



Slayback & Popp Associates  
**Environmental Land Solutions, LLC**  
Environmental Analysis, Landscape Architecture & Planning

November 30, 2005

Conservation Commission  
Town of Redding  
100 Hill Road, P.O. Box 1028  
Redding, CT 06875-1028

Dear Members of the Commission:

Georgetown Land Development Company, LLC (GLDC) of Georgetown, CT is proposing the development of a mixed use village on the site of the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property in Redding, CT. The property contains inland wetlands and watercourses and a 12 acre pond. Since there will be activities within the 150' upland review area as established by the Redding Conservation Commission (CC) as well as minor encroachments within the inland wetlands, a permit from the CC must be obtained.

Environmental Land Solutions, LLC (ELS) has been retained by GLDC to inventory and assess the natural resources of the site, the potential impacts of the proposed development to the identified resources, and to provide recommendations for the mitigation of the anticipated impacts. To complete this study, several site inspections were conducted beginning in the spring of 2004 and continuing intermittently through the fall of 2005. In addition, pertinent natural resource data, historic records and relevant technical data were researched. ELS' work has been conducted in concert with that of Tighe & Bond, project engineers, Jack Curtis & Associates, project landscape architects, and other representatives of GLDC.

**Existing Conditions:**

The subject 50 ± acre property essentially lies on the north side of Route 107 (Redding Road). The Norwalk River bisects the site from north to south. Historically, the flows in the Norwalk River were split at this location, creating the existing 12 acre pond on this site presumably for use as a source of power for the mill production. The property presently contains numerous abandoned buildings, drives, parking, the lake, dams, maintained grounds and woods. Chain link fences surround much of the site. Since the cessation of production at the facility, the buildings and support structures have deteriorated. The mill facilities have been abandoned. A few areas of the site are currently being used by site contractors.

Presently the site is undergoing soils remediation as required by state and federal agencies.

The topography of the site is essentially flat to gently sloping within those areas of existing buildings and parking. Beyond the perimeters of developed and paved areas the property

contains a mix of upland woods, meadows, and maintained grounds. Many of these existing natural areas have been disturbed by past filling, regrading and clearing. There are remnants of rail tracks within proximity to buildings and adjacent vegetated lands. Brush piles are scattered throughout the undeveloped land. Elsewhere, along the perimeter of the lake the land drops rather steeply to the water. Boulder riprap and sheet piling have been installed along the steeper slopes of the river as reinforcement.

### Vegetation

There are three general vegetative communities on site which consist of the Wetland and Riverine Habitat, Upland Habitat and Ornamental Habitat.

*Wetland and Riverine Habitat:* This area is essentially limited to the land bordering the Norwalk River. The following plant species have been identified in this habitat:

Red Maple	Norway Maple	American Beech
American Elm	Willow	Japanese Barberry
Asiatic Bittersweet	Highbush Blueberry	Silky Dogwood
Arrowwood	Spicebush	Alder
Aster	Virginia Creeper	Pickeralweed
Cinnamon Fern	Hayseeded Fern	Sensitive Fern
Marsh Fern	Iris sp.	Skunk Cabbage
Indian Poke	Dandelion	Jewelweed
Grape Sp.		

*Upland Habitat:* This habitat includes upland areas presently maintained in a natural state. Many of these areas have been disturbed by human activity in the past. The following plant species have been identified in this habitat:

Sugar Maple	Black Locust	Linden
Black Cherry	White Pine	Aspen
Grey Birch	Flowering Dogwood	Sumac
Autumn Olive	Ailanthus	Catalpa
Burningbush	Tartarian Honeysuckle	Wisteria
Multi-flora Rose	Pinxter Azalea	Bayberry
Buckthorn	Japanese Knotweed	Little Bluestem
Poison Ivy	Clover	Phragmites
Christmas Fern	New York Fern	Buttercup
Solomon's Sea	Garlic Mustard	Goldenrod Sp.
Heal-all	Milkweed	Dame's Rocket

*Ornamental Habitat:* This habitat includes the maintained areas surrounding the existing structures that have been planted. The following plant species have been identified in this habitat:

