

# STEWARDSHIP

CARING FOR YOUR PROPERTY page four

continued from page three

Rich Stevenson  
DNR Service Forester  
Eastern Upper Peninsula  
906-293-5131 ext. 4043

For forest management assistance in Charlevoix and Emmet Counties also contact:

Chris Anderson  
Conservation District Forester  
231.582.6193.

## Selling your Conservation Easement Property?

Please notify our office as soon as possible so we can ensure that the new owners are aware of and understand the conservation easement.

The following websites provide more information about forest management on small private properties:

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources**  
(www.michigan.gov/dnr)  
Search for the Forest Stewardship program and a publication entitled "Managing Michigan's Wildlife: A Landowner's Guide"

**Michigan Forest Association**  
(www.michiganforests.com)

**Michigan Society of American Foresters**  
(www.michigansaf.org/)  
In particular, check out their on-line publication: "Forest Management Guidelines for Michigan"

**USDA Forest Service Forest Landowners Guide to Internet Resources**  
(www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/misc/flg/index.cfm)



This is the covertime map from a forest management plan prepared for the owner of a 120-acre property protected by an LTC easement. The numbers denote different covertypes of tree stands.

**Stand #1:** Northern hardwood dominated by sugar maple and beech, thinned in the past and managed for quality timber and wildlife habitat.

**Stand #2:** Northern hardwood dominated by sugar maple & beech. Differs from #1 in that it was not thinned in the past. Management goals similar, but poor quality trees need to be thinned.

**Stand #3:** Sapling and pole-sized aspen, red maple, and green and black ash regenerating throughout heavily cut-over area, managed to maintain brushy habitat for wildlife by frequent cutting.

**Stand #4:** Transition from hardwood to swamp conifer. Managed for wildlife habitat, little or no cutting planned.

**Stand #5:** Cedar, with some very large scattered specimens, managed for wildlife and promoting cedar trees, little or no cutting planned.

**Stand #6:** Openings created and managed (through selective planting) for deer food plots and bird viewing.

In 2007, 2,873 acres of land were protected through the Little Traverse Conservancy with conservation easements.

# Conservation Easement Landowner Newsletter

- A newsletter for owners of land protected with a conservation easement - Spring 2007



## The Baseline Documentation of a Conservation Easement: An In-Depth Look

A Baseline Documentation Report is created for every new conservation easement project. The Baseline records the physical condition of the land at the time of the easement donation. You can think of it as a "snapshot in time" of your property. It is an important part of the conservation easement process, and one that is required by law. The Baseline Documentation Report functions to assure both the Little Traverse Conservancy and the easement donor/seller that the requirements of the easement can and will be upheld. It is a necessity in case there is a tax audit. In addition, Stewardship staff use the Baseline each year when monitoring your property, either on land or from the air.

### What's in a Baseline?

The contents and format of the Baseline Documentation Report vary a little from one project to another, but they usually all contain the following basic information:

1. A signed and notarized certification by both the Grantor and the Grantee that the report is accurate. These signed certifications are necessary to make the Baseline Documentation Report valid.
2. Introductory/summary information including easement name, size, name of donor or seller, and information about the easement signing and recording.
3. A legal property description, which can be long and cryptic and, unless you are a surveyor or real estate professional, hard to decipher.
4. Descriptions about the vegetation, soil, water, topography, and human-made features on the property.
5. A series of maps illustrating the property features, as well as depicting site location, property boundaries, and land ownership. We now incorporate Geographic Information System (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to make accurate and easy-to-read custom maps and aerial photographs of easement properties.

