

Easement Inventory, Outreach, Inspection and Evaluations

Sustainable Jersey Actions:
Easement Inventory and Outreach
and
Easement Inspections and Evaluations

Easements: Why are They Important

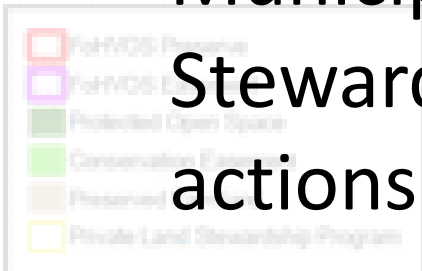
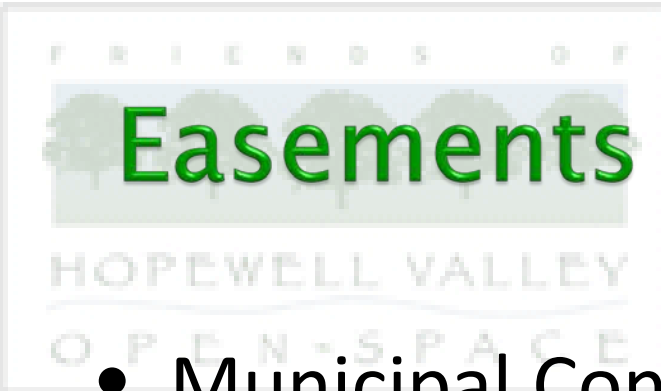
- Easements can be either voluntarily donated or sold by land owner or be the result of conditions placed on development approvals.
- Conservation Easements limit certain types of uses or prevents development in and around important natural resources as a result of site plan approval.
- A tool for protecting Natural Resources identified in an Environmental or Natural Resource Inventory.
- Used to protect wetlands, steep slope areas, flood plains, stream corridors, detention and stormwater facilities, utility easements, or other ecologically sensitive areas.

Background photo:

http://www.natureserve.org/sites/default/files/ns290_13_usda_nrcs_conservation_easement.jpg

Easements and Sustainable Jersey

- Municipal Conservation Easement Stewardship Program consists of three SJ actions (two are complete)
 - Easement Inventory and Outreach
 - Easement Inspections and Evaluations
 - Easement Stewardship (under development)



Hopewell Valley Protected Lands

June 2014

The Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space have helped to protect over 4,000 acres.

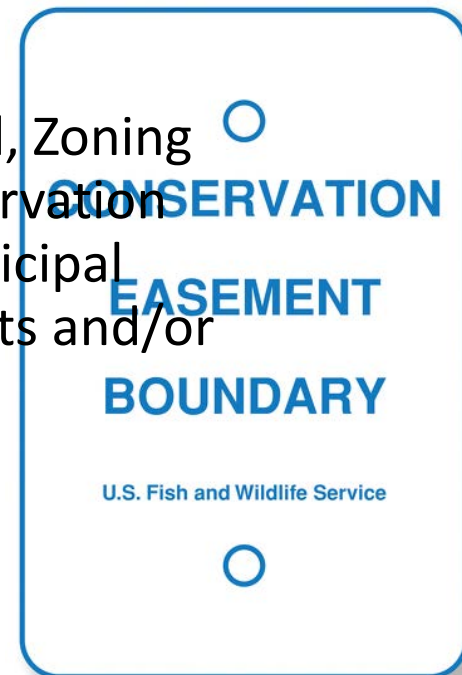
We own or co-own nearly 2,300 acres of nature preserves and hold nearly 700 acres of conservation easements.

Through our Private Lands Stewardship Program, we support stewardship on over 2,000 acres.

