

**Conservation Easement Stewardship Program
Minnesota Land Trust**

**White Paper Prepared by
Jane Prohaska
Minnesota Land Trust**

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BACKGROUND

The Minnesota Land Trust is a statewide land trust. We are the only land trust working extensively throughout Minnesota with conservation easements, although there are a few other conservation organizations that hold a number of easements in the state (e.g. The Nature Conservancy, American Farm Land Trust, Ducks Unlimited) and a growing number of government agencies (DNR, counties, townships) holding easements or interested in holding easements.

We currently have 10 staff (including 3 regional conservation directors, a volunteer land protection specialist, a part time attorney and a conservation programs assistant) and an annual operating budget of approximately \$800,000. This does not include the direct cost of purchasing any land or an easement but does otherwise include all project costs associated with completing new land projects and managing existing commitments. We have a small \$200,000 operating endowment and a stewardship and enforcement fund of approximately \$1,300,000.

Our mission

The Minnesota Land Trust is dedicated to protecting the lands and waters that define our communities and enrich our quality of life.

Within this broad mission, the Land Trust has, in recent years, increasingly concentrated its efforts on the following landscape features:

- Natural habitats for wildlife, fish and plants: This includes prairie, forests, blufflands, wetlands or any of the natural systems providing habitat for Minnesota's wildlife and plants and contributing to the state's natural heritage. It also includes habitat for specific species of state or national significance, although this is less common. Types of land include relatively undisturbed natural habitat, wildlife corridors, buffers to areas protecting habitat, or areas restored to enhance habitat values.
- Lakeshores, rivers and streams: These riparian areas are important as habitat, for their relationship to water quality, and for their scenic values.
- Scenic landscapes, particularly those with local, cultural and historic significance.

Additionally, the Land Trust has further organized its work by creating three regions – each encompassing a segment of Minnesota's natural character. Within each of these three regions, the Land Trust has then identified



specific "critical landscapes" most characteristic of the region's natural and scenic features. We are increasingly targeting projects within these landscapes.

The Minnesota Land Trust has completed 271 projects (almost all involving conservation easements, and most involving donated easements) in 48 counties to date, protecting almost 25,000 acres of land and more than 87 miles of shoreline. The Land Trust completes 20-25 projects a year on average. Our oldest easement is only 12 years old.

The average size of our easements is just over 100 acres, although they vary in size from 1 acre to 2,700 acres.

Most of our easements involve protecting both natural and scenic values of the land. Over half involve shoreline protection. Many involve land along designated scenic byways.

Most easements involve residential use and related structures, many involve forestry practices and forest management plans, and many include agricultural lands although only a few were created to protect the land primarily for agricultural use. Many allow for division of the property into more than one parcel. Very few would be considered "forever wild" easements. And a dozen or so involve conservation developments where the open space protection is part of a planned residential development.

Our landowners are primarily private individuals, although we hold a fair number of easements on land owned by government entities. Almost all are "first generation" landowners. Many live on the property as their primary residence. And for many, the property is a seasonal second home used primarily for recreation.

STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM AND PRACTICES

Our stewardship program is described in detail in the attached "Minnesota Land Trust Conservation Easement Stewardship Program Overview." In general, our program is based on preserving the conservation values associated with each protected property by encouraging voluntary compliance with our easements and viewing the landowner as a partner in this endeavor.

We work to make easement acquisition and easement stewardship a seamless process. Stewardship starts before the easement is completed and is taken into account as the easement is drafted.

Formal components of the program include creating a baseline property report for each property and covers easement administration, monitoring, landowner relations, community relations and easement enforcement and defense.

Our goal is to monitor all easements in person at least annually. We typically monitor between 85%-95% of our protected properties every year. It is also our policy to periodically flyover all of our protected lands, but we are quite far behind on that process.