6. Photographs taken at strategic locations to show all, or a large portion of, the property. The photos and accompanying descriptions can usually indicate quickly and definitively whether any changes due to human activities (either allowed or prohibited) have occurred. The photos will also depict interesting natural changes in the landscape over time. The exact location and direction of the photos is depicted on a photo points map (see map and photos below).
7. A summary of the landowner's reserved rights. Intended to be used as a quick reference; please always refer to the complete copy of the conservation easement for details.
8. A copy of the conservation easement, the irrevocable, legally-binding agreement with all the terms, stipulations, and justifications spelled out in detail.

continued page two

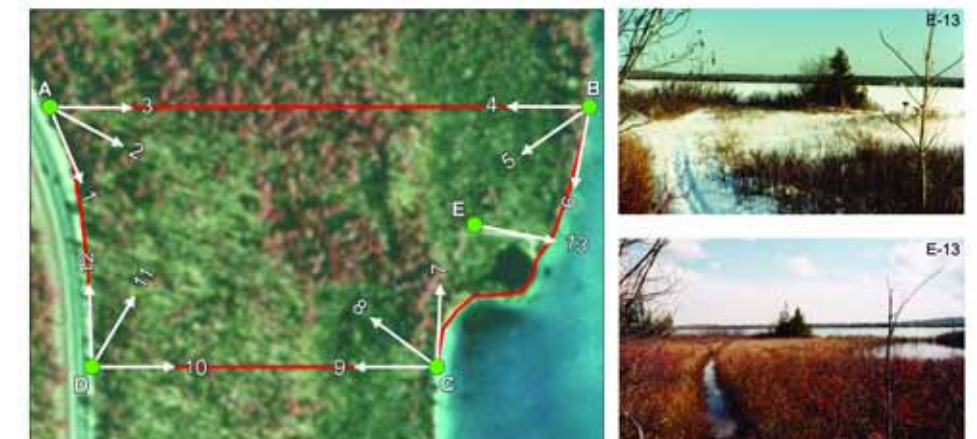


FIGURE 1: One of the most important and useful parts of the Baseline is the photographic record of existing conditions. The photographer takes pictures at specific locations on the property and collects data including latitude and longitude coordinates and compass bearings (to record the direction in which the camera was aimed). The photo data are linked to a map (termed a photo points map) showing each photo location. All this information allows us to go back, year after year, to exactly the same location and compare the original photos to the current conditions. (The two photos above right were both taken from location E.)

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How can an easement owner use the Baseline?

Three copies of every Baseline are created. One is an original file copy, which is stored in a fireproof vault for safe-keeping. Another copy is intended for routine reference and field use by LTC staff. A third copy is provided to each easement donor/seller. The Baseline is usually in a red or maroon, well-labeled pocket folder. We suggest that you keep your copy in a safe but easily accessible location so that you can use it to determine prohibited actions or reserved rights that you are allowed, and to see when the Conservancy requires notification or approval for your activities.

The Baseline is also a great reference document for information about your property, including the legal description, land character-

istics, road map, plat map, air photo map, and topographic map. The maps can be useful in a variety of ways, from helping you to walk your property and familiarize yourself with its features, to providing directions to visitors. If you ever decide to sell your property, the Baseline can be used to explain the provisions of the conservation easement to potential buyers and provide detailed information about the property.

What should I do with the baseline if I sell the property?

The baseline should be given to the new owners of the property.

## Meet Your 2007 Stewardship Staff



Cindy Mom

Cindy has been working for LTC since January, 2004 as a Stewardship Specialist and is passionately devoted to the well being of northern Michigan land. Her attention to detail has been invaluable!  
[cindy@landtrust.org](mailto:cindy@landtrust.org)



Doug Fuller

Doug is our "new guy" in the office having started as Director of Stewardship just last fall. He is a familiar face in our community and hit the ground running as a welcome addition to our staff.  
[doug@landtrust.org](mailto:doug@landtrust.org)



Charles Dawley

Charles started out as a stewardship intern with LTC more than four years ago and now works as our GIS/Stewardship Specialist. Thank him for all our lovely map graphics!  
[charles@landtrust.org](mailto:charles@landtrust.org)

## 2007 Easement Monitoring Schedule

### GROUND MONITORING

(all dates exclude weekends)

Charlevoix County	April 16 - May 25
Cheboygan County	April 16 - May 25
Mackinac County	July 9 - August 17
Chippewa County	July 9 - August 17
Emmet County	September 4 - October 12

### AIR MONITORING

(for larger and more remote conservation easement properties) All counties:

**April 16 - May 25 (target dates: April 18 - 20)**

Notification letters will be sent to landowners 2-4 weeks prior to monitoring their property. Landowners are encouraged and welcome to accompany staff during the monitoring visit. If the dates above do not work for a landowner, alternative arrangements can be made. If any landowner has questions regarding conservation easement monitoring or stewardship, please contact the Conservancy.

