



University of  
New Hampshire  
Cooperative Extension

## THE STEWARDSHIP NETWORK: NEW ENGLAND TRAINING GUIDES

# How to Monitor Conservation Easements



## Instructor Notes



The Stewardship Network  
New England

# How to Monitor Conservation Easements: Instructor Notes

## A guide for organizations and towns training volunteers to monitor conservation easements

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This training guide is adapted and borrowed from materials developed by Frank Mitchell for Bear-Paw Regional Greenways and Deborah Goard with Southeast Land Trust of NH (SELT).

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*How to Monitor Conservation Easements* is part of a series of training guides produced by UNHCE intended for use by organizations or individuals seeking to train volunteers to conduct stewardship and educational activities. Use of the training guide, associated materials, and the “Stewardship Network: New England Training” name is made available through a Creative Commons license by the University of New Hampshire.

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## Why Volunteers?

There are many reasons why having volunteers monitor conservation easements is a good thing:

- Increase capacity. Professionals can't always monitor every easement. Towns and small land trusts in particular often lack the budget and resources to monitor all their easements with paid staff.
- Good conservation easement monitoring benefits the entire conservation community.
- Volunteers care about their communities! They are passionate about conservation lands in their town and are interested in helping care for them.
- It's rewarding work, and we KNOW volunteers can do it.
- Volunteers love spending time in nature!
- **It's FUN!**



## Introduction

Volunteers play an important role in conservation. Conservation commissions, land trusts, and other conservation groups have a strong need for skilled volunteers, but often lack the resources or capacity to organize and coordinate trainings on the wide range of stewardship topics. The training guides from The Stewardship Network: New England are the product of collaborative efforts by conservation groups in New Hampshire to share expertise and develop stewardship trainings in topic areas identified as priorities for volunteers' skills. These guides can be used to train volunteers for your organization or group, and will help in The Stewardship Network: New England's mission of increasing the capacity of conservation groups, agencies, and volunteers to care for New Hampshire's lands and waters.

This training guide, *How to Monitor Conservation Easements: Instructor Notes*, will help you host a workshop for natural resource volunteers that will cover the basics of monitoring conservation easements. Volunteers will review the basics of conservation easements, how to read the easement deed, best practices for monitoring easements, and safety considerations.

### A note to conservation commissions:

If you are looking to train a group of volunteers to monitor conservation easements in your town, we strongly recommend partnering with a local land trust or other conservation professional. Because conservation easements are complex, legal documents, it is important to ensure that you are providing your volunteers with accurate, up-to-date information on how to monitor conservation easements. Visit [www.nhltc.org](http://www.nhltc.org) to find your local land trust, or contact The Stewardship Network: New England staff for more information on how to find a conservation professional or partner with a conservation organization.

### A note to land trusts and conservation organizations:

Whether you already have an established volunteer conservation easement monitoring program and host regular trainings, or you are looking to create a new volunteer program to monitor your conservation easements, we hope you'll consider reaching out to the communities in your service area and invite their conservation commissioners to attend your training. Many towns lack the expertise and resources to monitor conservation easements properly. It is in the best interest of the conservation community as a whole to help ensure that all conservation easements are monitored to the same standard. Feel free to use any of the information and resources in this training guide to train volunteers within your organization or local communities.

## Planning a Training

*The Stewardship Network: New England Training Guides* are available for any organization or town to use, but planning and executing a volunteer training will still take effort. The time spent building a skilled base of volunteers can be an incredibly valuable use of your time. Here you'll find a sample training agenda and four simple steps to keep in mind when planning your volunteer training.

### Sample Training Agenda

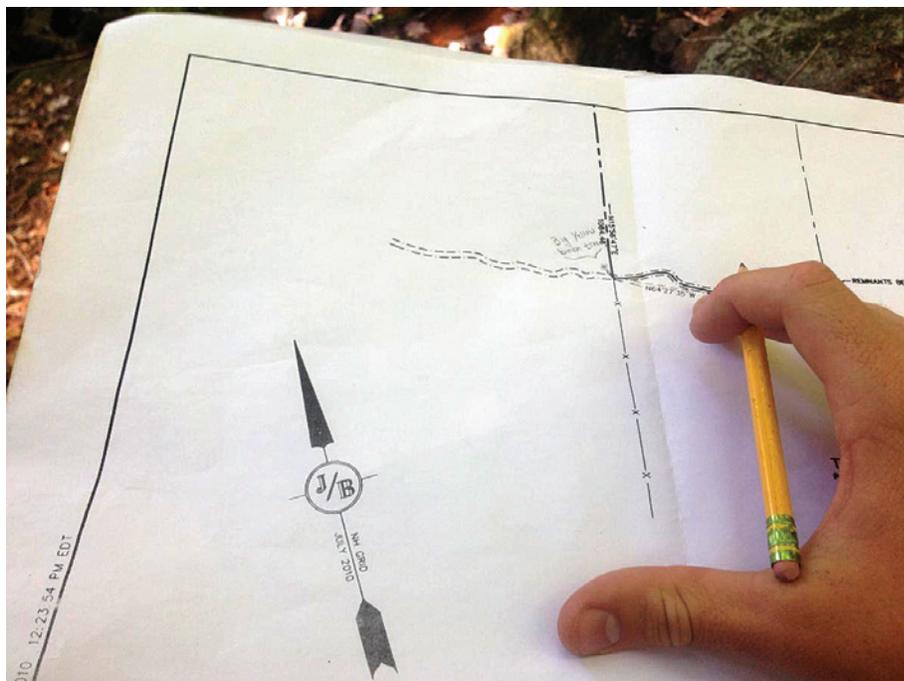
This training is best done with a combination of indoor and outdoor sessions.

