

**Guidance for Conservation Easement Projects Based on LCCMR Discussion at 08/11/11 Meeting**

- **Public Access**
  - For parcels purchased with public dollars, priority should be given to parcels that provide some level of public access.
- **Price Paid**
  - The price paid for a conservation easement as a percentage of total parcel value should be weighed carefully, particularly when there is no public access included as part of the purchase.
  - When public access is included then a greater percentage of total value is justifiable, but when public access is not included it's prudent to weigh the degree to which a parcel already is or will be protected. Given the limited conservation dollars available in relation to the spectrum of opportunities available, an acquisition should aim to avoid any appearance of public subsidization of private land acquisition by paying a landowner to do exactly what they were already planning to do with a parcel.
- **Personnel Costs**
  - Efforts should aim to minimize personnel costs for easement acquisition. Ratios of more than \$1 of personnel costs for every \$1 of conservation easement expenditures suggest there may be more economical ways of doing things that could result in greater dollars being available for land purchase.
- **Communication and Coordination with Local Communities/Local Government**
  - Organizations should emphasize clear and open channels of communication between the local communities and governments of the areas where an acquisition is taking place so as to ensure that relevant local plans/circumstances (e.g., changes in zoning) do not have problematic implications for the acquisition under consideration.
- **Donated vs. Purchased Easements**
  - Donated easements are preferred due to the greater ratio of benefit provided for the number of public dollars expended.
  - Although this guidance is applicable to both donated and purchased easements, due to their greater public costs it is more strongly intended for purchased easements.
- **Information Provided**
  - Projects need to provide LCCMR staff with additional required information on parcels prior to final closings, and should do so with adequate lead time so as to eliminate any potential impact on closings if questions or requests for further information should arise.