

“How to Approach Landowners About Conserving Their Land”—Teaching Notes
Workshop 2A, 1:00-2:15 p.m., Saving Special Places Conference, 11 April 2015
By Tom Howe, Senior Director of Land Conservation, SPNHF
(thowe@forestsociety.org, 603-224-9945 x 341)

I. Introduction

Identify workshop
Identify myself & SPNHF
Focus is on initial contact & communications through first mtng.
(review agenda)
Notes available at end
Questions along the way, want to draw on your
wisdom/experiences
Cell phones off

II. Making First Contact

A. The Best---Have LO Contact You!

1. Hold land conservation workshop or field trip to nearby cons. land
 - a. Send invitation to key landowners
 - b. Creates “safe” opportunity for LO to learn more, & for you to learn more about them & establish relationship, communication, etc.
2. Press and outreach following each land conservation success, including contact info for followup

So the landowner *didn't* contact you—now what? Get proactive!

B. Define Your Initial Objectives in Being Proactive

1. Introduce organization & interests
2. Appeal to landowner's interests (only if known, & “safe”)
3. Get agreement to meet with the right person(s)

C. Research the Landowner & Possibly Other Key Decision Makers—Discretely!

1. Confirm *Legal* Owner(s)
 - a. Public records

- i. County Registry of Deeds
(<http://www.nhdeeds.com/>)
- ii. Town property tax records
- iii. Annual Report filed by every corporation,
Corporate Division, NH Secy. of State
(http://sos.nh.gov/Corp_Div.aspx)

2. Confirm Key Decision Maker—the Person(s) You Want to Meet

- a. Usually, but not always, the LO, e.g. financial advisor, parent, etc.
- b. Among multiple owners, who's most influential?
- c. Consult friends or acquaintances of LO *whom you can trust*
 - a. E-mail at your peril! (Talking preferred)

Use discretion—avoid LO learning about your inquiry

3. Useful Info About LO

- a. Hands on vs. off re mgt. and/or use of land, e.g. farmer, hunter?
- b. Length of ownership, e.g. longtime family property?
- c. Financial capacity
- d. Hobbies
- e. Egocentric (naming opportunity?)
- f. Family politics
- g. Role of advisors
- h. Competency (engage LO's atty.?)

4. Additional Sources of Info

- a. Drive by home
- b. Contribution/membership history (own & others)
- c. Internet

D. Research the Land

- 1. (Use tools per above)
- 2. GRANIT Online Mapping Tool (<http://granitviewii.unh.edu/>)
 - a. Most current inventory of conserved lands (ensure addition to GRANIT of your newly conserved lands!)
- 3. DES OneStop Data (esp. waste issues) (<http://des.nh.gov/onestop/>)

E. Contact Medium Initiated By Whom?

- 1. Hardcopy letter followed by phone call

- a. By land trust rep., OR
- b. Mutual acquaintance trusted by LO & you
(E.g. Land trust bd. member, LO's forester, some third party)

(See sample letters, when you *can't* find another person, or as prospective owner of abutting/nearby land)

--leaving messages on answering machine?
--e-mail?

- 2. Confidentiality (default: "need to know" rule)
 - discuss w/ LO, esp. re need to talk with pot. partners
 - remind Bd. & staff periodically
- 3. Where to Meet?
 - a. Ideally, LO's home
- 4. When to Meet?
 - a. At LO's convenience...be flexible!
- 5. Others to Join You?
 - a. Two usually better than one (legitimacy, interpretation, personal safety re LO & walking land)
- 6. Don't surprise the landowner!
 - avoid unannounced visit

III. Preparation for First Meeting

A. Define meeting objectives & possible agenda, e.g.

- 1. Establish positive relationship & communication link
- 2. Introduce organization & its interests
- 3. Learn about landowner, their objectives, & land
- 4. Present concepts, possible outcome(s), & benefits
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- 5. If agreement to 4, identify costs, process, others to involve, timeframes
- 6. Define next steps
- 7. Temper expectations for proactive effort

(See "Agenda for First Meeting With Landowner" handout)

IV. The First Meeting

- A. **Appearance**—convey professionalism, preparation, use context as guide
 - How to dress for mtng.
 - Appearance extends to car, exterior (bumper stickers!)

- May have to compromise your freedom of expression to do your job

B. Ice breakers

1. Ask about history of property/ownership/stewardship
2. Walk land (ask LO if photos, esp. of them, are ok)
3. Mutual personal interests/acquaintances
4. Talk about other projects in area

C. Identify your agenda early on (be forthright)

D. Pacing; don't overwhelm

-risk of info overload

--can always come back

--questionable competency (What to do if...?)

E. Do more listening than talking

F. Verify/revise your previously established assumptions

* Esp. what you understood to have been landowner's interests & objectives

G. Summarize mtng. & next steps

H. Look for info you can provide later (maybe unrelated to land cons.)

I. Thank them!

--congratulate for taking steps

--land decisions are big ones, often irrational (land, kids, dogs)

V. After the Meeting

- A. Send followup ltr. summarizing key points, documenting handouts, cc other
- B. Deliver on commitments

VI. Conclusion

How you contact a LO, prepare for first mtng., & conduct yourself during & after first mtng., has big impact on prospects for successful cons. Outcome.

(Evaluation Forms)