

CHECKLIST OF CONSERVATION PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

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This check list is intended as a source of ideas for developing organization specific criteria for selecting or evaluating land conservation projects. No one group is likely to adopt all the possible criteria in the list. Which criteria to choose will depend on the values and goals of the conservation group and whether projects include possible tax incentives for landowners (the criteria to meet IRS requirements).

Criteria to Meet IRS Requirements for a Tax Deduction by the Landowner

- Protection is perpetual
- Given exclusively for one or more conservation purposes:
 - habitat protection
 - preservation of open space, including farm & forest land
 - education
 - recreation
 - scenic enjoyment
 - historic value
 - public benefit
- Consistent with governmental policy, including town & city master plans

Conservation Values

- Condition of land
- Parcel size
- Size of unfragmented area of which the project is a part
- Habitat protection, general
- Critical habitats
 - riparian areas
 - riverine habitat
 - grassland
 - dry shrub land
 - shrub wetlands
 - deep emergent marsh
 - sedge meadow
 - northern bog
 - dunes
 - pine barrens
 - estuary
 - salt marsh
 - alpine
 - peatlands
 - caves, mines
 - den sites

- vernal pools
- deer wintering areas
- waterfowl concentration areas
- mast production areas (mature oak/beechn)
- exposed south facing slopes
- cliffs
- undeveloped shorelands
- islands
- mature forest
- high elevation areas

- Rare or uncommon species
- Rare or uncommon natural communities
- Exemplary natural communities
- Representative natural communities
- Water resources
 - surface water
 - ground water
 - wetlands
 - riparian areas
 - floodplains
 - drinking water supply
- Farm land
 - prime & statewide important soils
 - active farm land
- Productive forest land
 - productive forest soils
 - management history
- Geology & landforms
- Connection to other conservation lands
- Expansion of other conservation lands
- Character of surrounding lands

Community Benefit

- Public support for project
- Aesthetic/scenic value
- Contribution to community character
- Recreation
- Public access
- Proximity to population centers
- Historic value

Cost Effectiveness

- Appraised value
- Selling price
- Transaction costs
- Monitoring and stewardship or management costs
- Funding potential, including owner contributions
- Income generating potential

Other Values

- Potential for protection of adjacent lands
- Development pressure (likelihood of development soon if not protected)
- Uniqueness (features represented or not represented in other regional conservation lands)

Risks

- Clear title
- Likelihood of transfer of property in the near future (conservation easements)
- Number of landowners (conservation easements)
- Extent of reserved rights (conservation easements)
- Project required for mitigation of a separate environmental impact (conservation easements)
- Likelihood of abutter encroachment

Unwanted features

- Hazardous materials
- Buildings
- Problematic lot configuration
- Problematic surrounding land use
- Small parcel size

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