



# JOURNAL

Serving the Needs of Land Professionals

## July 2009

*This newsletter is produced through a partnership between the Bureau of Land Management-Eastern States and the Eastern Lands and Resources Council.*

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*Eastern Lands and Resources Council (ELRC) will be hosting the upcoming 2009 Fall Conference in East Lansing, Michigan, September 21-24, 2009. A Virtual Conference option will also be available by Webcast. See article below and continue to watch the ELRC Website for details!*

## ELRC 2009 FALL CONFERENCE

### "Virtual Conference"

*Available by Webcast September 22-23*

State and federal land agencies, partners and conservation organizations are invited to the Fall Conference September 21-24 in East Lansing, co-hosted by the **Michigan Department of Natural Resources**.

With travel restrictions prevalent this year, a "virtual conference" option will be available. The **US Forest Service Forest Legacy Program (FLP)** is partnering with ELRC to provide a "virtual conference" by webcast. Agency staff and partners can log on to the webcast, or attend in person.

The goal of ELRC and FLP is to use the "virtual conference" so public land managers can share strategies for cost-effective program delivery of programs and services in difficult budget times. Conference topics are pertinent to both ELRC and FLP audiences.

If you have not participated with ELRC before, this is a great opportunity to see how ELRC can assist your agency meet its mission, and address challenges we face as public land managers.

Panel discussions to be webcast include:

- Addressing difficulties of appraising conservation properties in rapidly-changing markets
- Meeting the challenge of acquiring and selling conservation lands in distressed markets
- Current issues with conservation easements: monitoring large-scale acreage easements; accommodating renewable energy sources; ecosystem credits
- Advances in managing state land records systems, including methods for tracking federal interest in state lands and easements acquired with federal grant assistance
- Enhancing management efficiency through land consolidation and asset evaluation
- Web-based land auction systems

Webcasts are scheduled as follows: *(All times are Eastern Daylight Time)*

September 22 - 9:00-10:30 AM; 11:00 AM-12:00 noon; 1:45-3:15 PM  
September 23 - 9:00-10:00 AM; 10:30 AM-12:00 noon

There is no cost to access the webcast but you must register in advance to receive access code. Webcasts will cover most, but not all, presentations at the conference. *Times may change.*

Conference field trips will focus on the role public and private conservation lands play in supporting economic activity in northwestern Lower Peninsula - a hub for tourism, recreation, education and natural resource industries: oil, natural gas, timber, fishing, fruit and vegetables. The area is rich in trails, rivers, lighthouses, wineries, and fishing opportunities.

Please see the registration information in this newsletter, or soon at [www.elrc.org](http://www.elrc.org)



# ELRC 2009 FALL CONFERENCE

## "Virtual Conference"

Available by Webcast September 22-23

(Continued)

September is a great time to visit Michigan. Michigan has the highest number of lighthouses in the US, the second largest waterfall east of the Mississippi River, a thriving elk herd in the state forest and the salmon will be running. Bring your family and enjoy the waters, trails, lands, restaurants and shops. See [www.michigan.org](http://www.michigan.org) or [www.visitTraverseCity.com](http://www.visitTraverseCity.com) for information.



*"Globally-Significant Lake Michigan Dunes Complex, Protected by Foundations, Private and Public Partners, Support Recreation, Ecosystems and Sustainable Agriculture on the Backlands"*

(Photo Credit Michael Jordan)



*"Orchards and Vineyards Protected by Purchase of Development Rights, from Local and State Initiatives"*

(Photo Credit WWW.gtrlc.org)

**Please share this invitation with others from your agency, or other agencies in your state.**

Contact: Ed Meadows, [meadowse@michigan.gov](mailto:meadowse@michigan.gov), or Jon Mayes, [mayesje@michigan.gov](mailto:mayesje@michigan.gov) or call 517-373-1240 or Jennifer Huhn, [huhnjl@michigan.gov](mailto:huhnjl@michigan.gov) or call 517-335-3324

## Message from the ELRC President...

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to announce:

- a first for ELRC – which is the “virtual conference” scheduled for September 22-23. I would encourage you to attend “via web” if you are unable to travel in person to Michigan. Please invite others to listen in also. I would like to thank US Forest Service Forest Legacy Program for co-hosting this conference with ELRC; and would also like to thank Ed Meadows and “team” from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for all their efforts;
- that since the last newsletter edition, ELRC has now received its 501(c)3 designation from the Internal Revenue Service!

