September 23, 2024

Mr. James Ventres
Land Use Administrator
Town of East Haddam
East Haddam, CT 06423

Application to Inland Wetlands and Waterways Commission (2 of 2)
Great Hillwood Road Wetlands Viewing Platform

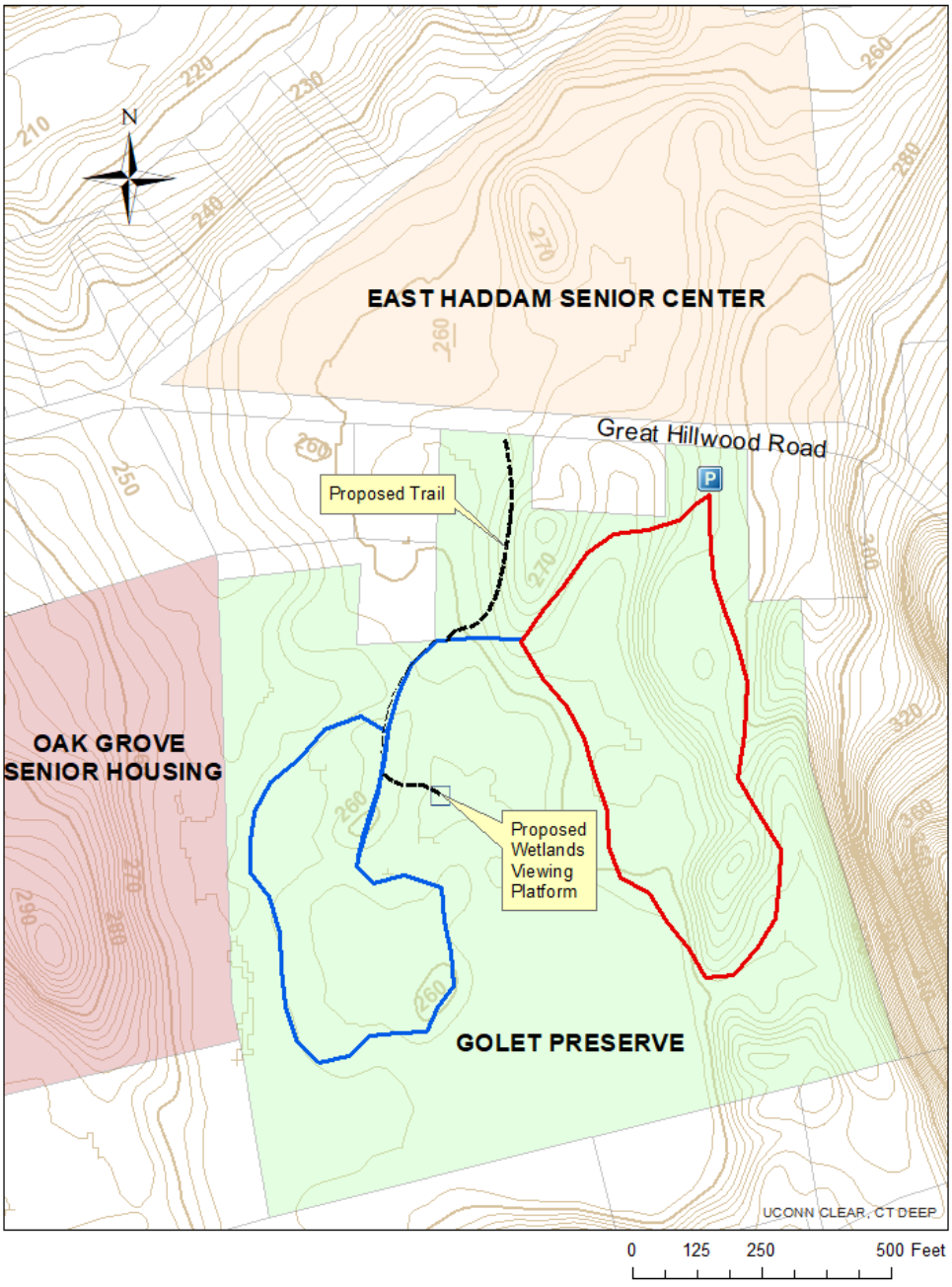
Dear Mr. Ventres,

Overview: East Haddam Land Trust, Inc. (EHLT) owns the Golet Farm Preserve (Map 65, Lot 121), located on the southern side of Great Hillwood Road, across the street from the East Haddam Senior Center. There is a significant wetlands area in the center of the property that, if made accessible in an environmentally friendly way, would doubtless be a destination of choice for birdwatching and the enjoyment of nature – for all visitors but in particular for the elderly and for those with mobility challenges who might visit from the Senior Center, as well as for schoolchildren. EHLT hereby seeks permission to install an 80' ramp to a 14' x 16' viewing platform in the wetlands area.

Background: (1) EHLT is currently preparing a grant application to the Community Foundation of Middlesex County for funding for construction of the ramp and viewing platform. (2) EHLT expects to file a subsequent application to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protections Recreational Trails Program to construct a hardpacked trail accessible to those with disabilities, which would lead from a spot directly across the street from the Senior Center to the viewing platform. The distance from the existing Golet Farm parking lot (east of the Senior Center) to the viewing platform, along established trails, is approximately 870 feet. The distance to the viewing platform from the proposed entrance site across from the senior center is approximately 700 feet.

Here is a map showing the locations of both the proposed viewing platform and the proposed
trail.

GOLET FARM PRESERVE
PROPOSED TRAIL AND VIEWING PLATFORM



Specifications: The viewing platform would be constructed using essentially the same design as that used by the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association (CFPA), for the

construction of a walkway in a wetlands area at CFPA's headquarters in Middlefield. Photos of that installation are below:









Note that these photos were taken during a drought; the platform usually sits in standing water.

Key to the design is the use of "swamp feet," which are galvanized pans that sit directly on the soil, irrespective of whether the soil is above or below the water line. Four by four posts sit atop the swamp feet and are attached to the side of the ramp/platform with lag screws. With

this design, it is not required that any piles be driven and, should there be any movement of the ramp or platform in the future, adjustments can be made by loosening the above-referenced lag screws and jacking up any section that requires it, before retightening the lag screws.

Ramps and walkways of this kind have a minimal environmental impact and have been approved for use in wetlands area in numerous locations nationwide, as one can see on the website of the swamp foot manufacturer, Custom Manufacturing of Clinton, Wisconsin (https://custommfginc.com/bridges_and_boardwalks/). Indeed, as noted above, our own CFPA utilizes the design in a wetlands area in Middlefield.

EHLT's goal with this project is to increase the public's exposure to and appreciation of both nature and our wetlands, with particular emphasis on serving East Haddam's elderly and disabled community.

We thank the IWWC for its consideration.

East Haddam Land Trust, Inc.
Cameron Beard, Stewardship Chair