

SAVE OSWEGATCHIE HILLS 2026 UPDATE



Photo Credit: Vivian Brooks

Members of the Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition have been fighting the planned development of a massive apartment complex in the Hills on the Niantic River for over two decades, and we have successfully blocked numerous destructive proposals. We're still here, working vigilantly to protect this vital ecosystem for future generations. Here's where the project stands in 2026:

Landmark Development Group LLC, the developer that owns the northern 236 acres of the Oswegatchie Hills, **does not have a shovel-ready project**. While Landmark was given 118,000 gallons of sewage capacity per day for phase I of their proposed development in 2018, their zoning application, submitted in 2015, was never fully approved. In 2021, a judge determined it was not final and ordered them to submit a final site plan that included environmental details. In the years since, they have not submitted a final site plan. **The project still has no permits or even a pending application, so nothing can move forward.** Now Landmark seems to be creating a new proposal. They are asking for more sewage capacity, even though they haven't used what they were already given and have told the wetlands agency that the land will be used for a tree farm.

That's the bottom line. For a deeper dive, here's an update on additional aspects of the ongoing fight to save the Hills.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE ONGOING LAWSUITS?

There have been two separate legal cases:

- **Zoning:** Save the Sound, Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, and Save the River-Save the Hills were instrumental in the success of the most recent appeal related to zoning (see above). These three organizations, represented by attorneys from Save the Sound, intervened to protect the public trust in the Oswegatchie Hills, providing evidence that stormwater from the development would pollute wetlands and the Niantic River. We were also successful as intervenors in three earlier decisions relating to the proposed development.
- **Sewage Capacity:** In 2020 Landmark unsuccessfully challenged East Lyme's sewer regulations, claiming they discriminated against housing, and they lost. (They have further appealed that decision to the appellate court). Last year, Landmark asked the town for an additional 95,000 gallons per day, which the town's Water and Sewer Commission denied in October of 2025 because it is running short of sewage capacity. In December of 2025, Landmark appealed this decision. That lawsuit remains pending, and Save the Sound attorneys are monitoring it.

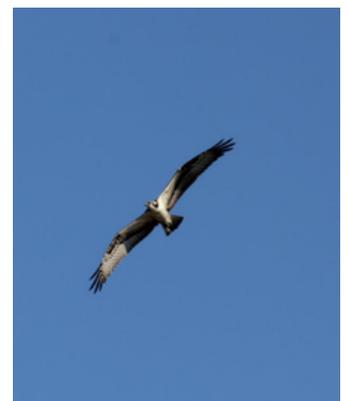


Photo Credit: Mike Dunn



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WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE ACRES OF TREES BEING CUT DOWN ON THE DEVELOPER'S LAND?

The developer applied for and received permits for a tree farm on their land and have clear cut an estimated 60 acres. Clearing forest for tree farming is considered an “as of right” use under state law, and therefore nothing can be done to stop it. The Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition is monitoring the situation and has been in touch with the town’s Inland Wetlands Commission and the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP). The Coalition questions why the developer would be asking for more sewage capacity when they intend to operate a tree farm.

IS CONSERVATION PURCHASE A POSSIBILITY?

The primary goal has always been to purchase and conserve the land permanently. While litigation was paused in 2019 to try to negotiate a conservation purchase, those talks were unsuccessful. We remain willing to re-enter negotiations at any time.

I REALLY CARE ABOUT SAVING THE HILLS! HOW CAN I HELP?

- Become a member of one or more of the Coalition’s lead organizations—Save the Sound, Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, or Save the River—Save the Hills—and tell them you care about this issue. Your membership will help support our continued watchdogging, legal involvement, and long-term land conservation efforts in the Oswegatchie Hills.
- Educate your family, friends, and neighbors about the importance of this valuable 236-acre coastal forest. See our accompanying Save Oswegatchie Hills fact sheet for more details.
- Tell your elected town, state, and federal officials that you care about what happens to the Hills. Tell them you’ll hold them accountable for any decisions that undermine preservation, and follow through. (Being a member of a Coalition organization will help you stay on top of the issue and take action when necessary!)



Photo Credit: Mike Dunn



Photo Credit: Rich Gallagher

