

Multi-faceted Approach for Prioritizing Land Easements (MAPLE)

A new method of evaluating and prioritizing multiple conservation easements within a similar landscape.

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Conservation easements are valuable tools to retain natural resource elements including:

- 1) A specific ownership (often very large or unique – forest products company, land adjacent to a state park, or a new SNA.)
- 2) Specific species (often Rare, threatened, or endangered plant or animal.)
- 3) Specific habitat for a targeted species or purpose (shoreline, waterfowl nesting areas, wetlands, etc.)
- 4) Targeted landscapes (usually a designated geographic area where multiple goals and larger acreages are the goal. E.g. Wildlife habitat, green space, working forests, and watershed protection within a county, township or watershed.)

This MAPLE tool is most useful for targeted landscapes (#4 above) where achieving easements on a larger number of acres from multiple landowners is more important than any specific tract. (It is a given that every parcel put into an easement must have an acceptable level of natural resource value.)

Benefits of using a process like MAPLE:

- MAPLE creates a “Conservation Value Rating” for each parcel which is the ratio of environmental benefits on the parcel compared to the easement costs.
 - Using this ratio as the Conservation Value Rating allows a straight-forward comparison of multiple parcels.
- MAPLE requires sealed bidding from the landowners offering parcels.
 - Reduces easement cost by letting landowners establish their lowest price. (Note: Limits are established so no bid exceeds the appraised value or some percent of the appraised value.)
 - Eliminates complaints that bureaucrats are setting the prices.
 - Eliminates gossip and hard feelings about how or why landowner A got paid more than landowner B.
 - Eliminates need for complex formulas to establish “fair” easement value. (Only the maximum needs to be established.)
 - Uses a fixed amount of funding most efficiently
- MAPLE uses natural resource experts to create the scoring system for rating the local natural resources.
 - Uses only existing data or aerial photo measurements.
 - Can be done in 20 minutes in the landowner’s kitchen.
 - Scoring can be targeted to the funder’s priorities.

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Example:

Each of the following landowners has 100 acres within the target landscape. Naturally each parcel has different natural resource features and would have different environmental benefits if enrolled in an easement. Each of the properties meets the minimum requirements of natural resource benefits. Let's assume that \$160,000 has been allocated to this landscape by the funder for this round of bidding.

Bob's land is very nice and has 10,000 environmental benefit points as scored. As importantly, Bob is willing to accept \$500/acre for an easement. His "Conservation Value Rating" is $10,000/500$ or 20.

Julie's land has 8,000 environmental benefit points as scored. Julie wants \$2,000/acre for an easement. Her "Conservation Value Rating" is $8000/2000$ or 4.

Jack's land has 5,000 environmental benefit points as scored and Jack wants \$1,000/acre for an easement. His "Conservation Value Rating" is $5000/1000$ or 5.

Rachel's land has the minimum 1,000 environmental benefit points as scored. Rachel is really interested in conservation and wants only \$100/acre for an easement. Her "Conservation Value Rating" is $1000/100$ or 10.

Under the MAPLE system, we begin funding with the highest Conservation Value Rating. (Conservation Value Rating = the ratio of Environmental Benefit Points / \$ per acre)

First, we would fund Bob's land using \$50,000, (Conservation Value Rating = 20)
Next, we would fund Rachel's land using \$10,000, (Conservation Value Rating = 10)
Next, we would fund Jack's land using \$50,000, (Conservation Value Rating = 5)

The funding would now be gone and we would not fund an easement for Julie's land. However she may choose to bid in future rounds if funding is again available and she may choose to adjust her bid in a future round.

See next page for example of scoring sheet.