We have also recently started to create specific monitoring plans for each protected property. These plans are tailored to the unique features of a property and to the specific terms of the conservation easement. The plan directs monitors to the most important features and characteristics of the property to review and identifies issues related to that particular property and its landowner.

We use staff and a corps of 60-70 trained and certified volunteers for this effort. No one staff person has sole responsibility for our stewardship program. Primary responsibility to make sure each easement is monitored and that any problems are remedied lies with the regional conservation director. Administrative support and tracking is provided by the conservation programs assistant.

In addition to monitoring, we try to hold an annual landowner appreciation event and produce an annual landowner newsletter. We also make all landowners "honorary" members so they receive the Land Trust newsletter as well.

Stewardship also includes providing easement interpretations, approvals and occasional amendments. Although we have only recently been consistently tracking this activity, this appears to be an area taking an increasing amount of time and attention.

In the past 2 years alone, we processed more than 45 formal landowner requests for interpretations or approvals, many of which required multiple trips to the site or extensive reviews of plans.

We have already amended 30 conservation easements—just over 10% of our total easement portfolio—and a few of those more than once.

We have discovered about 20 easement violations, almost all relatively minor. We have not yet had to go to court.

Our stewardship program is funded out of our general operating fund. We do take an annual draw of 5% from our stewardship and enforcement fund to help cover the costs and estimate that this covers approximately 1/2 of what we need, if that.

The ultimate goal for our stewardship fund is to have a large enough fund to cover all of our annual stewardship costs. We have completed a project cost analysis to determine what we think we need each year for each project. With each project we complete, it is our policy to find funds sufficient to "endow" the amount we believe will be needed annually. We do look first to the landowner for this amount, although projects are not rejected solely because of a landowner's inability to contribute to the stewardship fund. This currently runs between \$7,500 and \$12,000 and often significantly more. This also means our stewardship fund should be at somewhere over \$3,000,000.

REASONS FOR CURRENT SYSTEM

Some components of the current stewardship program are remnants of earlier approaches to stewardship and many are the result of intentional choices made more recently.

General philosophy

The Minnesota Land Trust has always worked to monitor easements annually. In part, this was simply accepting the conventional wisdom about monitoring. However, several years ago, the Land Trust articulated a philosophy of stewardship and structured a program around "ensuring voluntary compliance."

This approach was chosen in part upon advice of other more experienced land trusts around the country and in part upon the belief that it would be more effective and efficient in the long run.

And perhaps most importantly, the resources we were protecting would benefit from this approach. Once a violation occurs, it is often difficult if not impossible to repair the damage. Prevention made more sense.

Articulating this philosophy also led to articulating separate components of the overall stewardship program to meet our goals. Stewardship has become more than monitoring; it includes landowner and community relations.

For example, annual personal visits with all landowners are an important component of our annual monitoring. This is not essential in discovering a violation but may be in maintaining good relationships and preventing violations.

After identifying the components of the stewardship program, we also undertook a process to better understand the costs of the program. This cost analysis led us to recognize that we were dramatically under-funding every easement we accepted. This led to changes in our project funding policy.

Stewardship funding for each project we now complete has gone up dramatically. But because this is a relatively new practice, our stewardship fund is still well below what it should be.

Staffing and the use of volunteers

Based upon the philosophy set out above, the Land Trust made the decision to regionalize rather than centralize many stewardship activities. If landowner relationships are important, then regional staff should get to know their landowners. Making them ultimately responsible for monitoring was intended to foster this. Plus, they often already had a relationship with the landowner from completing the easement and we believed that this would allow for a smoother transition from easement acquisition to stewardship. With the geography we cover in Minnesota, it is difficult to try to foster such relationships from our central office in St. Paul.

We also hoped that this would make field staff take ultimate monitoring and enforcement issues more seriously as they designed and completed projects in the first place. They would be responsible for monitoring the projects they put together.

We have decided to centralize all record keeping, however, as this is a core responsibility of the organization regardless of individual staffing responsibilities.