Easement Stewardship

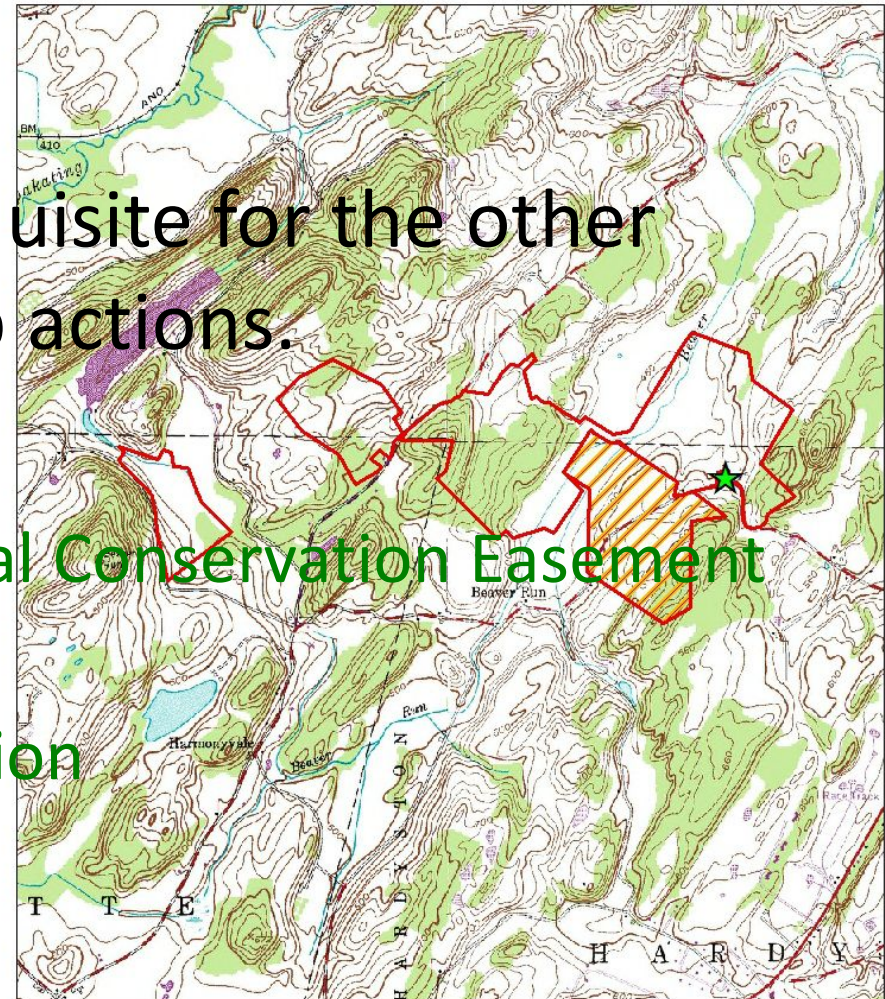


- Who should lead?
 - Environmental and/or Planning Commissions or a municipal staff member are often the lead for Easement related activities
 - Partners
 - Open Space Committee, Planning Board, Zoning officer, land trusts and other land conservation organizations, municipal tax office, municipal forester and parks personnel, consultants and/or municipal staff





Easement Inventory and Outreach

- This action is a pre-requisite for the other Easement Stewardship actions.
- Involves three Steps
 1. Planning for Municipal Conservation Easement Stewardship Program
 2. Outreach and Education
 3. Building an Inventory



Legend

-  Easement - No Access
-  Preserve Boundary

New Jersey Natural Lands Trust Congleton Preserve

Wantage, Hardyston, and Lafayette Twps, Sussex County

348 Acres Fee Simple/Management, 95 Acres Conservation Easement

★ Location: Beaver Run Road/CR-661, Hamburg, NJ (41.329 N, 74.704 W)

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 Miles



Building an Easement Stewardship Program

- **SJ Requirement-** Summary of approach to developing and implementing an Easement Stewardship Program.



Municipal Conservation Easement Stewardship Program Plan Worksheet

Municipalities are welcome to fill out the following worksheet in lieu of providing a Municipal Conservation Easement Stewardship Program Plan. (Please keep in mind that a fully developed plan that has been approved by the municipal decision making body/ planning board will provide the greatest support and means for the municipality to carry out a conservation easement stewardship program.)

- I. Briefly describe the team assigned to develop the Conservation Easement Inventory and Stewardship Program.

- II. Please provide a statement of the intent, scope, and essential provisions of the Municipal Conservation Easement Stewardship Program.

- III. Please describe the timeline for the inventory, monitoring, and stewardship efforts. (In order to receive points for this action, the inventory is required to have been developed.)

