

Protocols for the Cornish Conservation Commission Monitoring Conservation Easements

These protocols came from training sessions at the Upper Valley Land Trust in Hanover and at the Conservation Land Stewardship in Concord. They also came from field trainings with Jason Berard at UVLT and Steve Walker at CLS.

One of the jobs, which the Cornish Conservation Commission does for the Town, is to monitor the conservation easements, for which the Town is the primary holder. These are to be done yearly.

The folders for these easements are held in the commission's file cabinet upstairs in the town office,

It is important to establish a good working relationship with the owners of the easements that you will be monitoring.

Attempts should be made to contact the owner by phone, email or letter, to establish a convenient time to come monitor their property. They should be asked if there are any changes or concerns related to their easement. They should be invited to come along, but it is not required that they do so. Much valuable information can be learned when the owner is able to participate.

Before monitoring a property, it is important to familiarize yourself with the information about the easement in the front of its folder. It is also helpful to look back at prior monitoring notes, to see if there have been any issues or concerns, in particular the previous year's notes.

Conservation Easement folders should not leave the town office building. They are the only record that we have of important information and monitoring reports.

Copies of the previous year's monitoring forms and maps could be placed in a field notebook to be taken to the property when monitoring.

It is not necessary to walk the entire easement every year, especially the large ones. Different sections should be monitored each year, so that the entire easement including borders, corner markers and the interior have been monitored within a few years time.

It is helpful to place flagging at boundary corner markers if they can be found. Note any areas of concern.

Make note of interesting plants and animals or their signs. It is a good idea to bring a camera to help document what you see.

It is also a good idea to bring small field guides. If you have any areas of expertise or special interests and you see something interesting include it in your report. For example Jason Berard at UVLT loves bird nests. He brings a guide for nests with him and sometimes reports what he sees. Ricky Poor likes identifying ferns and wildflowers. Landowners love to read about interesting things that you see on their easement properties.

Some owners are not able to walk their easement properties, and they especially appreciate reading about what you have seen.

Following your visit, a letter should be written to the landowner. Included with the letter will be your monitoring report and a map showing where you walked and any important findings marked.

You may fill out the generic monitoring report by hand or download the form to your computer. Conservation Land Stewardship has a form on their website, but they do not mind if you send our generic form.

You may either show where you walked on a gps generated map or a paper map that you took from the folder.

Copies of the letter, monitoring form, and map will be placed in the easement folder that is filed in the town office.

If you use one of the paper maps found in the back of the folder, make sure that you do not use the last one, so that the next person monitoring will always have a clean map to copy and use in the field.

If there are parties with secondary interest in the easement, like the Upper Valley Land Trust and the Conservation Land Stewardship, monitoring forms and maps should be sent to them.

