



SRLT Conservation Easement Criteria

Approved by Board of Directors 6/14/16

Each easement the Scenic Rivers Land Trust accepts is approved by our Board of Directors. We proactively pursue land protection in specific priority areas.

Formal evaluation of each opportunity is based on two sets of criteria. First, targeting criteria guide an evaluation of the property based on its location and natural features. Second, acceptance criteria guide a detailed evaluation of the specific easement opportunity. The latter evaluation includes the priorities of the landowner, the quantity of development rights retired, the property's relationship with neighboring properties, and specifics of the property transaction that relate to SRLT's obligations under Internal Revenue Service law as well as the accreditation standards and practices of land trusts.

The evaluation criteria are intended to guide rather than limit the actions of the SRLT and one of the important benefits of a local land trust is the ability and flexibility to address unusual opportunities.

While SRLT has no minimum acreage for reviewing potential easements, it would be rare for an easement of less than ten acres to meet the increasingly demanding requirements of the IRS or to be financially viable for the landowner.

Targeting Criteria

A property to be considered for SRLT acceptance must have one or more of the following conditions:

- 1) High functioning natural habitat, ecosystems or natural features
- 2) Endangered, threatened or conservation priority species
- 3) Connected to other open space lands important for movement of wildlife between habitats or through developed corridors
- 4) Wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, bogs or other lands significantly important for the protection of water quality
- 5) Open space that contributes to the scenic enjoyment of the public when viewed from a public road or navigable waterway and provides a significant public benefit
- 6) Open space that is in furtherance of a local, state, or federal conservation policy and provides a significant public benefit

- 7) Actively in agricultural or forestry use
- 8) Ecosystems of educational or scientific value

Acceptance Criteria

When assembling information to evaluate a potential easement, the Board will review answers to the following questions:

- 1) How many development rights will be eliminated under current state and local laws?
- 2) Where on the property will reserved residences (if any) be located? What other accessory structures and means of access are reserved to serve the residence(s)?
- 3) What long term impact will reserved subdivision rights (if any) on the property have on the conservation values, with respect to: number, configuration, and size of parcels; continuity of open lands; and multiple ownerships?
- 4) Does the proposed easement include restrictions or reserved rights, the quantity and/or character of which make it more likely that monitoring and enforcement may become complicated, burdensome, or expensive?
- 5) Is the property of sufficient size that its conservation resources are likely to remain intact, even if adjacent properties are developed?
- 6) Can this easement be acquired with reasonable effort in relation to its value or purpose?
- 7) Is the easement consistent with federal, state and local government land use policies that relate to managed growth?
- 8) Does the easement contribute to the protection of lands in furtherance of government plans or policies such as the county Critical Area plan, county general development plan or Parks and Recreation greenway plan?
- 9) Does the property have the potential for having a sound management plan and, if so, can SRLT provide for its monitoring and enforcement?
- 10) Are there any ethical or public image problems with accepting the property?
- 11) Is the proposed easement part of a development proposal which, overall, is likely to have significant adverse impacts on conservation resources?
- 12) For monitoring purposes, is there legal right-of-way for access from public property?
- 13) Are there any hazards present, or indicated in the map, such as existing or historic fuel or hazardous waste storage, farm waste, evidence of use of biocides, fertilizer storage, fire hazards, waterside cliffs, quarries, landfills, dumps, or any other portents of future personnel hazard or legal action?
- 14) Is the property already protected by easement, covenant, deed restriction, etc.?