Administrative support for monitoring and other stewardship activities is provided from the central office as well.

We have always used volunteers in the Land Trust for monitoring, which is, in part, a carry-over from our "volunteer chapter" days. However, with the volume of easements we need to monitor, volunteers are now essential. We simply could not afford to use all staff at this time and still get new projects completed. Also, volunteers are often more familiar with local issues and can alert staff to opportunities and concerns that may come from the larger community. Even with 3 regional offices, it is impossible for staff to stay connected to all local issues.

We do have a “formal” certification program so that we can get to know the volunteers and make sure they are familiar with Land Trust policies and practices.

We do try to provide continuity for landowners by assigning the same volunteer each year; staff are required to monitor an easement at least once every 5 years.

Funding

As noted above, once we understood our actual ongoing costs, our approach to project funding changed.

We had always recognized that landowners are our best source of stewardship funding and had always asked landowners for a stewardship contribution. But we are now asking for considerably more than we had in the past. We also began talking with landowners about the stewardship fund very early in the process instead of after the deal was done. And we assigned responsibility for obtaining a stewardship commitment to the conservation director responsible for the project, in an effort to address stewardship funding when the project is presented to the board.

Our stewardship request is for a voluntary contribution. We believe that a request for a donation rather than charging a fee recognizes the gift to the community that the landowner is already making with the easement. We also believe that this approach would be better received.

Project approval is not contingent upon a landowner making a stewardship contribution. But we are adamant that stewardship funding be honestly addressed.

Knowing all landowners can't contribute, we are also looking for other ways to get funding. We have had government and foundation grants that have helped. And we are getting more creative. For example, when working with a conservation development we now ask for a portion of each homeowner's annual homeowners' association fees to be directed to the Land Trust. We are also working on instituting transfer fees in some situations.

It is also the policy of the Land Trust that any undesignated bequest would be directed to the stewardship fund.

Even with these efforts, our stewardship and enforcement fund remains under-funded, which is one of the reasons we use volunteers extensively and why stewardship responsibilities are spread among staff.

SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Because the Minnesota Land Trust is a relatively new land trust and because our formal stewardship program is newer yet, it is difficult to assess whether we are on the right track.

However, the following are some general observations:

Effective conservation easement stewardship starts with good project selection and design and careful easement drafting.

- Conservation easements are not always the right protection tool. They work best in limited situations, such as where there is some economic value to the property with the restrictions in place.
- Restrictions drafted too stringently can lead to unnecessary conflicts. Better language allowing approvals without easement amendment is something to consider. But easements requiring or allowing approvals take lots of staff time to administer.
- Many of the problems we have encountered could have been avoided if easements had been drafted more clearly, boundaries had been better identified and marked, better maps had been created, etc. Some easements simply contain unenforceable terms, such as prohibiting ATV use by trespassers.
- For a large portfolio of easements, standardizing language and easement terms becomes increasingly important. Inconsistent language makes it difficult (but not impossible) to manage things like responding to landowner requests in a timely manner, or interpreting easement language consistently.

Accepting a conservation easement is not the same as establishing a conservation easement program.

- The cumulative impact of managing a portfolio of easements is not readily apparent until you reach a critical mass of easements. I'm not sure what that critical mass is but it usually becomes apparent when you (the organization) can no longer remember all of the easements you have. If you can set up systems and procedures in advance, it will help in the long run.
- Good record keeping is essential. Personal memories fade. Institutional memories must be created to survive staff/volunteer turnover. It's easier to start when you have a few easements than to have to retrofit a system to a large portfolio later.

Compliance monitoring vs. monitoring for conservation outcomes.

- The Minnesota Land Trust monitors for compliance with easement terms. The effectiveness of the easements in protecting identified conservation values is assumed. If easements are to continue to be effective protection tools, we need to improve our ability to monitor for outcomes. This will be even more expensive.
- The creation of a monitoring plan for each property does make compliance monitoring more effective and efficient.

