

Ferry Landing Wildlife Refuge



The refuge is outlined in blue. The Connecticut River is to the left, Ferry Road abuts the north boundary.

An Important New Conservation Project for Old Lyme

As part of its mission to preserve and share our community's natural lands, the Old Lyme Open Space Commission is undertaking its first habitat restoration project on the Town's "Ferry Landing" property on Ferry Road, at the mouth of the Connecticut River.

The site is an important, multi-layered ecosystem with a rich history that encompasses valuable natural features including a freshwater pond and inland wetlands, making it important habitat for birds including migratory waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors like osprey and bald eagles. The Open Space Commission is designating this property as a wildlife refuge.

Wildlife depends upon healthy habitat for food and shelter. Degraded habitat such as land and water resources that are overwhelmed by invasive species do not provide the

necessary conditions for plants, insects, and other important food sources. Habitat loss from fragmentation due to development, and changes in land uses, also threatens the survival of wildlife communities that depend upon a healthy, sustainable ecosystem.

The Old Lyme Open Space Ferry Landing Wildlife Refuge includes a little over 1 acre of riparian and wooded upland terrain, and a freshwater pond nearly 7 acres in size. The pond ecology is deteriorating primarily due to [phragmites australis](#), an invasive reed, which is lowering water levels in the pond and creating conditions for algal blooms and other water quality issues. Phragmites is considered to be one of the most problematic invasive species in North America.



View of Eklund Pond, part of the Ferry Landing Wildlife Refuge (photo credit: Fred Behringer).

The riparian and wooded areas of the refuge have been degraded by other invasive plant species like [tree of heaven](#) (Ailanthus), [bittersweet](#) (Celastrus orbiculatus), and [autumn olive](#) (Elaeagnus umbellata), that have out-competed native plants and now dominate the landscape. The habitat restoration project will gradually remove invasive species and introduce native ones.

This work will commence in the first year and continue over subsequent years. The Open Space Commission applied for and was recently granted \$7,500 by the Community Foundation of Eastern CT to support the first year of this important project. The Commission will seek additional funding opportunities as the project moves forward.

About Ferry Landing Wildlife Refuge

The Old Lyme Open Space property located at 316 Ferry Road was initially referred to as “Eklund Pond” after the former owner but was formally re-named “Ferry Landing” by a unanimous Open Space Commission vote on November 12, 2021.

The new name reflects the area’s historic location as a ferry crossing of the Connecticut River in the 18th century. From 1662 to 1911, crossing the CT River was done by ferry boat, which landed on the east shore of the river at Ferry Point, in Old Lyme, and connected travelers and commerce to the Boston Post Road. A mile marker exists today on Ferry Road that is believed to have been set by Benjamin Franklin in 1698 when he was laying out the main road to New London and measuring distances for the postal route. It was acquired by the Town of Old Lyme as part of a required set aside when 18.9 acres were subdivided in 2009.

The open space is located within an area that was recently designated as part of the [National Estuarine Research Reserve](#) by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and it borders the State’s Ferry Landing State Park, the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection’s (DEEP) Marine Headquarters and a Connecticut River viewing boardwalk. The property is also within the Connecticut River Gateway Conservation Zone.

While Ferry Landing Wildlife Refuge will be reserved as a conservation area, the pond and riparian areas are easily viewed from the state’s Shippee Pond Park, as well as other areas of the DEEP Marine Headquarters property.

For more information about this exciting project, email the commission members at openspacecommission@oldlyme-ct.gov.