

Property Selection Criteria

Accepted August 1, 2013

Opacum Land Trust takes its stewardship role seriously. Once it accepts a conservation property in fee or a conservation restriction on a property, Opacum Land Trust must protect the property forever, "in perpetuity". This is a significant commitment of the limited resources of the Trust but it is a promise that can never be ignored or broken. Consequently, the members of the Land Trust's Board of Directors must carefully evaluate each proposed acquisition with respect to the Land Trust's conservation goals and managerial abilities.

Opacum Land Trust's conservation goals are sufficiently broad to include a wide variety of lands. In support of these goals, the Trust uses the following criteria to evaluate lands being considered for protection by the Land Trust, by asking if the land has one or more of the following characteristics:

Is it habitat for endangered, threatened, or rare species?

http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/species_info/ mesa_list/ mesa_list.htm

Does it contain exemplary natural ecosystems? (such as old-growth forests, refer to

http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/natural_communities/pdf/priority_natural_commun.pdf)

Is it included in BioMap2? <http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap2.htm>

Is it included in other like studies (ex. TNC Resiliency)?

What type of access is available? Is it landlocked? Does it allow for public access? Are there hiking trails on the property? Is parking available? Is there access for maintenance?

Is it valuable for timber or agricultural production? Is there a forest management plan?

What water resources are present? Are there riparian areas, shoreline, rivers, lakes, ponds, streams, intermittent streams, seeps, springs, vernal pools, wetlands, floodplains, or other lands important for the protection of water quality? What aquifers are present?

Does the property connect to or have viable potential to connect to other protected lands to form a greenway or wildlife corridor?

Does it include unique local scenic viewpoints or outstanding physiographic features (for example, distinct outcroppings, waterfalls, or bluffs) that help define the character of our locale and enhance our community's sense of place?



Is it a heritage site of historic and/or prehistoric importance? Has any archeological investigation ever taken place on the site?

Does it include ecosystems of educational or scientific value?

What are the threats to the property?

How many abutters to the property?

Are there undesirable uses (e.g., ORVs, dump sites)? Existing or potential air, water, noise + light pollution that might make the property unattractive or involve us in legal action? Hazardous waste?

Are there known controversies that we would inherit relating to the property; including inter-family disputes; Problems with uncertain ownership (title), easements, etc.?

Is there strong community support to protect this land? Are there present or potential volunteers? Opacum strives to work in all of the towns it serves.

Is Opacum the most suitable organization to protect the property? If not, can Opacum facilitate, thus providing an opportunity to work with other like organizations, communities or state agencies?

Does Opacum have the capability to manage the property successfully?

Are there legal or zoning restrictions or requirements that might limit management?

If this is a gift, do legal restrictions limit acceptance?

Can a public outreach campaign be developed to acquire the property and establish a stewardship fund? Are there existing or potential endowment funds or other financial support?

Is a funding source in place to support on-going monitoring?

Will the property complement other OLT holdings & contribute significantly to Opacum fulfilling its mission? Opacum Land Trust must be confident that it can adequately fulfill its stewardship responsibility for each property or easement which it accepts.