Costs

- Effective conservation easement stewardship based upon voluntary landowner compliance takes lots of time. This makes it expensive.
- There is always a tendency to want to put resources into new protection projects rather than into stewardship of existing projects. Each year, we struggle to do all of the things we say we will do in our easement program because it means taking time and money away from new projects.
- It is better to get stewardship \$\$\$ as the project is completed than to try to fund it later.
- Using volunteers can be cost effective BUT managing a volunteer program will have its own costs.
- With patience and persistence, most landowners and many other funders understand the importance of stewardship and stewardship funding if conservation easements are to be an effective protection tool. Convincing government agencies of the need to establish stewardship funds or think about long-term easement needs has been more difficult.
- We have lost projects to government agencies because "they don't charge." We need to continue to improve our message about the importance of stewardship. We are also slowly exploring more co-holding arrangements with government entities and providing monitoring services on a fee for service basis.
- Relying on landowners to cover stewardship costs will ultimately limit the effectiveness of any conservation program, just as relying completely on donated easements will. You can't target land if you have to rely only on the landowners who can afford to give up rights in land and contribute to stewardship funding.

Landowner satisfaction

- Not all landowners are alike. BUT most landowners seem to like personal attention. Many would prefer even more attention than we can give, whether in completing an easement or in monitoring the easement. And personal time is expensive. We are trying things like the landowner newsletter and landowner fact sheets to be more efficient in staying in touch. We are exploring expanding our web site with information geared at existing landowners.
- We currently evaluate landowner satisfaction when the easement is completed, but we need to find a way to better evaluate landowner satisfaction with the monitoring process.
- As noted above, some landowners do resent being asked for stewardship support, now matter how carefully or tactfully we word the request.

Staffing

- Even with the use of volunteers, we are staffed too thinly. Problems do not get the timely attention they need. Staff are always pulled between new projects and existing ones.
- Dedicated stewardship staff would in part help this issue BUT at the expense of the reasons we decentralized the function in the first place.

Violations

- While our records regarding individual projects are pretty good, we need to keep better organizational records to understand the overall success of our easements and the cumulative impacts of easement violations and other problems. Our estimate of 20 violations is probably low.
- Violations are not limited to "second generation" landowners. Many original easement donors do not truly understand the terms of their easements.
- Most of our violations have been unintentional. Is more landowner contact necessary?
- Third-party trespass or encroachment has been a major source of easement violations. Ideas?

THE FUTURE

We are still fine-tuning the system we have and don't foresee major changes in the immediate future. New sources of funding, rather than programmatic changes, will be our primary focus.



Jane Prohaska is Executive Director of the Minnesota Land Trust.



**Minnesota Land Trust
Conservation Easement Stewardship Program Overview**

Stewardship: Working in partnership with landowners and the communities in which their lands are located to preserve the conservation values of those lands protected by Minnesota Land Trust conservation easements.

Conservation easements are forever. With each easement, the Minnesota Land Trust accepts responsibility to protect that land and its conservation values into the future.

Conservation easements are difficult to draft with perpetuity in mind. But it is even more difficult to make sure that the original purpose of each easement is carried out long after the excitement of completing the transaction has faded:

- The Minnesota Land Trust is not the landowner or the land manager. We share responsibility for the land with others.
- Ownership of the property will change.
- The Minnesota Land Trust and its staff will change.
- The land and surrounding landscape will inevitably change over time.
- Goals and interests of the landowner and the Minnesota Land Trust may diverge.
- Private benefits from the initial transaction may dissipate over time.
- Community support for conservation and conservation easements may change.
- The ultimate tool available to any land trust to enforce the terms of an easement—litigation—is costly, time-consuming and often unpredictable.

Stewardship in the Minnesota Land Trust is that portion of our program designed to make sure that we do meet our responsibility for each conservation easement over time--in light of and in spite of these difficulties. The following generally describes our stewardship program.

