

To: Editors of *The Hartford Courant*

From: Barbara Jack Strickland, Chairman of the Board, Connecticut Audubon Society

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*The Hartford Courant* has published a series of articles about the Connecticut Audubon Society's property in East Haddam. Because these articles seem to have caused some confusion about our plans for this property, we offer the following clarifying information.

All of our lands were donated with funds or the income potential to maintain them, except for property we own in East Haddam, which was donated to us on an unrestricted basis. Our donor could not provide an endowment for the property, and due to its unique natural habitat, it does not have the potential for an income-producing nature facility.

The donor understood the financial challenge of maintaining the property. To offset these costs he granted the Society the right to maintain a home on the property and to sell two additional parcels of the land. We will not exercise this right to develop the two additional parcels.

The sale we seek is predicated unequivocally on the establishment of one home, replacing the original donor's house, which we removed in 1996. The property will be preserved in perpetuity under deeded conservation restrictions, which do not currently exist on the property. This natural environment will be managed by the Connecticut Audubon Society. We are working with the Attorney General's Office in full compliance and disclosure of all aspects of such a sale.

Our preference is to sell to a conservation organization. However, the land has been on the market for almost one year, and we have had no such offers. Thus, we will consider a private buyer.

For the last 16 years we have maintained the property without benefit of an endowment, but tough financial times have forced us to reconsider. Like other non-profit organizations nationwide, we have made difficult decisions to exercise the fiscal responsibility our members and donors expect. Allowing the potential reestablishment of a house on the East Haddam property is one of those decisions.

The Connecticut Audubon Society is the best organization to oversee the stewardship of this property, and it will do so forever thorough legally binding easements attached to the deed. The property will always remain a wildlife sanctuary. This commitment not only satisfies the donor's intentions – it surpasses his expectations.

The Connecticut Audubon Society has never been a real estate developer, and it never will be one. We are a statewide, non-profit, membership organization providing excellence in environmental education, encouraging conservation of the state's natural resources and advocating enlightened public policy on ecological matters. We are stewards of 2,600 acres at 19 sanctuaries in Connecticut, many of which are open to the public year-round. Our plan for the East Haddam property is based on our commitment

as environmental stewards in Connecticut and to preserve the natural habitat of this beautiful property.

I invite readers to visit one of our sanctuaries or many preserves across the state to experience the way that the Connecticut Audubon Society is living its mission everyday, and, for 108 years, has served the land and residents of Connecticut.