## Forest Management Guidelines for Easement Properties

The purpose of a conservation easement is to protect a myriad of conservation values, often including forest resources. Although there is nothing wrong with taking a "preservationist" approach and letting natural processes prevail in your forest, it is widely acknowledged that because forests are renewable resources they can be periodically logged and still provide many ecological and social functions and values (like wildlife habitat, beautiful scenery, watershed protection, clean air, healthy soils, and recreation). However, forests can also be badly managed to the detriment of all those things.

Forest resources are unique to each property and therefore what the Little Traverse Conservancy both allows and requires regarding forest management on conservation easements varies widely. Many conservation easements specifically allow for forestry activities, from gleaning dead and down wood for personal firewood use to selective commercial logging for timber production or even clear-cutting in some types of tree stands. Some easements simply allow timber harvesting in accordance with "best management practices," with no additional detail specified. Others outline the specific management practices in great detail and require an approved forest management plan and pre-and post-cutting inspections. The latter approach can best help protect exceptional forest resources without adding a great deal of complexity and cost to establishing and monitoring a conservation easement.

Regardless of what your conservation easement allows or requires, there are steps that every landowner can and should take to ensure the best protection and management of forests. One of the most valuable and basic steps is to develop a forest management plan for your property. Basic plan components include:

1. Identification of landowner's goals and objectives. Examples include making money from a saw log harvest, promoting a certain type of wildlife, fostering recreational opportunities, or restoring native biodiversity. For conservation easement properties, the purposes of the conservation easement must also be considered.
2. Inventory what is present. The inventory, (a.k.a. timber cruise) is the most important part of the forest management planning process. Unfortunately, sometimes it is not done to an adequate degree. Besides indicating

merchantable timber, the inventory should identify elements like percent species composition, presence of species vulnerable to disease or insects, presence of dead snags or other factors important to wildlife, and state of ecological succession. A brief summary of the inventory is often depicted by means of a cover-type map (see p. 4).

3. Prescribe management activities. Management prescriptions should be developed for each cover-type or different tree stand and describe in detail things like purpose, location, access requirements, species and percent cover to be removed, harvest method, erosion control and site restoration measures, and time-lines. The Michigan Society of American Foresters has set forth model guidelines for the proper management of woodlands.

It is worthwhile in the long-run to select a qualified professional forester or other resource professional to write your forest management plan. The cost of a plan is highly variable depending on many factors, but might range from \$500 - \$1,500 or more. A consulting forester can also provide services for additional fees like marking trees for harvest, requesting bids, selecting a reputable logger, and monitoring and overseeing the harvest. It is generally not recommended that the logger or timber buyer be allowed to write your management or cutting plan.

There are government assistance programs available to landowners to promote long-term; economically viable; and socially, ecologically, and environmentally responsible use and stewardship of privately-owned forest lands. One program in

Michigan is the Forest Stewardship Program. Any private non-industrial forest landowner with a minimum of 12 acres of land (at least 5 of which must be forested) who wants to manage the land for its many resources is eligible to participate. Up to 50% of the cost of the plan preparation (not to exceed a flat fee of \$300.00 plus \$1.25 per acre) and many implementation practices may be cost-shared. Interested landowners should contact their local DNR Service Forester for more information and to be referred to a certified plan writer in their area:

Tom Stone  
DNR Service Forester  
Northwest Lower Michigan  
231-238-9314

### Is a Forest Management Plan Part of Your Easement?

Please be sure to submit a forest management plan and notify LTC's Stewardship staff if required to do so by your easement agreement. Even if no notification is required, LTC Stewardship staff always appreciates being notified of planned timber harvest activities. If you would like to talk to a conservation easement landowner with a forest management plan who is actively engaged in forest management activities in collaboration with LTC's Stewardship staff, please let us know.

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