I hope you are well and enjoying the summer season – even in the midst of these challenging economic times.

As always -- Please call upon me if I may be of any assistance to you!

### The ELRC

...fostering responsible public land management policies for tomorrow

The ELRC is an organization comprised of highly trained public land professionals in the eastern United States which provides a collaborative and unique forum for enhancing land stewardship and conservation.

The ELRC fosters communication, strengthens professional development, and promotes sound policies and practices among those involved in the management and administration of public lands, records, and natural resources.

For more information, write:

Lynda Godfrey, Chief, Land Acquisition  
Division of State Lands  
Florida Department of Environmental  
Protection  
Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building  
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, M.S. 115  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000  
Email: [lynda.godfrey@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:lynda.godfrey@dep.state.fl.us)  
Phone: (850) 245-2669

# ELRC Fall Conference and “Virtual Conference”

September 21-24, 2009

Marriott, East Lansing at University Place  
East Lansing, Michigan



Co-hosted by:  
**Michigan Department of Natural Resources**  
**US Forest Service Forest Legacy Program**

## Draft Agenda

### Monday, September 21

*Conference set up. Conference coordinators convene: MDNR & Forest Legacy staff*

5:00 - 6:30 PM Registration desk open  
6:00 - 9:00 PM Reception for ELRC associates and guests

### Tuesday, September 22

8:00 AM Conference Begins  
8:00 AM Registration desk open  
8:30 AM All attendees seated for webcast. Welcome and Introductions

9:00 – 10:30 AM Webcast begins - EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

Welcome to ELRC's first virtual conference

#### **Challenges of Appraising in Rapidly-Changing Markets**

What is happening with values in the states?  
Dealing with declining markets and limited comparative sales data: What do we do about it?  
How do we determine a “good” value in this market?  
Making adjustments “comfortable” – is there such a thing?  
*Presenters: members of Appraisal Institute*

10:30 AM Break – webcast ends

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM Webcast begins - EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

#### **The IRS and Conservation Easements: *Invited Speaker***

Issues with Appraisals, Deductions, Bargain Sales and Enforcement  
Issues with Forest Legacy Program and Conservation Easements  
Tax treatment for donors and bargain sales. Tax credit renewal/extension

12:00 PM Morning webcasts end

Working lunch; facilitated discussion or speaker

1:45 – 3:15 PM Webcast: EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

# ELRC Fall Conference and “Virtual Conference”

## Draft Agenda

*(Continued)*

### **Opportunities and Challenges of Buying and Selling Conservation Land in Turbulent and Distressed Markets**

Determining a fair offer – what are the factors

Opportunities with distress sales: auctions, foreclosure, bankruptcy, etc. – how do we proceed?

Overcoming barriers to purchasing from auction, foreclosure, etc.

When auction rules don't mesh with agency purchasing rules

Strategies for dealing with “distressed” sellers

3:15 PM

Webcast ends for day

Break

3:30 – 4:30 PM

**Applying what we have learned: Strategies, tools and methods for Surplus Land Disposal**

*Michigan's Land Consolidation Initiative and web-based land auction system*

*OR*

**Appraiser Round Table and Case Studies**

**Response to presentations: ELRC, Heart of the Lakes, others**

4:30 PM

Presentation of appraiser Continuing Education certificates

Adjourn

6:00 PM

Conferees gather. Informal dinner on your own.

