



CONSERVATION EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP FUND

The Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund Policy of SELT was adopted by the Board of Directors in June 2007 and applies to all conservation easements accepted by SELT. This fact sheet outlines the goals of this policy and how it works.

A conservation easement is a tool for achieving the conservation of your land. However, the preservation and responsible use of your property, be it a farm, woodlot, or wildland, only *begins* with the easement: as holder of the conservation easement, SELT has the responsibility and obligation to monitor the property and enforce the provisions of the conservation easement.

Conservation stewardship is the term that describes this responsibility. Depending on the property, conservation stewardship may include:

- an annual visit to walk the property boundaries (with the landowner if possible);
- annual aerial monitoring;
- responding to landowner inquiries and requests for approval of reserved rights;
- updating easement files to reflect changes in the use of the property (such as conversion of a pasture to an orchard);
- responding to easement violations; and
- extensive recordkeeping about property and landowner changes.

In addition, stewardship might include hosting workshops or training programs for landowners about current forest, farm, or wildlife management practices.

SELT seeks to resolve all violations and disputes regarding our conservation easements through discussion and creative problem solving. However, our responsibilities also include taking legal action to enforce the easement, if necessary. Taking legal action is an expensive step and one of last recourse for the Trust, but it is one that we must be able to take.

All of these responsibilities carry with them costs, such as hiring staff to monitor the properties, storing and tracking information on each property, traveling to and from the site, photographing and mapping the property, acquiring conservation easement defense insurance, and if necessary, hiring an attorney.

Unless SELT has the resources to effectively monitor and enforce the easement, the land will not truly be protected in perpetuity. Forever is an unimaginably long time. Nevertheless, SELT must ensure that it will have the resources to carry out our conservation stewardship responsibilities in perpetuity. To do so, the Board of Directors created the *Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund*, a dedicated fund for conservation stewardship. This *Fund* is dedicated solely to covering the

costs of monitoring and defending each and every easement.*

Our goal is to ensure that SELT has sufficient funds to monitor and enforce each one of its conservation easements hereafter. Therefore, we seek to receive a minimum of \$7,500 for each conservation easement accepted by SELT. The Trust may increase the requested contribution above this minimum level based on our evaluation of factors that could increase either the future workload of the Trust or the probability of an easement violation. Such factors include the complexity of the easement provisions, number and type of reserved rights, property size, boundary configuration, number of abutters, public access, and ownership type.

Contributions to the *Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund* may come from a variety of sources in addition to the landowner, including municipalities, private individuals, and foundations. In all cases, contributions to the *Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund* are strictly voluntary and tax-deductible. The Board of Directors retains the right to waive any and all of these requested contributions.

By considering the conveyance of a conservation easement on your land, you've taken the first step in ensuring that your property will remain

undeveloped *forever*. Please consider taking the next step by making a donation to the *Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund*. You may pledge your contribution over several years, or make payments at the time that reserved rights are exercised.

We realize that, in donating a conservation easement, you are already making a donation that has significant financial value. SELT recognizes and appreciates your generosity and foresight. Indeed, without the generosity of landowners like you, SELT would not be able to conserve so much land.

We also recognize that not every landowner has the financial capacity to contribute at the requested level.

Please contact SELT with any questions regarding the *Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund* and how it relates to your property.

** Contributions to the Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund are pooled into a single account for administrative and investment purposes. SELT will monitor and enforce all easements equally and to the full extent our resources allow.*

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