

An Introduction to
**Conserving
Your Land**



Photo: Jerry Monkman



The Value of Conserved Land

Protected land offers countless benefits to people and the natural world. Conserved forestland along waterways acts as a buffer from pollution and sediment runoff, which can ensure clean drinking water for well owners and public water supplies downstream. Healthy forests, meadows, and wetlands provide wildlife habitat and protect species biodiversity. These areas also provide recreational opportunities, including fishing, hunting, and hiking. These opportunities drive our region's tourism and local economy. For local businesses that participate in sustainable farming and forestry, these lands can provide raw materials for food and wood products, as well as creating additional jobs. Furthermore, protected land preserves the region's scenic landscape, traditions, and historic landmarks—all essential elements of the Maine we know and love. For the private individual or family, protecting your land can offer valuable tax incentives, and the assurance that you are leaving a valuable legacy for future generations.

Tools for Protecting Land

GLLT, LElt, MLT, and WFLT all offer landowners two primary ways to permanently conserve their land.

1. Donation, sale, or bequest of a **conservation easement**. While retaining ownership of the land, the landowner relinquishes development rights. The easement runs with the deed to the property, meaning these restrictions are perpetual regardless of ownership. The landowner manages the property while paying property taxes. The land trust monitors the property according to the specific terms of the easement to ensure the conservation values are being protected.
2. Donation, sale, or bequest of a property by **transfer of title**. The land trust owns and manages the land and pays property taxes, ensuring the conservation values for the benefit of the public. In some cases, the land trust may purchase land if funds are available and the land is identified in a focus area for protection.

How will a conservation easement impact the use of my land?

The easement terms are mutually agreed upon by the landowner and the land trust and include both permitted uses and restricted activities. Agricultural, forestry, and wildlife-management activities are common examples of permitted activities on easement lands. Easements generally prohibit the subdivision of a property or limit the building of structures, commercial and industrial activity, topsoil removal, and activities that might disturb or degrade natural areas. Public access is not necessarily required.

Does a conservation easement restrict my ability to sell or bequeath the property?

Landowners can sell or bequeath their property with a conservation easement in place. Since conservation easements are permanent, the restrictions run with the land and are not negotiable for future owners. The land trusts ask that landowners discuss the easement with prospective buyers, realtors, and heirs so they are aware of the restrictions and allowed uses.

How do land trusts choose which land they will accept?

Each land trust has priorities used to evaluate a property. We use the best available science to determine the conservation value of a property, and consider community priorities such as historic preservation, recreation, and proximity to schools and other conserved land.

How long will it take to complete the transfer?

The time to complete the full process depends on the size and complexity of the project. These are generally not quick transactions, and if the land trust needs to raise funds to complete the project, the timeline may extend into multiple years.



Value and Cost of a Project

Please connect with GLLT, LELT, MLT, or WFLT directly for more detailed information specific to your land and goals.

