

April 7 2026

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Dear Ledyard Wetlands and Water Courses Commissioners:

Land Use Department

I am Mary Brown Larson (Mobby) of 53 Harvard Terrace in Gales Ferry, one of the abutters to 25 Harvard Terrace, the Avalonia property. As you may have heard me mention before, we bought our home in 1969. We were one of the ten families who purchased the pond in 1979 along with its west bank acreage to prevent any future development. We formed the Cranberry Pond Association, so named in honor of the cranberry bog it was originally. Eventually the Association gifted the land and acreage to Avalonia, believing that, as a respected conservancy, it would have more resources to protect it over the years.

This pond has been well loved by us, our neighbors, our children and grandchildren, who have enjoyed canoeing, fishing, turtle hunting, and ice skating, as well as just sitting, watching the water and the wildlife. We have chatted with sailors from the Base delighted to have found a fishing spot, held hands with young children wobbling on their first skates, and reminded older children that any turtles they caught had to be returned to their natural habitat.

We are constantly renewed by new life in the spring, the deep greens of summer, amazing fall colors, and quiet winter snows. We have watched geese, all varieties of ducks, egrets, great blue herons and ospreys thrive in these wetlands. Over the years we have waded through the floods over the road, cleared the path on the west side of the pond, pulled logs out of the culvert from our canoe, and struggled to get our paddles in the water during summers of extreme vegetative growth in the pond—from upstream fertilizer and septic systems feeding into the Pine Swamp Brook.

Just as you, the members of the Ledyard IWWC, we are primarily concerned with the protection and preservation of our wetlands in town. I have studied all the reports and appreciate what Steve Maselin and the town are doing to keep the watercourses flowing and healthy. I have to say it was a great relief this past year when they cleaned out the culvert under Harvard Terrace roadway. It had gotten to be much more than we could do from our canoe! And what we had seen of that culvert made us quite concerned for the stability of the road above it, as you can see from his pictures.

I have to say I was not aware of flooding east of Route 12 and blockage in those culverts. The beaver dam, which appeared in the early 2000's, has slowed the flow of water and created a higher level of water in the DEEP wetlands north of the boundary berm. Although we were shocked at the time when the cut was made through the Avalonia/Klewin boundary berm last summer, in retrospect I understand the need if the upstream flooding was causing problems. To be honest, we were all afraid that somebody was trying to drain the wetlands in order to enable more building on that farmland, without permission or notification at the time to the

owners , to you, or to DEEP. I will agree that life is full of conflicting problems and difficult decisions.

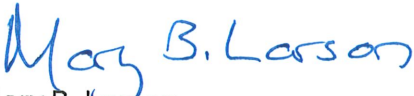
Speaking of that, we have conflicting feelings about the beavers. In the past, whenever people have tried to remove the beavers and the dam, they have always returned and rebuilt. I know the town removed the beavers this past year, but they (or other beavers) are back. It is their natural habitat; and our conflict comes from trying to manage what CT DEEP calls the “Cultural Carrying Capacity” when any wildlife population in the state is too great.

I have to say, though, that the beavers are not responsible for damming up the culvert on the south or the boundary berm on the north. The berm has always been there, and has remnants of the wire fence Bud Crandall used to try to keep his cows contained on the farm. Water flowing from the wetlands to the pond created waterfalls over the berm in times of heavy rains. And from what I understand about beavers, they do not like the movement or sound of flowing water, and will add branches to stop it.

From what we have seen while clearing the culvert under the road, it was blocked by branches breaking off from the dead trees* along the water’s edge getting trapped in there and then covered with silt. Again, we have a conflict—if we remove those dead trees to prevent branches flowing down to the culvert, Avalonia says we would be destroying habitat for fish and turtles. (*These trees have died naturally and were not cut down by beavers.)

All this is to say, I appreciate the difficulty you have with the responsibilities to protect wetlands and wildlife, and yet provide safety for human residents. I am in favor of the work the town needs to do to repair and maintain the culverts for Pine Swamp Brook, and any road work that must be done to ensure access to Harvard Terrace residences. I thank the town for doing that. The beaver dam is another matter. I am not an expert on beavers, but they seem determined to win! This is a conflict I do not know how to resolve, although I know what the state recommends. I suspect, though, that the problem would just keep repeating itself.

What I have shared with you tonight has been to hopefully give you a sense of how beloved this pond and wetlands are, and how concerned we are with the preservation of this incredible resource. I wish you blessings in your responsibilities and your work, and pray that you will keep the welfare of our natural resources always in mind whenever projects are proposed. You are the first line of defense. Thank you.


Mary B. Larson