

CSC Project Synopsis -- 2014

Project Title: Establishing Stewardship Supports for Land Trusts:

- a Protocol for Monitoring Properties Protected with Conservation Easements and Properties owned by Land Trusts; and
- a Cloud Based Back-up System for Baseline Documents and Monitoring Reports for lands protected by land trusts.

Goals:

- To establish a monitoring protocol and form that land trusts can use for monitoring properties they are protecting with conservation easements as well as properties that they own and provide workshops for land trust leaders on the use of the monitoring protocol.
- To develop a cloud based back-up system where baseline documents for land trust properties are maintained and where annual monitoring reports can also be maintained for properties with a baseline document in the system.

Brief Description:

The RI Land Trust Council (Council) proposes to undertake two projects building on the Conservation Stewardship Collaborative's initial land conservation stewardship protocols: Baseline Documents and Management Plans. Historically, baseline documents and management plans for many protected properties in Rhode Island were not prepared or are inadequate to meet today's nationally recognized standards for baseline documentation. Further, many Rhode Island land trusts are entirely volunteer organizations without an office. Many have their property records (deeds, easements, baseline documents and monitoring reports) scattered around the homes and offices of current and past Land Trust Board members. These two situations create a large risk for Rhode Island's protected lands and the land conservation community's ability to enforce easements and defend our collective land conservation accomplishments. Further, national standards require land trusts to have off-site back up for their land conservation and stewardship records. The Council plans to address these issues with a system where land trusts across that state can store digitized baseline documentation and monitoring reports.

Two of the first initiatives of the RI Conservation Stewardship Collaborative were to develop, test and improve protocols for preparing baseline documents and management plans for protected lands. The Council proposes to coordinate 2 initiatives and employ consultants to build on these two CSC protocols and build on the work of the Council's Land Trust Excellence Committee (which is working in partnership with the Land Trust Alliance).

1. The Council proposes to engage a consultant to develop a monitoring protocol and monitoring form for Rhode Island as the next step in stewardship documentation. The consultant will gather information about existing monitoring practices used by the land trusts and other conservation organizations with established strong monitoring practices. The consultant will also research Land Trust Alliance's standards and practices and monitoring practices and forms used by land trusts in other states. They will look for previous work developing a protocol and forms that multiple organizations use for monitoring protected lands. Based on this research and the consultants experience monitoring protected lands for land trusts, they will develop a protocol and monitoring form for monitoring protected properties in Rhode Island. This

draft monitoring protocol and form will be distributed to members of an advisory committee for review and comment. The consultant will then amend the protocol and monitoring form based on the feedback received. Once the monitoring form and protocol are completed, the Consultant will lead two workshops about how to use the protocol and monitoring form. One workshop will be offered at the 2015 Land and Water Conservation Summit.

2. The Council proposes to contract with the web designer who maintains the Council's website and Land & Water Partnership's website (where the CSC stewardship library is housed) to develop a cloud based filing system for baseline documents and monitoring reports for Land Trusts' protected lands. The consultant will interview land trusts with strong baseline document systems in place to ascertain their practices and needs from a cloud based filing system. The consultant will work with the Council to research models in use in other states and at land trusts. This research will inform the consultant's design of a system for Rhode Island. The consultant will involve land conservation practitioners in the design and review of the system and will test the system once it is developed. The system will include links between baseline documents in the system and property records in RIDEM's GIS database for protected lands.

Deliverables: The deliverables for this project are:

1. Monitoring protocol and monitoring form for protected lands.
2. Workshops on the use of the monitoring protocol and form.
3. Cloud-based filing system for baseline documents and monitoring reports for land protected by land trusts.

Timetable and Benchmarks:

Dec. 2013 – Jan. 2014	- Establish contracts with consultants for both components of this initiative
January 2014	- Initial interviews and or meeting of the consultant and advisory committee for each project.
January – March	- Research into monitoring protocols and forms and cloud based filing systems for baseline documentation used in other states.
March 2014	- Develop draft monitoring protocol and monitoring form. Circulate it to the advisory committee for review.
March 2014	- Develop cloud based filing system for baseline documents and monitoring reports. Test it and get feedback from advisory committee members.
April – May 2014	- Hold 1 st training on use of monitoring protocol and form - Solicit baseline document records from land trusts to begin using the file system
May 2014	- Adjust and revise the monitoring protocol/form and the baseline document filing system as necessary once it is being used.
2014 January	- Issue check for \$10,300 to the RILTC restricted for the development of Land Trust Stewardship support systems and related training

Budget:

Amount	Purpose
\$ 3,150	Consultant development of monitoring protocol and monitoring form, and 2 workshops on the use of the protocol and form.
\$ 3,300	Consultant development of cloud “filing system” for baseline documents and monitoring reports for land trust properties.
\$ 2,000	Estimated cost for data input for initial year.
\$ 400	Server space hosting for baseline filing system (initial year). (Note: as addition to existing website – RI Land Trust Council or Land & Water Partnership)
\$ 300	Workshop space rental and supply costs
\$1, 150	Partial cost for project coordination

Total \$ 10,300

Payments will be made as follows:

\$10,300 Payment will be made to: TSNE- RI Land Trust Council at
Rhode Island Land Trust Council
PO Box 633
Saunderstown, RI 02874

Note: Third Sector New England is fiscal sponsor for RI Land Trust Council

Project oversight and coordination will be done by: Rupert Friday, Director,
RI Land Trust Council.