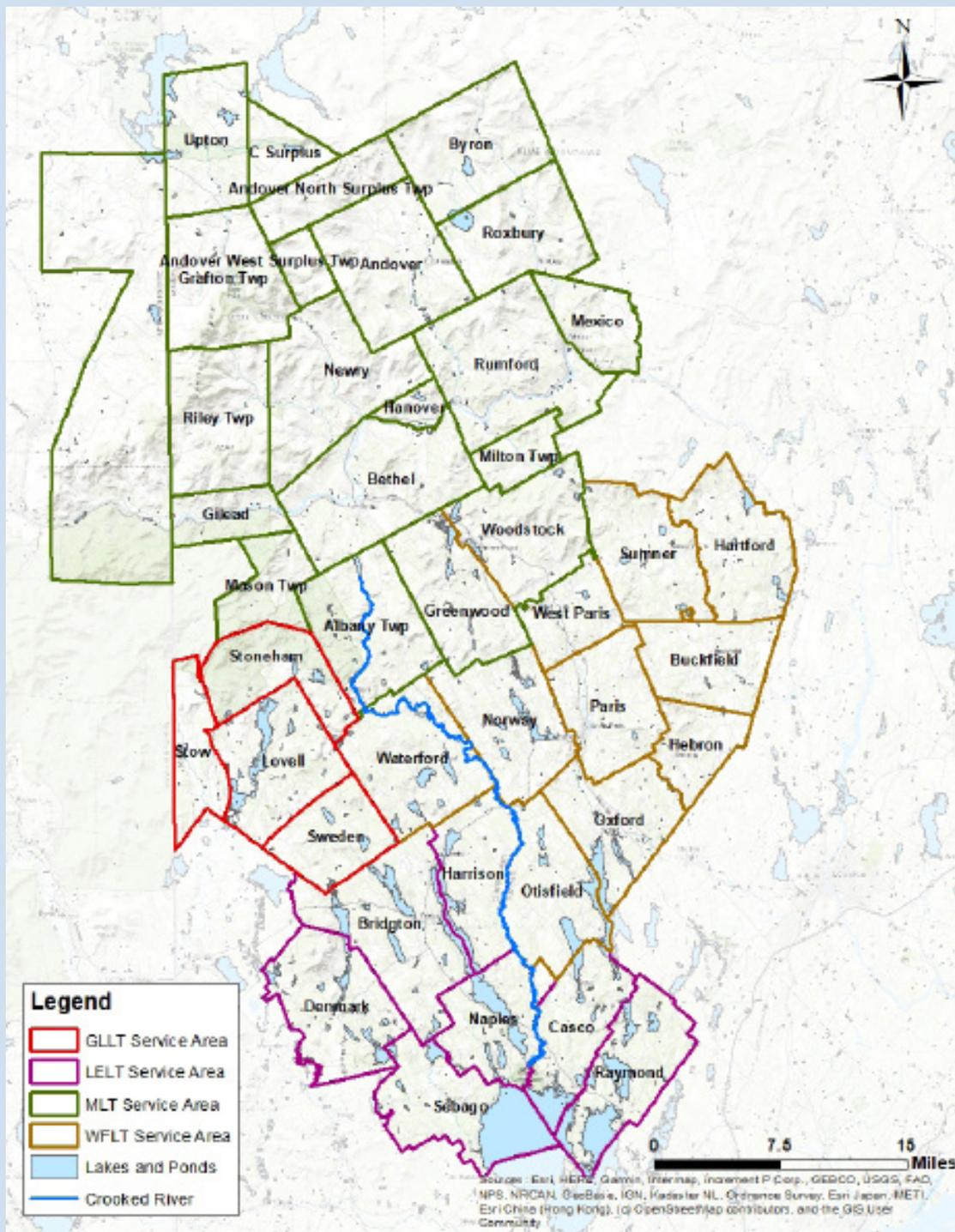
There are numerous potential financial benefits and tax incentives available for donating land or an easement. There will also likely be project-specific costs that are borne by the landowner. Costs are highly dependent on size and complexity of the project.

As a general practice, the land trusts pay at or below appraised value for a property or easement. This is done to avoid conflicts of interest and prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the transaction is completed in good faith.

Additional Conservation Options

- Trail easement securing access along a recreational corridor.
- Remainder interests in a property – either land trust may accept a donation of a remainder interest in real estate that allows a term of residence and/or use of the real estate by the donor or other occupants.
- Property tax incentive programs in Maine:
 - Farm and Open Space Program
 - Tree Growth Program
- Other specialized conservation organizations to consider in this region:
 - Maine Woodland Owners
 - Maine Farmland Trust
 - Forest Society of Maine
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
 - Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry





About the Land Trusts

Greater Lovell Land Trust (GLLT), Loon Echo Land Trust (LELT), Mahoosuc Land Trust (MLT), and Western Foothills Land Trust (WFLT) were all formed as 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations in the late 1980s. Their work is dedicated to the conservation of natural ecosystems, sustainable forestry and farming, water quality, climate resilience, plant and animal habitat, and recreation for the benefit and enjoyment of natural and human communities, today and for future generations.

The decision to conserve your land is one that takes time and a great deal of consideration.
We appreciate your interest in GLLT, LElt, MLT, and WFLT.

Thank you!

Additional Information

For more information and materials regarding land conservation benefits, visit the Land Trust Alliance at lta.org or the Maine Land Trust Network at mltn.org

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