MSU Campus and Lansing area tours available upon inquiry

8:00 PM

Hospitality Suite open

### **Wednesday, September 23**

8:00 AM

Registration desk open

8:30 AM

**Convene Forest Legacy Program**

All attendees seated. Welcome and Introductions

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Webcast begins - EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

**Advances in Land Records Systems: Tracking Federal Interest in State Lands and conservation easements acquired with federal grant assistance** – Forest Legacy, LWCF, Pittman-Robertson, NAWCA, CELCP, NCWC, others

10:00 AM

Break - Webcast ends

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Webcast begins - EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

**Forest Legacy Program topics:**

Strategies for monitoring large acreage conservation easements

Handling renewable energy sources – wind, solar, others

Addressing “ecosystem services credits”

Minerals and split estates; gas and oil

Other topics to be added

12:00 PM

Webcasts end. Virtual Conference adjourns

*Optional site visits for attendees. Tour space is limited; register early, or call.*

# ELRC Fall Conference and “Virtual Conference”

## Draft Agenda

*(Continued)*

12:30 PM                   Box Lunch and tour. Registration required.  
Site visits: rail-trail corridor acquisition, appraisal management, legal and appraisal issues; appraisal and land issues; partner presentations

5:30 PM                   Arrive Traverse City

7:00 PM                   Informal dinner and area tour

**Thursday, September 24**

7:00 AM                   Breakfast on own

8:00 AM                   Depart for site visits and partner presentations:  
Partnering with foundations and conservancies to protect farmland, orchards and Great Lakes dunes  
Lunch - in field

Afternoon                Return to Lansing or depart



**Eastern Lands and Resources Council  
Fall 2009 Conference  
September 21-24, 2009  
Virtual Conference September 22 & 23**

**Reservation Deadline: September 8, 2009**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guest Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency/Company \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Business Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Accommodations: Access \_\_\_\_\_ Dietary \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Conference Fees**

\_\_\_\_\_ **I will log on to webcast only.** No cost, but must register by September 1, 2009.  
 Webcast details to be provided at a later time

\_\_\_\_\_ **Full Conference** (September 21, 22, 23, 24). \$185.00 \$\_\_\_\_\_ **Register by September 8, 2009**  
 Please Check Meal Attendance (*These meals are included in the Full Conference registration fee*)  
 Monday, September 21 – Reception \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuesday, September 22 – Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_ Lunch \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wednesday, September 23 – Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_ Lunch \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Lansing Program Only** September 22 & 23 AM. \$110  
 (includes lunch on 9/22, breaks, and materials)

\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend the field visits September 23 & 24

**Method of Payment**

Check Enclosed – Please circle ( Y / N ) Check number \_\_\_\_\_ **MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: ELRC**

\_\_\_\_\_ I will pay by EFT. Contact: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail the registration form and payment to:**

Attention: Debbie Strzelec  
 ELRC Fall 2009 Conference  
 MDNR Office of Land and Facilities  
 P.O. Box 30448; Lansing, MI 48909-7948  
 Phone: 517.335.3245 Fax: 517.335.1880 Email: strzelecd@michigan.gov

**Cancellation Policy:**

You may receive a refund of conference fees less \$50 administrative fee until September 11, 2009.  
 Conference fees will not be refunded after cancellations made after **September 11, 2009**.

ELRC Fall Conference  
 Marriott East Lansing at University Place  
 September 21-24, 2009  
 Co-hosted by: Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
 US Forest Service Forest Legacy Program



ELRC Fall Conference  
Marriott East Lansing at University Place  
September 21-24, 2009

Co-hosted by: Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
US Forest Service Forest Legacy Program

**Conference and Hotel Information**

Virtual conference. No cost, but you must register before September 1, 2009. Registrants will be provided access code and updated agenda with webcast times.

Conference Registration fees.

**Full conference** – includes Sept. 21 reception, 4 meals, field tour and all materials. Hotel and dinner Sept. 23 and all meals Sept. 24 are not included.

**Lansing Program** – includes Sept. 22, 9:00 a.m. through noon, Sept. 23, with breaks both days, lunch Sept. 22 and materials. Continental breakfasts and Sept. 21 reception not included.

**Registration and payment due no later than September 8, 2009**

The Marriott Hotel and Conference Center is in downtown East Lansing, walking distance to shops, eateries and the campus of Michigan State University. A limited number of hotel rooms are available at the conference rate of \$109. Government rate is available (\$65 for state employees and \$81 for federal employees); government ID required at check in. Exercise room on site, as well as swimming pool. Wireless Internet service available in guest rooms for a fee. Parking fee extra.