TOPIC	DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY	TIME
<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	Introductions (instructors and volunteers)	15 minutes
	Your organization and mission	
<b>Conservation Easement Monitoring Basics</b>	What is a conservation easement?	20 minutes
	Why do we monitor easements?	
	Safety considerations	
<b>Monitoring Procedures and Documentation</b>	How to monitor easements	60 minutes
	Introduce monitoring form	
	How to handle potential violations	
<b>Safety</b>	Overview of safety considerations	20 minutes
<b>Field Activity</b>	How to interpret survey maps	1-2 hours
	How to interpret aerial photos	
	Compass and navigation tips & tricks	
	Walk a portion of an easement boundary	

## Where to Hold Your Training

**An ideal property will have the following:**

- Landowner permission to use the property for the training
- Adequate parking for a large group
- Easy access
- A nearby indoor venue for the first part of your training
- An easement with features to highlight (i.e. clear boundaries and monuments, maybe a monument that is difficult to find to challenge your group)
- An existing survey map and aerial imagery



## 1. Choose the Location, Date, and Time

You'll need both an indoor and outdoor location for your training. Your outdoor location should feature a conservation easement on which you can practice monitoring.

Because you will be training volunteers, we recommend holding your training on a weekend. This workshop typically takes about five hours to run. As such, you will want to make sure you either provide lunch or have volunteers bring their own.

The best time of year for the training is in the spring or fall, which are the recommended times to monitor easements. Both seasons offer clear, unobstructed views through the forest and make teaching easement monitoring easier. Spring training is preferred because it is the start of the monitoring season.



## 2. Recruit Volunteers

Recruiting motivated volunteers who are excited about conservation is an important step in organizing your training. Here are some things to keep in mind when recruiting volunteers to monitor easements:

- **Group size.**

A recommended group size for this training would be anywhere from six to 20 people. If the group is bigger, you'll need additional trainers to assist in the field.

- **Recruit pre-existing volunteers.**

Do you have volunteers who work on trails, serve on a board or committee, or help with tasks around the office? They might be excited to monitor easements if they had some training!

- **Use The Stewardship Network's registration system.**

When you post a volunteer training on The Stewardship Network: New England's online calendar, you will automatically receive e-mails with volunteer contact information when someone registers for your training.



## 3. Select Your Trainers

For this workshop, we strongly recommend working with a conservation professional to lead the training. Connect with your local land trust or with The Stewardship Network: New England staff if you need help finding a conservation professional.

Having more than one leader is a good idea: it allows the volunteers to hear from a variety of people in your organization, and will ensure that one person doesn't get burnt out doing it all. Two leaders is likely sufficient for smaller groups; three or four is also usually fine for larger groups, though you want to be sure that trainers don't overwhelm the group size.





## 4. Organize the Logistics

Planning the details in advance will ensure the training runs smoothly and the volunteers have a positive experience.

### Food

- You can keep it simple, but offering food and drinks as volunteers arrive is a nice touch and can help break the ice.
- Consider providing muffins or doughnuts in the morning or cookies and fruit in the afternoon.
- Don't forget something to drink. Coffee or cider always hits the spot.

### Supplies

- An easel or whiteboard for brainstorming during discussions.
- Compasses, survey maps, and aerial photos for the field activity.
- Sign-in sheet for contact information (name, e-mail address, etc.).
- Nametags for volunteers. (This will make it easier for them to communicate with each other, and will help you use and learn the names of new volunteers.) Don't forget your nametag, too!

### Technology

- The indoor portion of this training will likely require a PowerPoint presentation. Ensure that your venue can provide you with projection equipment and a screen, or bring your own.

## 5. Compile Volunteer Materials

There are volunteer materials available in *The Stewardship Network: New England's Training Guides* that will help volunteers monitor conservation easements. These materials can be used as-is, or can be edited and adapted to fit the needs of your group/organization. See the following section for a list of materials for volunteers.



