

WELCOME ! to New Owners of Conservation Easement Properties

In response to the growing number of requests for some sort of “welcome package” for new owners of conservation easement properties we offer the enclosed ideas. This is meant only as a guide for you to customize to fit your needs. This information is directed primarily toward new owners of existing easement properties.

The single most important element of maintaining a successful easement stewardship and monitoring program is supporting excellent communications with the landowner. This, along with a program of regular monitoring dramatically reduces the likelihood of violations and their accompanying difficulties. The communication effort should begin as soon as possible after the new owner has taken possession of the conservation easement property. *A “welcome package” is a great way to begin the new relationship.*

More and more the first generation of easements is seeing changes in ownership and this trend will continue. We also find that despite the usual requirement in the deed that the original grantors and/or owners notify the grantee interest of a transfer of title, this seldom occurs. It is not uncommon to find a change in ownership has occurred well after the transfer date, often during annual monitoring. New owners are not always aware of just what it means to be an owner of conservation easement land, and sometimes they do not share the same connection with the land and conservation values that the original grantor had in mind when the easement was enacted. In both cases, a change in ownership creates an ideal opportunity to welcome the new owner to the conservation community, and provide well timed education if necessary.

A welcome in person is the highest ideal, though it may not always be practical. Sitting down, or walking the land with the new owner offers opportunities that a letter does not. In the event you cannot meet in person with the new owners, we encourage you to send a “welcome package” of whatever design you choose. At the very least, this opens a doorway to communications, and could in some cases prevent an unwanted event from occurring.

The following ideas are written principally with Conservation Commissions and the municipal LCIP properties and LCHIP easements in mind. A “welcome package” might include some of the following:

- **Cover letter (see sample) and copy of the easement deed are a must**
 - May include a date for an annual inspection and invitation to attend
- Your organization’s brochure
- A printout of the easement property from the GRANIT Conservation Viewer
 - Go to www.granit.sr.edu and use the easy to follow instructions
- A town-wide map from GRANIT showing all conservation lands
- An 11 x 17 reduction of the survey map, if a survey exists
 - Easy to reproduce and great for field use
- An aerial photo of the property if available

- A copy of the conservation easement deed with important points highlighted
 - Use Limitations
 - Reserved Rights of Landowner
 - Affirmative Rights of Grantee
- Your Stewardship Philosophy, monitoring guidelines and procedure, and sample monitoring inspection report
- Conservation easement FAQs
- Contacts, web sites, and information resources that may be helpful
 - LCIP information if acquired through our program
 - LCIP also provides monitoring oversight for LCHIP easements
 - Other organizational brochures, info sheets, etc.

Other items you may want to include, especially if the new owners are “from away”:

- Town or area trail maps
- Town or area newsletters
- Local annual calendar of events
- Town primer (or other local contact information)
- Invitation to your annual conservation lands meeting
- Coordinate with local “welcome wagon”

In addition to the above letter of introduction you may also choose to add another level of information to the file by monitoring the property to document property condition at the start of the new ownership. In effect, this provides you the Grantee with another baseline benchmark

We hope this information is helpful to you. The conservation community in New Hampshire and New England is a close one. It is important that in whatever we do we consider our actions as representative of the whole community. By keeping our standards high and fulfilling our obligations we strengthen our collective effort.

Please feel free to share with us your experience and advice. We consider this information a work in progress and seek continual improvement. Always keep in mind that the work you do today may become of critical importance decades from now. And never forget the value of what we do and the satisfaction and enjoyment it can provide.

Good Luck and Have Fun !!!

For additional information see [The Conservation Easement Stewardship Guide: Designing, Monitoring, and Enforcing Easements](#), by Brenda Lind, published by the Land Trust Alliance, 1991.

Your letterhead if available

Mr. And Mrs. New Landowner
123 Apple Tree Lane
Anytown, NH 03999

June 1, 2003

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Landowner:

We understand that you are the new owner of the (name of property) property. You may be aware that the Anytown Conservation Commission holds a conservation easement on this property. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and introduce the conservation commission and its role in protecting easement properties.

The Anytown Conservation Commission is a town board comprised of community members. The commission is responsible for monitoring (##) conservation easements in town, of which yours is one. This property was protected through the New Hampshire Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) (or Land and Community Heritage Program, LCHIP). The State of New Hampshire, administered through its LCIP program, maintains an interest in this easement and serves in a support capacity to the commission. The Conservation Commission is the grantee interest in your easement and thus has the primary responsibility for annual monitoring inspections to ensure the conservation values are being maintained according to the terms of the easement.

Our practice is to meet with new owners of conservation easements as soon as possible after the ownership change has occurred. This is an opportunity to meet you, review the easement, discuss plans you may have for the property, walk the land and answer any questions you might have. We will contact you in the coming month to see if we can arrange a time to meet.

We have enclosed materials on land protection that we think you might find valuable. Also you will find additional information about Anytown, local events, etc. Again, welcome! Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Mr. Joe Green, Chairman
Anytown Conservation Commission

enclosures: CC brochure, CE Deed,