

Colchester Land Trust

Alliance with Salem Land Trust and Avalonia Land Conservancy

Frequently Asked Questions

Three Trusted, Accredited Organizations Joining Forces: Colchester Land Trust, Salem Land Trust, and Avalonia Land Conservancy have earned national Land Trust Alliance accreditation — a rigorous credential held by fewer than 400 land trusts in the entire country. CLT achieved this distinction in 2013, becoming one of just 13 land trusts in Connecticut to do so at the time. Salem Land Trust was the second all-volunteer land trust nationwide to become accredited in 2009, and Avalonia Land Conservancy, also accredited, holds a 50-year history of strategic conservation and conscientious stewardship. This merger brings together three organizations that have already proven they meet the highest national standards.

A Larger, Stronger Voice for Conservation: Avalonia has already conserved more than 5,000 precious acres in Southeastern Connecticut, while the Colchester Land Trust has built a strong track record protecting Colchester's rural character. Salem Land Trust stewards 10 preserves, protecting over 1,000 acres of pristine open space. Together, the combined organization will be better positioned to pursue major grants, acquire priority parcels, and protect connected wildlife corridors across a broader region.

Colchester Lands Are Protected — Forever: Colchester members and donors can be assured: the properties and easements CLT holds will continue to be stewarded permanently. The Colchester Land Trust's purpose has always been to protect the beauty and natural diversity of the area by preserving significant land and scenic areas for present and future generations. That mission doesn't end — it gets amplified.

Expanded Capacity, Continued Local Connection: Avalonia's vision includes working collaboratively with other land trusts, preservation groups, and political entities in the region to conserve key habitats. This merger embodies that vision. The community relationships, local knowledge, and volunteer bases Colchester and Salem have fostered remain an asset — and now become a key part of a larger organization with more resources.

Protecting Wildlife Corridors That Don't Follow Town Lines: Nature doesn't respect municipal boundaries. Avalonia already operates across towns including Bozrah, Colchester, East Lyme, Franklin, Griswold, Groton, Lebanon, and many more — meaning lands stewarded by Colchester and Salem can now be part of a coherent, landscape-scale conservation strategy.

Trails and Public Access Remain a Priority: Avalonia maintains a detailed trail system across its preserves, with information on difficulty, mileage, terrain, and habitat — all free and open to the public. The beloved trails and preserves Colchester and Salem steward will continue to welcome hikers, birdwatchers, families, and nature lovers, and gain more support from a wider group of conservation enthusiasts.

A Smart Response to Development Pressure: The Colchester Land Trust was founded in 2002 specifically because of the rapid development of the town and the need to give landowners options for preservation. That development pressure hasn't gone away. Merging with Salem and Avalonia creates a larger, well-staffed organization – which means the cooperative mission to preserve open space is more sustainable for the long term.