MAPLE Method (Multi-faceted Approach for Prioritizing Land Easements)

Avon Hills Area Conservation Easement Bid Worksheet

Formulas updated 3 March 2011 by T. Kroll

Landowner Code Name:	Example	(Make up a name or code that will be used to identify your property.)
Date prepared:	7-Apr-11	
Environmental Benefits Points	Environmental Weighting Factor	Units Affected
Enter data in the blocks with this color to determine Environmental Benefits Points.		
(EBP= weighting factor x units)		
Size of Property (based on tax statement acres)		
		120 Total acres owned by applicant contiguous to this proposed easement. (For information only)
1,246	10 +	110 Acres to be protected by an easement, not including any house site acres within the easement area.
		120 Acres of this proposed easement plus those acres outside the easement that would fall within a full "40" or Gov. Lot
		(i.e. 75 acres in easement + 5 homesite acres = 80 acres. Include only those acres owned by applicant.)
1,246	10 +	110 Total contiguous easement acres or largest block if not all acres are contiguous
Special Natural & Cultural Resources to be Protected by the Easement (count only those acres covered by the easement)		
4,500	100	45 Acres of Outstanding Quality DNR Sites of Biodiversity Significance (SOBS) (Rounded up to nearest 5 acres)
1,500	75	20 Acres of High Quality DNR Sites of Biodiversity Significance (SOBS) (Rounded up to nearest 5 acres)
0	50	0 Acres of Moderate Quality DNR Sites of Biodiversity Significance (SOBS) (Rounded up to nearest 5 acres)
1,920	1	1920 Feet of Shoreline on "public waters" (lakes+ wetlands>10 ac) from the Public Water Inventory Map (round up to nearest 10)
1,427	10 +	260 Feet of the longest contiguous section of shoreline on "public waters" for each lake on which the survey is "meandered." (round up to nearest 10)
0	100	0 Acres which are designated as a source of public drinking water or aquifer recharge area.
0	1	0 Feet of protected property boundary which is adjacent to a designated scenic road, river, trail, or other designated scenic feature.
0	500	0 # of documented sites of historical or cultural significance which will be protected.
Open Space /Working Forest /Working Ag to be Protected by the Easement (count only those acres covered by the easement)		
1,119	10 +	100 Acres to be used for working forest, prairie, preserved forest, savanna, or wetland. (Not intended for agriculture, pasturing, or horticulture.)
50	5	10 Acres to be allowed for use as agriculture, pasturing, or horticulture.
0	5	0 Acres for which a current land management plan exists. (i.e. Forest Stewardship Plan or NRCS Farm Plan)
Location of the Property to be Protected (count only those acres covered by the easement)		
0	100	0 Acres on which unrestricted public access will be allowed.
1,320	1	1320 Feet of protected property boundary which is adjacent to either public land or other permanently protected land.
1,246	10 +	110 Acres which are inside some kind of specially designated conservation protection area. (Township, county conservation overlay district)
Building Allotments to be Extinguished, or Retained for Future Use, or are Already Used by the Applicant		
(Count only allotments on land controlled by the applicant. Include allotments inside the proposed easement area plus those in the areas outside the easement that would fall within the next largest full "40" or Gov. Lot)		
		3 Total number of building allotments (used or unused) that are assigned by zoning. (Often 1 per 40 acre. Check with zoning board.)
		1 Number of building allotments already used or to be retained from above. (Include any existing homesites you own.)
2,000	1000	2 Number of building allotments to be extinguished on the proposed easement
17,573	SUB-TOTAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS POINTS	
Deductions (if any) for Not Extinguishing all Building Allotments (100% protection = no deductions)		
16,109	= sub-total x %	92% Percent of land in the easement compared to the next highest "full 40" or government lot. (Protection must be 80% or more.)
16,109	=(.35+ %)x abo	67% Percent of total allotments to extinguished. (Must be >65% for full credit.)
Final Calculations and Examples		
16,109	16,109	16,109 = TOTAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS POINTS
\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$500.00 \$ per acre you want to be paid for the easement.
8.1	16.1	32.2 = YOUR CONSERVATION VALUE RATING
Conservation Value Ratings = (Environmental Benefits Points / Cost per acre for the easement) Higher is better!		
110	110	110 = Total acres you are protecting with an easement
\$220,000.00	\$110,000.00	\$55,000.00 = Total \$\$ you would receive if your bid is accepted.
Maximum Bids must not exceed the lesser of 1) the appraised value of the rights extinguished by the easement or 2) the % of ATAMV from below.		
	Assessors Township Average Market Value (ATAMV) per acre	Avon \$3,793 Collegevill Farming \$4,698 St. Joseph \$2,764 St. Wendel \$4,910 Wakefield \$4,873 \$4,452
> 500	Total Environmental Benefit Points = Minimum to participate	
< 1,000	Environmental Benefit Points = Payment NTE 20% of ATAMV nor NTE appraised value	\$759 \$940 \$553 \$982 \$975 \$890
< 3,000	Environmental Benefit Points = Payment NTE 30% of ATAMV nor NTE appraised value	\$1,138 \$1,409 \$829 \$1,473 \$1,462 \$1,336
< 5,000	Environmental Benefit Points = Payment NTE 40% of ATAMV nor NTE appraised value	\$1,517 \$1,879 \$1,106 \$1,964 \$1,949 \$1,781
< 10,000	Environmental Benefit Points = Payment NTE 50% of ATAMV nor NTE appraised value	\$1,897 \$2,349 \$1,382 \$2,455 \$2,437 \$2,226
< 15,000	Environmental Benefit Points = Payment NTE 60% of ATAMV nor NTE appraised value	\$2,276 \$2,819 \$1,658 \$2,946 \$2,924 \$2,671
< 20,000	Environmental Benefit Points = Payment NTE 70% of ATAMV nor NTE appraised value	< Your Max Bid \$2,655 \$3,289 \$1,935 \$3,437 \$3,411 \$3,116
> 20,000	Environmental Benefit Points = Payment NTE 80% of ATAMV nor NTE appraised value	\$3,034 \$3,758 \$2,211 \$3,928 \$3,898 \$3,562