Contact hotel directly for reservations at 517-337-4440. Mention ELRC to get the conference or government rate.

Hotel charges paid at checkout.

Information at [www.marriott.com/LANEA](http://www.marriott.com/LANEA)

Guests are welcome. Please contact the Michigan DNR at 517-335-3324 for meal costs.

Air Travel. Major airlines and regional carriers serve 4 airports nearby: Lansing - 20 minutes; Flint - 60 minutes; Detroit - 90 minutes; Grand Rapids - 75 minutes.

Air service is available from Traverse City, the end point for the optional site visits on Sept. 24.

Hotel shuttle service from Lansing Airport to the Marriott Hotel is available.

Conference attire. Dress casual for meetings. Casual for receptions and tours.

Weather. Fall is one of the best times to visit Michigan. Foliage should be starting to turn brilliant colors. Temperatures can be from 70s to 50s, with cool evenings.

Sight-seeing and travel activities. Golf, hiking and biking are available on nearby MSU campus and area. Campus tours available. Suggestions and tour assistance available, including for additional time to see Michigan's natural and cultural wonders. Contact host committee.

Site visits Sept. 23-24. A limited number of spaces are available for optional site visits. Traverse City is 3½ hours by car from Lansing. It is a renowned travel destination on the shore of Lake Michigan. We will meet with conservancy partners to discuss land protection projects and issues. Jackets, hats, sturdy shoes and rain gear recommended for those going on site visits. Heavy hiking boots not needed. Return to Lansing by 6 pm Sept. 24, or to meet air connections.

Participants may take own vehicle to tour longer in Traverse City region.

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## Conference and Hotel Information

*(Continued)*

Lodging will be available at the Holiday Inn West Bay. You can call 231-947-3700. Mention ELRC to receive the reduced rate of \$65 per night.

Information at [www.tctestbay.com](http://www.tctestbay.com)

Appraiser continuing education. We will seek state approval for 7 hours of appraiser continuing education credits in Michigan for each day, Sept. 22 and 23.

Education credits may be available in other states for this program, if applied for by licensed appraisers in their state.

State program materials. It is customary to bring your agency's handouts, publications, CDs etc. Display space available.

Door prizes. It is traditional for attendees to bring items from your state for door prizes.

Helpful websites:

[www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)

[www.michigan.org](http://www.michigan.org)

[www.marriott.com/LANEA](http://www.marriott.com/LANEA)

[www.visitTraverseCity.com](http://www.visitTraverseCity.com)

[www.tctestbay.com](http://www.tctestbay.com)



# What's Happening in YOUR State?

## Land Trust Accreditation Commission An Independent Program of the Land Trust Alliance

### National Land Trust Accreditation Program Presents Opportunities eNewsletter Template Language April 2009

A new national land trust accreditation program may offer an opportunity to help your agency evaluate the nonprofit conservation organizations it partners with.

The accreditation program is operated by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. The Commission uses a rigorous process to verify accreditation applicant compliance with 37 standards derived from the Alliance's *Land Trust Standards and Practices*. These standards are used to evaluate the land trust's ability to acquire, monitor and defend conservation easements and fee land holdings. Applicants are also evaluated on good governance and financial management.

"At a time when the public is demanding increasing accountability from nonprofit organizations and government, including land trusts, the new independent accreditation program provides the assurance of quality and permanence of land protection the public is looking for," said Commission Executive Director, Tammara Van Ryn. Land trusts applying for accreditation submit extensive documentation and make a significant commitment of time and resources to participate. In a thorough review process, the Commission examines each application, interviews the land trust and evaluates multiple sources of information, including comments from the public.

As one recently accredited land trust remarked, "Accreditation wasn't a small or easy undertaking, but I'm thankful that we did it. At a time when financial institutions, businesses and non-profits are failing, it's critically important that our community knows we've taken the steps to assure transparency and stability in our work. Unlike land-use planning

and regulations, we purport to protect land forever. That means we have to take the steps to insure that we're still here managing these lands for generations to come. In the end, that's the value of accreditation."

The land trust accreditation program is highly regarded in the nonprofit community, and government programs in the states of Colorado and California already utilize it in conjunction with their own requirements to qualify organizations for tax incentives or conservation funding.

Already dozens of nonprofit land trusts across the country have been awarded accreditation, and the number of accredited land trusts is expected to grow steadily each year. For a complete list of accredited land trusts or more information about the accreditation program visit the Commission's website at [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org) or call the office at 518-587-3143.

Contact: Tammara Van Ryn, Executive Director, Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Saratoga Springs, New York

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### Small State Agency Achieves Big Impact With No Tax Dollars

Trick question: What state agency operates without a single taxpayer dollar; generates all of the state's K-12 public school library aids; provides a reliable source of financing for municipality and school district projects, even when credit is tight; and is a small but committed player in the fight to keep Wisconsin's forest land available for sustainable timber production and public recreation?

If you guessed Wisconsin's oldest state agency, the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, you guessed right.

### A Unique Piece of Wisconsin History

Over 160 years ago, when our state's forefathers were drafting Wisconsin's constitution, they couldn't agree on much. But the notion of putting the state's Treasurer, Secretary of State, and Attorney General in

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# What's Happening in YOUR State?

(CONTINUED)

charge of accepting federal land grants and managing a sizeable portion of the proceeds as a stable source of support for public schools and libraries survived virtually intact until the constitution was ratified in 1848.

Many western states also created land commissions but, to the best of our knowledge, Wisconsin is the only state that used land granted by the federal government to establish a protected "school fund" to benefit public school libraries, and the only state to invest those funds in public purpose loans that benefit the public twice—once as a contribution to the state's infrastructure and again as interest paid on those loans is distributed as library aid to the state's 426 K-12 public school districts.

before 1900 and a fascinating collection of early records describing these lands is housed in the agency's archive.

Today, BCPL holds title to less than 80,000 acres of Trust Land in Northern Wisconsin, much of which has been in continuous state ownership since the federal government granted title to it over 150 years ago. These lands remain a Trust asset and are managed as part of the Trusts' investment portfolio, which includes government bonds, loans to local governments, and the State Investment Fund.

As a timber land manager, BCPL plays a relatively small but important role in the forest products industry and the state's economy.



*Common School Fund Beneficiaries:  
Wisconsin's K-12 Public School Students  
(c) 2009 Jupiter Images Corporation*



*Jim Pietila Scaling White Birch Logs at a Timber Sale in Oneida County. Jim Started Work for the BCPL as a forester in 1966  
(Photo Courtesy of WI BCPL)*

BCPL's importance as a funding source for schools has grown in recent years, but generating revenue is only the beginning of trust stewardship. Today's Board of Commissioners—State Treasurer Dawn Marie Sass, Secretary of State Doug La Follette, and Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen—also has a constitutional duty to protect and enhance Trust assets, which include Trust Lands, and to preserve an extensive archive of historical records relating to the lands originally granted to the state.

## Land as Legacy and Investment

The federal government granted Wisconsin over 10 million acres—almost a third of the state—to support public education and develop the new state's infrastructure. Most of these Trust Lands were sold

Much of the upland forest land that BCPL manages is highly productive with good timber quality. These forests have been managed for sustainable timber production since 1943 and most have never been subjected to a cut and sell cycle. Each year, about 75 to 85 percent of forest growth on productive upland sites is harvested, based on the agency's comprehensive inventory.

Holding and managing these productive timber lands allows BCPL to contribute to Northern Wisconsin's economy and makes good financial sense in an environment of volatile markets and fluctuating interest rates. With "land bank" authority granted by a unanimous legislature in 2006, the agency can better manage Trust Lands as an investment. This authority allows BCPL to sell non-productive lands and use the

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# What's Happening in YOUR State?

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proceeds of these sales to purchase working forests and enhance our timber management efficiency.

## A Growing Contribution to the Timber Economy

In addition to productive upland forests, continuous state ownership of Trust Lands has resulted in areas of high conservation value that warrant protection. About one-third of Trust Lands contain excellent examples of rare forest and wetland cover types. The agency is in the process of selling these Trust Lands to the DNR since the vast majority of them are within existing DNR project boundaries.

Under the Land Bank Program, BCPL identifies tracts like these for sale in accordance with Board-approved criteria. Where Trust Lands are located within another government project boundary (a county or state forest, for example), those lands are offered for sale to that unit. Our remaining scattered, isolated or unproductive holdings are being offered for sale to the public.

Proceeds from these sales are used to buy land from willing sellers to increase the productive acreage of BCPL timberlands, consolidate Trust Lands into larger tracts, prevent forest fragmentation, and increase legal access to existing land holdings.

Since inception of the Land Bank Program in 2006, BCPL has sold nearly 6,000 acres of land poorly suited for timber production or located within the boundaries of another government agency. Nearly 4,500 acres were sold to the DNR. The remaining lands were sold to Sawyer County, Taylor County, and private landowners via a sealed bid sale. These sales contained only 35 percent productive timberlands and included 2,805 acres of unproductive wetlands.

With the proceeds of these sales, BCPL purchased just over 3,725 acres with 80 percent productive timberlands, providing an impressive two-year net increase of 1,450 acres of managed timberlands. These purchases have added significant acreages of northern hardwoods, aspen, white spruce, red oak, and red pine timberland. At the same time,

strategic purchase of lands with road frontage or easements that are adjacent to existing Trust Lands has increased publicly access by 3,327 acres.

With these actions, significant progress has been made toward the agency's land consolidation goals, reducing the impact of forest fragmentation in the North, and improving our timber management efficiency to balance current forest products needs and long-term productivity.

But BCPL's contribution to the state's economy reaches farther than the northwoods.

## Making a Difference Across the State

Of the four Trust Funds the agency manages, the largest is the Common School Fund, the net earnings of which are distributed each year as library aids to each of Wisconsin's public school districts. One of this fund's primary investment vehicles is the State Trust Fund Loan Program. This program finances public projects such as school improvements and expansions, fire and rescue vehicles, town halls, sewage lift stations, and economic development within TIF districts.



*"Northern Hardwood Research Expert Gus Erdman (c), Joins BCPL Staff Jeff Niese (l) and John Krause (r) to Examine a Properly Released Yellow Birch in a Canopy Gap on Trust Lands in Oneida County."*

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# What's Happening in YOUR State?

(CONTINUED)



**Barneveld-Brigham Fire Department Fire and Rescue Vehicle Purchased Using a State Trust Fund Loan**  
*(Photo courtesy of WI BCPL)*

In last year's tight credit market, more municipalities and school districts than ever turned to BCPL for simple, reliable financing to meet their borrowing needs. Through the end of December, the agency approved 209 loans totaling more than \$200 million, an agency record. Over 95 percent of the interest paid on these loans will be distributed in coming years as public school library aids and, as the principal is repaid, it will be loaned to others to continue the cycle of infrastructure improvements in Wisconsin. BCPL provided \$35 million in public school library in 2008, another agency record.

With its lands, loan program, archive, and library aids, the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands takes great pride in making a difference in every corner of Wisconsin—including yours—without a single penny of tax revenue. To learn more about BCPL, visit [www.bcpl.wisconsin.gov](http://www.bcpl.wisconsin.gov).

*Article by Tia Nelson, Executive Secretary, Board of Commissioners of Public Lands - Reprinted by permission from Great Lakes TPA Magazine.*

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## **Tight Budgets and Strategic Conservation: Selecting the Right Lands for the Right Price**

Strategic conservation is a planning process that seeks to select the highest quality lands given limited financial resources. Traditionally conservation officials implement strategic conservation by creating prioritization maps that attempt to identify the lands of highest ecological value or public value from a resource perspective. State strategic conservation

planning efforts such as Florida Forever, Delaware Ecological Network and the Maryland Greenprint are examples of prioritization mapping efforts that illustrate an interconnected system of existing and potential preserved lands and well managed private lands. As many states are facing dramatic budget problems, resulting in significant decreases in funding for land acquisition, incorporating land costs and budget constraints strategically into the planning framework has never been more important. Fortunately, the initial applications of cost effective analysis (also referred to as optimization analysis) in concert with strategic conservation plans demonstrates that land conservation efforts can actually be strengthened by including both cost and budget elements.

Cost effective analysis is a tool of economics and operations research that in recent years has shown land conservation managers how to get more “bang for their bucks”. Cost effective decision support tools have been developed to be user-friendly, spreadsheet-based applications that allow quick comparison of all possible combinations of parcels given both an agency's traditional project evaluation criteria and the agency's budget constraints, to select the set of projects that guarantees the maximum possible conservation benefits. The decision support tools have been designed to be integrated with GIS and enable a user to readily evaluate results given different constraints—such as an acreage threshold, a budget level or the maximum number of acquisitions. In fact, cost effective analysis is particularly effective when organizations face a much larger pool of potential land acquisition project costs than can be afforded given a limited budget. Finally, and importantly, the use of cost effective analysis does not require changing the existing processes or policies used by a program to evaluate a project, but rather builds directly upon the existing processes and policies and provides additional information for decision makers.

Many state agencies apply rank-based criteria to evaluate the quality of a potential land acquisition project. These rank-based processes have been useful in ensuring that state agencies are truly buying high quality lands to meet public goals, such as protecting rare and endangered

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# What's Happening in YOUR State?

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species, preserving high quality soils for farming, and providing diverse recreational opportunities. However, few criteria systems take the cost of the property (either fee or easements) into account in their scoring system. By including cost as a strategic factor for evaluation and comparing cost along with other environmental and public benefits among a pool of potential projects, efficiency gains are achieved.

The Conservation Fund's Strategic Conservation Planning Program working in partnership with Dr. Kent Messer from the Department of Food & Resource Economics at the University of Delaware has applied cost effective analysis techniques to guide the evaluation processes of several public conservation programs including: the Delaware Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and Baltimore County's Agricultural Preservation Program. The results show dramatic increases in overall environmental benefit for the same amount of program funding. For example, in the case of the Delaware Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (DALPF), an analysis of historical data from willing sellers suggests that the use of cost effective analysis could have yielded the program an *additional* 12,000 acres of high quality agricultural land, worth an estimated \$25 million for the same \$93 million budget spent during the program's first decade of existence (Messer and Allen 2008). In Baltimore County, the one-year gains from adopting cost effective analysis have been estimated at \$2.8 million. Additionally, a recent analysis of the 2008 application for the USDA Forest Legacy program suggests that 43.8% *more* acres (91,621 acres) could be protected by incorporating project costs strategically in the decision process.

In the coming months, the Eastern Lands and Resources Council will be sending a white paper to members with detailed examples of the use of cost effective analysis to help guide decision making with land conservation programs. Cost effective analysis can help programs achieve ambitious conservation goals even during periods of declining budgets. By using these tools, officials can demonstrate solid financial stewardship to budgeting staff, legislators and the public, laying the foundation for future support for stronger funding for land conservation when the economy has improved.

In the words of Steve Castleman III, Executive Director, Catoctin Land Trust, based in Maryland, "If you were offered an opportunity to gain \$4 million worth of conservation benefits by spending only \$1 million, wouldn't you be interested in learning more?"

### References:

Messer K.D. and William Allen III, "Applying Optimization and the Analytic Hierarchy Process to Enhance Agricultural Preservation Strategies in the State of Delaware" 2008. *Alfred Lerner College of Business and Economics Working Paper*, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware, 2008-18.

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## Massachusetts Launches Coordinated Forest Landowner Program

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation has recently launched its "One Stop Shopping" forest landowner assistance program. The program offers forest landowners across the state financial and technical assistance in four areas: Forest Stewardship Plans, Inventory and Administrative assistance to sell "carbon credits", grants for small forest businesses and technical assistance with estate planning. The programs are being administered by the Massachusetts Farm Bureau and the University of MA Extension Service. Landowners will attend outreach sessions and can choose what type of assistance fits their needs. The program pays 100% of Forest Stewardship Plans (at funding levels that vary by acreage) and initial costs to inventory and sell carbon credits for tree growth. It is hoped that many landowners will sign up for both these programs as forest inventories can serve both purposes in a more efficient manner. The forest

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# What's Happening in YOUR State?

