this is essential, thank you! But their time, particularly for young adults, is limited.

Keeping a non-profit land trust running legally and properly requires a lot of office work: the responsibility for tracking donations, finances and investments, all the legal paperwork for each new property acquisition, tracking and inspecting each property for incursion or misuse, are just the highlights! Finding volunteers with the skills and volunteer time for these duties has been difficult.

Larger land trusts have paid professional staff. Most of the land trusts in CT are small, but a number are now merging to enable the sharing of professional staff, which for many land trusts has become a necessity.

About four years ago the Board of SLT began to investigate the possibility of merging with another local land trust. This process led SLT to begin a serious discussion of a three-way merger: Salem Land Trust, Colchester Land Trust and the Avalonia Land Conservancy.

Founded in 1968, Avalonia has been protecting the lands of southeastern Connecticut for more than 50 years.; they have paid staff. They conserve over 5700 acres across 97 preserves, 47 of which contain trails. Like Salem Land Trust and

The Salem Land Trust is dedicated to conserving for future generations
the area's beauty, rural character and natural diversity.
A non-profit 501(c)(3) organization



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Colchester Land Trust, they are accredited by the National Land Trust Accreditation Commission and share our deep belief that protecting natural resources is essential to healthy, livable communities. They know our region. They share our values. *Together we can be stronger.*

At SLT's April 17th Board meeting, the SLT Directors took a vote. We unanimously approved the merger. **But, as per the SLT By-Laws, the Members of SLT must also vote for or against this merger.** We have scheduled that vote to take place on May 20, 2026, at the Old Salem School (The Grange) at 6:30 PM. All Life Members and Regular Members who are paid up for 2026, are eligible to vote.

If approved by the Members, and as per the "Plan of Merger" and "Merger Agreement", the present SLT Board members will become the **Salem Chapter of Avalonia**. As members retire, new members from the Salem community will join this committee. Chapter members and existing Preserve Stewards will be active and available to you to report any issue on the trails. If we merge, you will find Event and Preserve information for Salem at www.avalonia.org. Please visit their web site! Avalonia is dedicated to making sure the land conservation needs in Salem are heard. In addition to the Salem Chapter, two current SLT board members will sit on the Avalonia Board of Directors. The Salem Chapter will continue to advocate for the protection of Salem's land. Please read the attached bulleted list for additional important information.

If we keep on schedule, and our SLT Members agree, his merger should be completed by July 1, 2026.

The three-way Merger Plan and other important merger documents will be available for members to read on the SLT web site, www.salemlandtrust.org.

Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Linda K. Schroeder, President, Lschroeder@snet.net ; 860-859-3520
David Bingham, Vice-President
The SLT Board of Directors



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Info for after the merger:

- Our identity and local presence will remain; we will become “The Salem Chapter of Avalonia”; this will be a committee of volunteers maintaining the trails and Preserves of Salem with stewardship and financial help from Avalonia. Our local Chapter will advise and recommend local acquisition and stewardship projects.
- The 800+acres that we have protected together will remain protected and managed locally.
- We gain professional staffing, legal expertise, and the financial infrastructure to grow – including preservation of more open space here in Salem. We will count on the Salem Stewards to keep the trails clear and safe., with professional help from Avalonia for trail improvements such as bridges over watercourses.
- This larger community of conservation-minded neighbors will work toward the same goals.
- The Salem Chapter of Avalonia will continue to sponsor events such as the Annual Amphibian Walk, the Spring Bird Walk at the Mumford Farm, CT Trail’s Day Hikes and the Butterfly Walks.
- We will continue to be active with the Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Coordinating Committee.

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