Landowner Application
for a Non-Binding Bid to Obtain a Conservation Easement.
Avon Hills Round of Bidding Ending March 22, 2011

Form updated 17 March 2011

Complete, sign, and return all 4 pages of this form plus a copy of your property map in a sealed envelope. Write on the map to generally indicate areas you wish to include in the easement and areas you wish to leave out. Deliver in person or by mail to the office of Saint John's Arboretum, Box 2000, Collegeville, MN 56321 so that it arrives before 3 pm on March 22, 2011.

Conservation easements are a legal tool used to restrict certain activities on private property in perpetuity in order to achieve conservation goals. Easements are negotiable, tailored to the land and the landowners. The broadest goal of an easement is to keep most of the land undeveloped.

The purpose of this form is to allow landowners to voluntarily bid and compete for public funds made available to the Avon Hills Initiative through the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Saint John's University is the fiscal agent for the grant and distributes the funds. Bids will be prioritized using a method which compares the environmental benefits to the landowners bid to create a conservation value rating. (Multifaceted Approach to Prioritizing Land Easements -MAPLE) Successful bidders will be paid upon finalizing a conservation easement with the easement holder, the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT).

Landowner Information:

Name(s): _____

Yes No ---> The names above include all persons who have a legal share in this property.

Designated Easement Contact Person(s) Information:

Name(s): _____
Address: _____
Phone(s): Day: ____ - ____ - _____ Cell: ____ - ____ - _____
E-mail(s): _____

Legal Description or copy of tax statement: _____

Landowner Application

on a Non-Binding Bid to Obtain a Conservation Easement.

Section 1: The following information is useful for the easement holder (Minnesota Land Trust) in determining how complicated the process of finalizing an easement might be. Answering "True" is preferred, but not necessarily required in this section. (The terms "we" and "us" means those parties which have a legal interest in the property being considered for an easement.)

T F The property which is intended to be covered by the easement is held free and clear by us. (No mortgages, encumbrances, liens, or delinquent taxes exist against the land.)

T F The property which is intended to be covered by the easement is not currently the subject of a lawsuit, annexation, condemnation, or a proposed utility right-of-way.

T F The property which is intended to be covered by the easement has not been the subject of a proposed development or plat taken before a planning commission by us within the last 3 years.

T F It is not currently our intent to develop the land intended to be covered by the easement within the next 5 years.

T F We believe we have a good understanding of easements in general.

T F We understand that an easement will have permanent restrictions on the land to benefit long-term conservation.