Goals:

The ultimate responsibility of the Minnesota Land Trust's conservation easement stewardship program is to preserve the conservation values associated with each property protected by an easement. Therefore, the Minnesota Land Trust is prepared to legally defend and enforce its easements when necessary.

Legal enforcement, however, is a remedy of last resort. And although it may be necessary in certain circumstances, as noted above it is also costly, time-consuming and does not include guaranteed results.

To meet our ultimate obligations effectively with all of the above issues in mind, the goals of the Minnesota Land Trust's stewardship program are to:

- Encourage voluntary compliance with the terms of our conservation easements whenever possible.
- Establish and maintain good relationships with our landowners.
- Establish and maintain good relationships with the communities in which our easements are located.
- Provide professional, timely responses and service to our landowners. The Minnesota Land Trust recognizes that it cannot be successful without working in cooperation with the many landowners dedicated to protecting their lands through conservation easements. The Land Trust respects the commitment made by these landowners and is dedicated to working with them in a respectful and professional manner.
- Document the condition of lands protected by each easement at the time the easement is completed and monitor that condition over time.
- Maintain accurate records.
- Be efficient and effective with the use of our funds in supporting our stewardship activities.

Components of a Stewardship Program:

Stewardship in the Minnesota Land Trust starts with a well-drafted conservation easement. Many future problems can be eliminated if the easement itself is drafted with long-term stewardship issues in mind.

That being said, there are a number of specific components to the Minnesota Land Trust's stewardship program. These include:

- creating the baseline property report
- easement administration
- monitoring
- landowner relations
- community relations and finally
- easement enforcement and defense

Aspects of each component of the stewardship program meet various goals. Activities are often interrelated and not confined to one programmatic area. Major aspects of each area are discussed below.

Baseline Property Reports:

Required by IRS regulations whenever a landowner reserves rights which, if exercised, might interfere with the conservation purposes of the easement, a baseline property report documents the physical and biological condition of a parcel of land subject to an easement at the time the easement is granted. It is the background information against which the property is monitored and evaluated over time to determine if there has been a violation of the terms of the easement.

In the event of a controversy between the landowner and the Land Trust, the property report can be used as a basis for resolving the dispute. The report can also be used to help educate a landowner about the property's natural features and conservation values.

A baseline property report will be created for every conservation easement held by the Minnesota Land Trust. The property report should be completed as close as possible to the time the easement is completed. In many instances, however, it may take some time to collect the information needed and complete the report. Much of the information needed to complete a property report will have been gathered earlier as a basis for determining whether to complete an easement. If not, the information on the property will be collected at the time the property report is put together.

All property reports will contain:

- landowner and locational information,
- a descriptive overview of the property including vegetation and improvements
- maps
- photographs

Each property report will be signed by the landowner conveying the easement and the Minnesota Land Trust attesting to the fact that the report reflects the condition of the property at the time the easement was completed.

Property reports will be updated as necessary to reflect changes to the property from the exercise of reserved rights, any amendments to the easement or other factors which reflect major changes to the condition of the property. Every five years, the staff will closely examine each property report to make sure that it is adequate and up to date.

More details regarding property reports are set out in the baseline property report guidelines.

A monitoring workbook, based upon the property report, will also be created at the time the property report is created. While the property report captures the condition of the property at the time the easement was conveyed, the monitoring workbook will be used to trace the history of the property over time.

More information on monitoring workbooks is set out below. Monitoring workbooks are also discussed in the property report guidelines.

Easement Administration:

Administrative tasks associated with conservation easements include routine requests for information or interpretation about a particular easement, formal requests for approval from the Minnesota Land Trust for certain activities specified in the easement as requiring Trust approval (e.g. building locations, forestry management plans, etc.) and amendments to the easement itself.

Most easement administration can be handled by staff, with Board of Directors involvement when required. However, it will occasionally be necessary for staff to obtain the advice or assistance of outside experts. The Minnesota Land Trust will obtain information and opinions from others as needed to make sure that the organization has all the data needed to make an informed decision regarding any aspect of administering or managing a conservation easement.

Requests for information:

The conservation staff person most familiar with the project routinely handles requests for information about an easement or about monitoring or similar matters. Interpretations of ambiguous or confusing language require review by legal staff.

All interpretations are set out in writing to avoid later misunderstandings. The most appropriate staff person depending upon the situation will sign interpretations. Questions about who should issue the interpretation should be addressed to the Executive Director

Formal approvals:

Easements often allow certain activities to take place only with the written approval of the Land Trust. This allows for flexibility and limited accommodation to deal with unknown future conditions.

Formal approvals require an initial written request with appropriate supporting information from the landowner and must be approved by the Executive Director of the Land Trust.

All requests are initially reviewed by the conservation staff person responsible for the project to make sure that any approvals are consistent with the conservation purpose of the easement and will not adversely impact the conservation values of the land. Staff are encouraged to visit the site and make any independent inquiries necessary before making a recommendation on an approval.

Requests for approvals are also reviewed by legal staff to make sure any approval is in technical compliance with the terms of the easement. Recommendations to grant an approval request are forwarded to the Executive Director for final review and approval.

All approvals will be given to a landowner in writing, generally signed by the Executive Director.

Requests for approvals, and actions taken, will be tracked and periodically reported to the Board.

Property reports and monitoring workbooks will also be updated or amended as needed to reflect the approval.

Amendments:

Amendments to conservation easements are less common and more serious but may be necessary in a number of situations.

Technical amendments may be necessary to correct an error or ambiguity in an easement. This might include a correction to a legal description or map, inclusion of language unintentionally omitted, or clarification of ambiguous language needed to avoid future problems over interpretation.

Other requests for amendments involve changing the terms or restrictions of an easement. These requests may have more serious implications for the land and its conservation values and may raise a number of financial and tax issues.

It is the policy of the Minnesota Land Trust to hold and enforce its conservation easements as written. Therefore, amendments are permitted only in exceptional circumstances. All amendment requests require legal review as well as review and evaluation by the conservation staff member responsible for the project. A site visit will often be necessary.

In appropriate circumstances, efforts should be made to contact the principal parties of the original transaction including the landowner, any government agency involved with the transaction and major supporters of the project.

All amendments require approval by the Executive Director. Technical amendments may be completed based upon the Executive Director's approval. All amendments that change any substantive terms or restrictions of an easement also require approval by the Board.

Following an amendment, the property report and monitoring workbook for the property will be amended or updated as needed. Requests for amendments, and actions taken, will be tracked and periodically reported to the Board.

Monitoring:

Monitoring is the core component of any conservation easement stewardship program. It helps build relationships with landowners, allows the Land Trust to discover any problems, provides an opportunity to document changes in the property or its ownership, and is critical for the Land Trust to meet its legal obligations.

Monitoring plans:

The Land Trust will create a monitoring plan for each property on which it holds a conservation easement. These plans will be based on terms of the conservation easement itself and on the

property report created to document the condition of the property at the time the easement was completed. The monitoring plan will suggest how and when the property should be monitored and identify those areas of particular concern or requiring special attention.

A monitoring plan will generally include a monitoring map to assist in monitoring.

Conditions on the property may change over time and monitoring plans will need to be updated to reflect these changes.

Monitoring workbooks:

A monitoring workbook will be maintained on each protected property. NOTE: While a property report will be created for each easement, for ease of monitoring a monitoring workbook might cover more than one easement or only part of the land covered by an easement. For example, land at a site may have been protected overtime by the same owner with separate easements. Each easement will have a property report but might be covered by a single monitoring plan and workbook. Or a property that has been subdivided might be covered by a single official property report but two separate monitoring plans and workbooks.