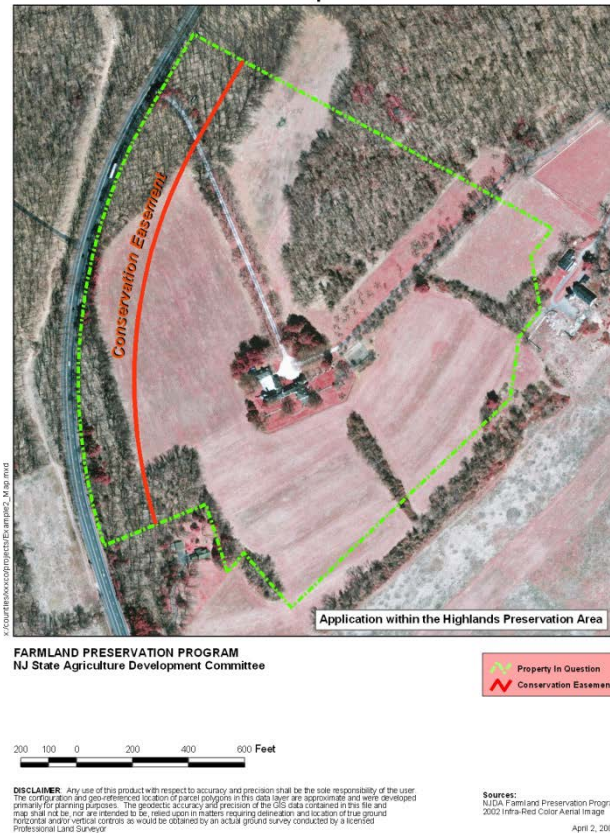
- IV. Estimated costs and potential funding for the Municipal Conservation Easement Stewardship Program. Please include costs incurred while developing the inventory. (You may provide information for the inventory only, if this is the only information available to you. However it is important that you start to identify funding opportunities for the monitoring/inspection and stewardship efforts required for a conservation easement stewardship program.)

Outreach and Education

- ▶ Will be a part of all three Easement Stewardship actions.
 - Flyers, letters, and posters explaining what a conservation Easement is and why they are important.
 - Build community awareness and appreciation
 - **SJ Requirement**– Provide description of outreach program and a sample of outreach materials.

Building an Inventory

Example 2



- Potential Sources
 - Tax records, County deeds, Past development approvals, DEP LOIs, DEP FHA, land trusts, county land use databases, watershed organizations
- Create database that includes:
 - Location, partial/full, acres, date easement conveyed or recorded, landowner contact information, resource values the easement is protecting
 - Using State Plan or GPS coordinates will also allow for easement information to be incorporated into GIS data layers.
- **SJ Requirement– Submit a copy of your easement inventory**

Easement Inspections and Evaluations

1. Finalize the Inspection and Evaluation Process
2. Outreach and Education
3. Property Inspections and Evaluations

Inspection and Evaluation Process

- Update and fill in the blanks for the I & E process you summarized for the first SJ action.
- Ascertain the current condition of easements
- Determine who, when, and where the easements will be inspected and evaluated.
- Create a monitoring form to conduct the inspection.
- **SJ Requirement**— Submit your finalized plan that guides the I&E process (including estimated staffing and projects costs, proposed timeframe, any prioritization scheme, process to address violations, and applicable forms for record keeping).

Outreach and Education

- ▶ Main Focus– develop positive relationship with property owners who have conservation easements on their land.
- ▶ Send letters making them aware of the easement and description of the easement program within the community.
- ▶ **First contact should be prior to the inspection.** Indicate if any monitoring has been scheduled for the property.
- ▶ Provide follow-up communication with landowners after inspections have been completed.
- ▶ **SJ Requirement–** Provide description of Outreach and Education program and TWO samples of outreach materials.

Property Inspection and Evaluation

- ▶ Main focus– determine if conservation easement provisions, restriction, and protections remain in effect.
- ▶ May need to collect baseline data if not done already (types of vegetation, special features, size, appearance, activities, and other relevant information about the property)
- ▶ Photographs
- ▶ Access the easement to determine whether current conditions comply with the easement restrictions and proposes and identify potential violations.
- ▶ **SJ Requirement–** Submit completed inventory database with easement inspection data.

Thank You

- ▶ Jennifer Feltis Cortese, NR Task Force Leader
 - Office of Coordination, Water Resource Management
- ▶ jennifer.feltis@dep.nj.gov