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business small grants program offers business plans and up to \$20,000 for the implementation costs of the approved plans. A requirement of this program is a 20 year "no development" covenant on the forest land that contributes to the business plan. The estate planning effort involves workshops held in local communities across the state as well as educational material and case studies on the benefits of estate planning and is geared to landowners looking at conservation options. In the 5 weeks since the program was launched, more than 100 landowners who collectively own more than 6,000 acres have had Forest Stewardship plans completed. Stewardship Plans are often the first step towards landowners beginning forest management and considering land conservation options.

The majority of those completing plans also enroll in the MA forest current use tax law program which offers additional incentives for good forestry and land stewardship. The One Stop Shopping Program is funded via a three-year contract with the Farm Bureau and the University.

Contact: Bob O'Connor, Director of Land and Forest Conservation, 617-626-1170

"The Forest Legacy Program started in 1990, thanks to Senator Leahy, who is truly the Father of Forest Legacy," Kimbell said.

Through Leahy's efforts, Vermont was the first state in the nation to undertake a Forest Legacy project – the conservation of 1,660 acres at Cow Mountain Pond in Granby in 1993.

"The four-state area of Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and New York leads all other regions, with more than 1 million acres conserved to date," Kimbell said.

The Forest Legacy Program, first authored by Senator Leahy in the 1990 Farm Bill, has provided more than \$406 million to conserve nearly 1.85 million acres in 42 states over the past two decades. Leahy is the most senior member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and is a former chairman of the panel.

"To all the landowners and our private partners here in Vermont and across the nation, I applaud your vision and commitment in maintaining the integrity of our country's valuable forest lands," Senator Leahy said. "Intact forest lands supply timber products, wildlife habitat, soil and watershed protection, recreational opportunities and the quality of life that helps make our state such a great place to live, work and raise families."

Leahy said he continues to champion the Forest Legacy Program as a powerful tool to permanently conserve treasured working forest lands. Leahy also applauded the President's FY 2010 budget request of \$91 million in funding for Forest Legacy.

"The Forest Legacy Program is a unique conservation effort which recognizes that environmental stewardship rests in citizens' hands," Senator Leahy said. "Vermonters place a high value on protecting our open spaces and maintaining our traditions of a working forest."

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## Vermont's Senator Leahy, U.S. Forest Chief Announce Forest Legacy Funding

Outgoing U.S. Forest Service Chief Abigail Kimbell joined Senator Patrick Leahy Monday on May 18 in Richmond Vermont to announce \$50 million in grants to protect 24 working forests in 21 states, including Vermont, through the Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program.

Chief Kimbell also announced the details of the President's Fiscal Year 2010 proposal to fund 47 Forest Legacy projects at \$91 million.

Kimbell, a graduate of the University of Vermont who graduated from high school in St. Albans, hailed Vermont's senior senator as the inspiration behind the federal program that brings together states, private partners and landowners to protect environmentally and economically important forests.



# What's Happening in YOUR State?

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Working with the Trust for Public Land, Vermont will receive \$1.8 million this year toward purchasing a conservation easement on the 5,727-acre Eden Forest. The Eden Forest links one of the last remaining large unprotected forested parcels in the northern Green Mountains to a larger conservation area reaching into Quebec. Protected through Legacy funds, the Eden Forest will continue serving as a biological corridor for animals such as bear and moose. It will continue producing timber, sequestering carbon, safeguarding water supplies, and providing jobs as a working forest.

The Forest Legacy Program has contributed more than \$14.6 million to conserve 67,603 acres 47 tracts in 16 projects in Vermont since 1993.

The Forest Legacy Program is a partnership between states and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service to identify and help conserve environmentally important forests from conversion to non-forest uses, while maintaining private ownership. Using conservation easements, the federal government may fund up to 75 percent of program costs, with at least 25 percent coming from private, state or local sources. For more information on Vermont's Forest Legacy program, visit [www.vtfpr.org](http://www.vtfpr.org).

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