Unlike a property report that is intended to capture a “moment in time,” the monitoring workbook will be a dynamic tool tracking changes in the condition and ownership of the property. The monitoring workbook will include:

- Current ownership, contact information and directions to the property.
- Copy of the property report including maps and photographs.
- Monitoring plan for the property, with monitoring map.
- Past monitoring reports.
- Copy of the conservation easement or a summary of its terms.
- Summary of monitoring procedures, monitoring report form and monitoring maps.

Monitoring workbooks will be kept in the Minnesota Land Trust office and will be updated as needed and distributed to monitors before each monitoring season.

Timing of monitoring visits:

It is the goal of the Minnesota Land Trust to monitor each property annually or more often if needed such as at time of construction, amendment of the easement, or approval of the exercise of a reserved right. Circumstances preventing an annual monitoring visit will be documented.

Monitors:

The Land Trust uses both staff and volunteers to monitor protected property. All volunteers will be asked to complete a certification program.

Assignments of monitors:

Regional Conservation Directors, in coordination with the conservation programs assistant, will make monitoring assignments for properties in their region. Efforts will be made to use the same monitor for a property for several years. However, at least once every 5 years a staff member

will visit each property. Volunteers will not be asked to monitor particularly difficult or troublesome easements.

Landowner Relations:

The Minnesota Land Trust will be most successful if landowners voluntarily comply with the terms of the easements protecting their lands. Therefore, the Land Trust views its relationship with landowners as a partnership. To support this partnership, the Land Trust will:

- Send each landowner a completed easement packet that will include a copy of the recorded easement and information on monitoring and other matters of concern to most landowners regarding their conservation easement.
- Properly thank each landowner for their contribution through a letter from the Executive Director and an appropriate acknowledgment gift.
- Provide each landowner with signs that note the protected status of their property.
- Provide each landowner with an honorary life membership in the Minnesota Land Trust.
- Ask each landowner if the Minnesota Land Trust may publicize their conservation easement.
- Ask each landowner if they might be willing to provide a testimonial regarding their project or serve as a reference for other landowners.
- Hold an annual landowner appreciation event.
- Distribute an annual landowner newsletter.
- Following the transfer of ownership, make sure that all new landowners receive a personal visit from staff, a copy of the property report, a complimentary membership and an easement packet.

From time to time, the Minnesota Land Trust will also ask landowners to evaluate their experience in working with the Land Trust.

Community Relations:

Conservation of private lands will be successful if the communities in which these lands are located recognize and value the role of private land conservation in creating a livable community.

The Minnesota Land Trust will work with local communities by:

- Hosting appropriate events to educate a community about conservation easements and activities in the area.
- Working with local media.
- Identifying and working with selected audiences such as realtors, local government officials, neighbors, or homeowners associations.

Violations and Easement Defense:

In the end, the Minnesota Land Trust must be prepared to correct violations of easement terms. Each suspected violation requires an individualized approach. Whenever possible, the Land Trust will work with the landowner to have the landowner correct the situation without further action. Any judicial action taken by the Minnesota Land Trust requires approval by the Board of Directors.

Volunteers:

Volunteers play a critical role in the Minnesota Land Trust's stewardship program. They are able to extend the Minnesota Land Trust's presence into local communities throughout the state and personally work with landowners when staff might not otherwise be able to do so. Volunteers should be provided with adequate resources and training to fulfill their roles and be treated professionally and respectfully as they carry out their responsibilities.

The Minnesota Land Trust has created a certified volunteer monitoring program. This program includes a training component for all monitors. Training sessions for new and returning volunteers will be held at least annually in one or more locations across the state.

An overview of the program, the job description for volunteer monitors and an overview of monitoring for volunteers are set out in the volunteer monitoring guide.

The Land Trust will keep records of all certified volunteers. NOTE: The Minnesota Land Trust does maintain limited insurance to cover a volunteer's accident or injury while monitoring. And as representatives of the Land Trust, volunteer monitors are covered by the Land Trust's general liability insurance while conducting official Land Trust business.