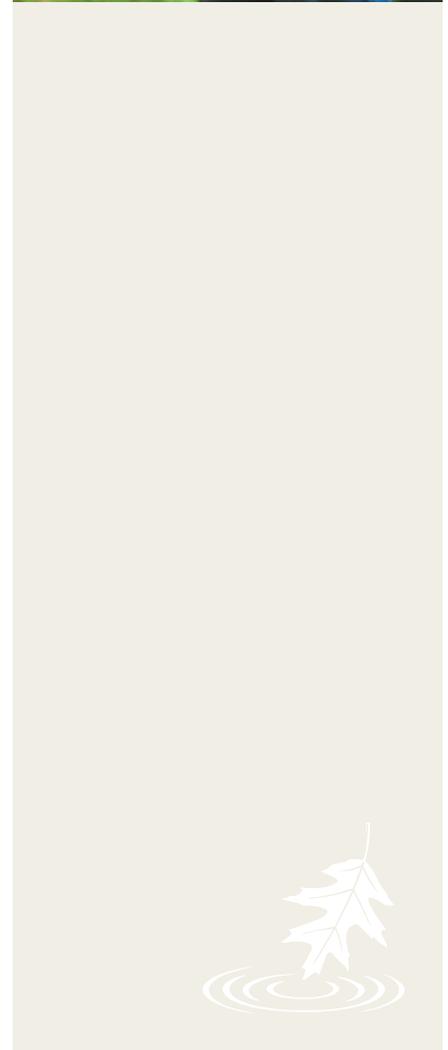
## Materials for Volunteers

The following materials will help volunteers monitor conservation easements. These resources can be found on The Stewardship Network: New England’s website at [newengland.stewardshipnetwork.org](http://newengland.stewardshipnetwork.org).

Print these out and provide them to volunteers in a folder of materials; this will allow them to reference the guides, checklists, and tips as they prepare to monitor conservation easements.



VOLUNTEER MATERIALS	WHAT IS THIS?
<p><b>How to Monitor Conservation Easements: Volunteer Handbook</b></p>	<p>A step-by-step guide for volunteers on how to monitor conservation easements.</p>
<p><b>Sample Easement Monitoring Form</b></p>	<p>A sample form to be used during monitoring, which can be used as-is or adapted as needed.</p>
<p><b>Outdoor Skills for Conservation</b></p>	<p>Tips on becoming more comfortable navigating off-trail in the woods. Includes tips and tricks for reading survey maps, using a map and compass, and general safety tips.</p>





## From the Team at The Stewardship Network: New England

We hope you find the *How to Monitor Conservation Easements* training guide and materials valuable to your work. Volunteer conservation easement monitors are a valuable addition to a town or organization looking to steward their conservation lands. If you have any questions about the content, tips, and materials provided, contact:

**The Stewardship Network:  
New England**

**224 Nesmith Hall, 131 Main St.  
Durham, NH 03824**

**[newengland@  
stewardshipnetwork.org](mailto:newengland@stewardshipnetwork.org)**

**603-679-9444**



## Staying in Touch with Volunteers

After the training is over it's important to follow up with your volunteers. If appropriate, give your volunteer specific property assignments at the end of the training. Have volunteers commit to a timeline for completing their monitoring assignments. Make sure they have all the documents and materials they need well in advance of their planned monitoring visit.

It is critical to follow up with your volunteers after they have monitored their assigned conservation easement and submitted their report. Ask the volunteer if any questions or concerns arose during their visit. Review their report to make sure they didn't find any violations or issues while monitoring.

This guide is part of *The Stewardship Network: New England Training Guides* series published by UNH Cooperative Extension, for conservation organizations that want to work effectively with volunteers on stewardship and educational projects. Guides and materials are available for free download at [newengland.stewardshipnetwork.org](http://newengland.stewardshipnetwork.org).

## **Additional Titles:**

### **How to Lead a Nature Walk**

Information for workshop instructors and organizers on how to train volunteers to lead nature walks on conservation lands.

### **Easement Monitoring with Volunteers**

Information for workshop instructors and organizers on how to train volunteers to monitor conservation easements.

### **Off-Trail: Outdoor Skills for Land Conservation**

Information for workshop instructors and organizers on how to train volunteers in field skills such as using a map and compass and global positioning system (GPS), understanding a survey, navigating in the woods, recognizing property boundaries, and more.

### **Basic Trail Maintenance and Construction** – *available 2016*

Information for workshop leaders on how to teach basic trail construction and maintenance skills to volunteers.

### **Invasive Plant Identification, Mapping, and Control** – *available 2016*

Information for workshop instructors and organizers on how to provide education and training to volunteers in recognizing, mapping, and controlling invasive plants in their communities.

### **Volunteer Workday 101** – *available 2016*

Information for those interested in working effectively with volunteers to



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