Larch  
Holly  
Spirea  
Pieris  
Ajuga  
Lawn grasses

Norway Spruce  
Cherry  
Forsythia  
Mt. Laurel  
Lilly-of-the-Valley

Japanese Maple  
Magnolia  
Taxus  
Azalea  
Pachysandra

### Wildlife

A wildlife study had previously been conducted for this property by ELS with the observations noted in a report dated June 4, 2004 which are listed below. That report noted both floral and faunal species. Additional species observed since this report are also included in this list. Wildlife observed on or within the vicinity of the site by ELS staff by sightings, calls, tracks, nests, tree marks, and/or burrows include the following:

### Birds

Double-crested Cormorant	Canada Goose	Mute Swan
Mallard	Turkey Vulture	Red-tailed Hawk
Spotted Sandpiper	Killdeer	Mourning Dove
Tree Swallow	Great-crested Flycatcher	Barn Swallow
Blue Jay	American Crow	Tufted Titmouse
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Cedar waxwing	Carolina Wren
Grey Catbird	Warbling Vireo	Northern Mockingbird
European Starling	Yellow-throated Vireo	Northern Parula (migrant)
Blackpoll Warbler (migrant)	Yellow Warbler	Yellow-rumped warbler
Northern Cardinal	Song Sparrow	White-throated sparrow
American Robin	Chipping Sparrow	Red-winged Blackbird
Indigo Bunting	Common Grackle	Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole	House Finch	American Goldfinch
House Sparrow		

### Mammals

Eastern Chipmunk	Grey Squirrel	Raccoon
White-tailed Deer		

### Fish\*

American Eel	Blacknose Dace	Brown Trout
Cutlips	Minnnow	Redbreasted Sunfish

\* Fish species identified within the Norwalk River parallel to Route 7 at Ridgefield-Redding Town Line by DEP on 7/16/90.

### Insects

Cabbage White	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
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The Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) department of the Department of Environmental Protection was contacted regarding the possible known presence of any population of federal and/or state endangered, threatened or species of special concern that occur at the subject site. April 28, 2004 correspondence from Ms. Dawn McKay of that department indicated there were no known such species at this site. Refer to the letter submitted with this report.

### Wetlands and Waterbodies

Wetlands are primarily associated with the fringes of the pond/river system. The wetlands were field identified by Henry T. Moeller, soil scientist, and subsequently surveyed by Fuss & O'Neill onto the site plan. The regulated inland wetlands and watercourses on site consist of a reach of the Norwalk River which is dammed, and its riparian corridor. This dam impounds a portion of the onsite river forming the existing pond on the property. A second low weir downstream of North Main Street provides fire protection. Much of the river throughout the mill complex is channelized with retaining walls and a portion is covered with a building.

The wetland fringe ranges from about 0' to 50' in width and is dominated by red maples. Additional vegetation within the wetlands includes elm, willow spp., birch among the tree species. The shrub and vine growth includes Japanese barberry, Asiatic bittersweet, highbush blueberry, spicebush, silky dogwood, arrowwood, and shadblow. Herbaceous growth includes iris spp, cinnamon fern, hayscented fern, sensitive fern, marsh fern, Virginia creeper, skunk cabbage, pickerelweed, aster, and grass spp.

On the north side of the pond there is residential development not associated with this site, including lawn which extends to the pond edge in several areas.

The inland wetland/watercourse corridor provides the following functions as identified and described in The Highway Methodology Workbook, *Supplement, Wetland Functions and Values, A Descriptive Approach*, published by the US Army Corps of Engineers, September 1999:

**Groundwater Recharge/Discharge** - Based on the location of the site within the landscape, the site's wetland and watercourse systems lend themselves potentially as a point of limited groundwater discharge.

**Flood water storage** - The wetlands and watercourse have the ability to store flood water during times of flooding.

**Fish and Shellfish Habitat** - The Norwalk River provides pond and riverine habitat for fish and shellfish.

**Sediment Retention** - The physical characteristics of the wetlands and watercourses allow for sediments to become trapped within these areas. This function would occur especially within the ponding areas.

**Nutrient Removal** - Vegetation growing within regulated areas allows for the ability of nutrient uptake.

**Production Export** - The vegetation within this wetland provides a source of food for wildlife.

**Shoreline Stabilization** - Vegetated along the banks of the Norwalk River provide stabilization of its banks.

**Wildlife Habitat** - Due to the nature of the wetland with a source of water and some areas of dense vegetation, the regulated areas provide suitable habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

**Recreation** - The onsite wetland systems lend themselves to be used for wildlife observation, hiking and nature photography.

**Visual Quality/Aesthetics** - The site's regulated areas, particularly the Norwalk River corridor, provide an aesthetic feature to the site.

### **Proposed Conditions:**

GLDC is proposing the development of a village within this 55 ± acre property which will provide a mix of residential and commercial uses and structures with the attendant utilities and facilities to include roadways, drainage structures, and other infrastructures necessary to support the proposed village development. This community is slated to include a commercial segment which will have retail and restaurant spaces, office space and light industrial space. The residential portion of the development will contain a mix of approximately 416 units to include artists lofts, rental and ownership townhouses and units, and single family homes. Other amenities proposed for the village are a bed and breakfast facility, performing arts center, a train station and parking garage, recreational facility, a pedestrian walking trail and green space. The development is to be done in phases and will be outlined in reports prepared by others.

The stormwater management plan has been prepared by Tighe & Bond, engineers and proposes a drainage system which will provide the cleansing of stormwater runoff through both mechanical and natural processes. Refer to the plans prepared by Tighe & Bond for specific details regarding the stormwater management plans, construction phasing, and sediment and erosion controls.

The landscaping plan for the development has been prepared by Jack Curtis & Associates and is included with the application materials.

### **Regulated Activities**

Those activities which are proposed to occur directly within regulated areas (inland wetlands

and waterbodies) are as follows:

1. Building of riprapped points for stormwater discharge to be installed at 9 points.
2. Removal of the existing building by the dam which spans the Norwalk River.
3. Installation of a portion of the pedestrian walk through wetland soil areas.
4. Regrading and installation of riprap along the Norwalk River near the northwest end of the site adjacent to the proposed single family residences.
5. Installation of native plantings along the wetland line on the southern side of the ponded portion of the river.
6. Replanting of the lawned areas on the north rim of the pond to water's edge with native plantings. This new buffer will be approximately 60' wide.
7. Lowering of the sheet piling by the lake for visual enhancement purposes.

It should be noted that those activities proposed within wetlands are essentially positive measures which are not expected to impair nor impede the character or functions of the wetlands/waterbody.

Activities proposed within the upland review area (150' setback from regulated lands) includes all of the site development which is proposed within that setback. This includes roads, buildings, infrastructures, grading, etc. Refer to the site layout and grading plans submitted with the application for specific details.

#### **Mitigation:**

With regard to the mitigation measures proposed with the development of this property adjacent to a dammed portion of the Norwalk River, the first and foremost component is the cleanup of the contaminated soils on the site to meet state and federal standards. This work alone, will have the greatest positive long-term impact to the environment.

Additional measures of mitigation incorporated with this plan are as follows:

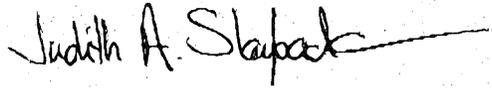
1. Removal of existing outdated and deteriorated stormdrain structures and replacement with a new stormdrain system which is to provide multiple cleansings of runoff prior to discharge into the river.
2. Planting of native plants with known attraction for wildlife, capability of stabilization of soil and uptake of nutrients in areas near the water's edge.
3. Installation of three screech owl nest boxes within the Norwalk River corridor. Nest boxes should be placed in trees at a minimum of 15' ± above grade and will be field located by the project environmental analyst.

#### **Summary:**

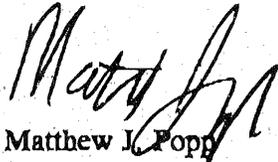
The development of the Master Plan for the subject "village" will transform this 50 ± acre site from its abandoned, deteriorated condition, to a dynamic village. In summary, the proposal provides an orderly balance with the development of the land and its economic benefits while

protecting and enhancing the water and environmental quality of the Norwalk River.

Sincerely,



Judith A. Slayback  
Senior Environmental Analyst



Matthew J. Popp  
Professional Wetland Scientist

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