T F We understand that we will be able to bequeath, donate, or sell our land to any person or entity, but that those parties will continue to live with the easement restrictions. We understand that the easement will become part of the deed.

T F We believe we have a good understanding of what property uses we would like to restrict and also those we would like to retain in this easement.

T F We have discussed conservation easements in general with our family.

T F We have discussed our interest in this conservation easement with our family.

T F We have an attorney or could find one with whom we can discuss this conservation easement if we so choose.

T F We have a financial adviser or could find one with whom we can discuss this conservation easement if we so choose.

Section 2: Please indicate that you have read, understand, and agree with each of the following statements by circling either Y for yes or N for no. Answering "yes" to each question in this section is required to qualify for an easement.

Y N Our application must be received in a sealed envelope marked "Easement Bid" at the offices of Saint John's Arboretum, Box 2000, Collegeville, MN 56321 before 3 pm on Tuesday, March 22, 2011.

Y N Information regarding completed easements will be considered public information as public funds are being used. Any information submitted on the application may be made public if the names and legal descriptions are removed.

Y N We may be party to only one application per round of bidding.

Y N At least part of our land is in the Avon Hills as described in the map "The Avon Hills Landscape of Stearns County."

Y N Separate landowners may pool their bids on a single application as a group, providing 1) they all agree to accept their

combined environmental benefits score and 2) provided they all agree to the same bid rate per acre. If accepted as a group, each landowner will receive an individualized easement, but all landowners must sign their easements for any to be accepted.

Y N We are not legally committed to the easement until we agree and sign the final easement documents. We may withdraw at any time for any reason prior to signing. The only penalty for landowners whose bids are accepted and then choose to withdraw is that they may not participate in a future round of bidding sponsored by the same funding source for 18 months. THIS PENALTY PROVISION WILL NOT APPLY TO THE AVON HILLS-MARCH 2011 ROUND OF FUNDING.

Y N The MN Land Trust (MLT) will be the easement holder and is not legally committed to the easement until they agree and sign the final easement documents. They may withdraw at any time for any reason prior to signing without legal recourse by the applicants.

Y N To have a bid accepted, you must be able to convince the easement holder (MLT) that you can legally sign an easement within the time constraints set by the easement holder and/or the funding source which is June 30, 2011. This decision is at the sole discretion of the easement holder. Rejected landowners may apply at any future round of bidding.

Y N The Environmental Benefits Points determination is partly subjective and we accept the score as presented.

Y N The Conservation Value Rating is determined by dividing your Environmental Benefits Points by the dollars /acre you wish to be paid from funding provided by the LCCMR. Other parties may offer additional funding to specific landowners without affecting that landowner's Conservation Value Rating.

Y N Our bid must meet the minimum threshold of Environmental Benefits (500 points) and will be prioritized against any other bids based on the highest Conservation Value Rating.

Y N The landowner whose bid has the highest Conservation Value Rating will be offered the opportunity for an easement. If funds remain, the landowner with the next highest Conservation Value Rating will be offered the opportunity and so on until the available funds are expended.

Y N If a landowner is next in line for funding, but not enough funding remains to fulfill their bid the landowner may choose to: 1) Withdraw their bid and be allowed to bid without penalty in the next round. 2) Lower their bid to use all the remaining funds while keeping all the acres they originally bid for the easement.

Y N There is a limit to the amount of funding a landowner may receive which is the lesser of either the 1) appraised value of the rights given up in the easement or 2) the limit connecting Environmental Benefits to a percentage of the Assessors Township Average Market Value (ATAMV) per acre.

Y N If a landowner's bid is higher than the appraised value of the easement, the land owner may choose to: 1) Withdraw their bid and be allowed to bid without penalty in the next round. 2) Lower their bid to maximum appraised value while keeping all the acres they originally bid for the easement.

Y N The income from any payment we receive for an easement is considered taxable income.

Y N As needed, the landowner is responsible for the costs of acquiring a land management plan (\$7-10/acre).

Y N As needed, the landowner is responsible for the costs associated with surveying.

Y N The previous answers and bid represent the full agreement of everyone applying for this easement.

Print name(s) and sign by landowner(s) or designated easement contact:

Date: